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# THE BLUEBERRY BULLETIN

## *A Weekly Update to Growers*



Visit the Blueberry Bulletin webpage: [extension.rutgers.edu/blueberry-bulletin](https://extension.rutgers.edu/blueberry-bulletin)  
2024 Commercial Blueberry Pest Control Recommendations for New Jersey: [njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs](https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs)

## Blueberry Culture

*Dr. Gary C. Pavlis, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent*

The next couple of nights are predicted to be below 32 degrees. The following tips should be known if a frost is imminent.

### Tips on Protecting Blueberries from Freezes:

- Dew point is important because water vapor slows the rate of temperature drop during a freeze.
- A low dew point is always worse than a high dew point. Dry air loses heat faster.
- Wind can be bad or good during a freeze.
- Bad - If overhead irrigation is being used, wind is a serious problem.
- Good – If water is not being applied, the wind prevents a cold pool of air.
- Dry soil and any weeds, alive or dead, lower the temperature in the field.
- Wet soil has been reported to conduct heat from the warm depths of the soil to the cold surface eight times greater than dry soils.
- Applying irrigation either from overhead or trickle before the freeze event has been found to be beneficial.



- **Table 1.**
- **Suggested overhead irrigation application rates for cold protection of blueberries under different wind and temperature conditions**

<b>Minimum temperature expected</b>	<b>Wind speed (miles per hour)</b>			
	0-1	2-4	5-8	10-12
	<b>Application rate (inches per hour)</b>			
27°F	0.10	0.10	0.2	0.2
26°F	0.10	0.10	0.2	0.2
24°F	0.10	0.16	0.3	0.4
22°F	0.12	0.24	0.5	0.6
20°F	0.16	0.3	0.6	0.8
18°F	0.20	0.4	0.7	1.0
15°F	0.26	0.5	0.9	---

  
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 Atlantic County Agricultural Agent



# Pest Management

*Dr. Cesar Rodriguez-Saona, Extension Specialist in Blueberry Entomology, Rutgers University*

*Dr. Janine Spies, IPM Agent – Fruit*

*Ms. Carrie Mansue, IPM Sr. Program Coordinator – Fruit*

Last week, we scouted 59 blueberry fields across Burlington and Atlantic counties. Because this is an early stage of blueberry development, we focused exclusively on cranberry weevils.

Across the 59 fields sampled, the average density was 1.09 weevils per bush, with a maximum of 15.3 weevils per bush. Of the fields visited, at least three had weevil populations high enough to warrant treatment. For treatment options, see the previous newsletter article or consult the [2024 Commercial Blueberry Pest Control Recommendations for New Jersey](#).

## Best Management Practices for Honey Bee Hives

*Dr. Beth Ferguson, Postdoctoral Researcher, Rutgers University*

*Dr. Cesar Rodriguez-Saona, Extension Specialist in Blueberry Entomology, Rutgers University*

With bloom just around the corner, your honey bee hives should be arriving soon. The optimal time to place honey bee colonies is when 5–20% of flowers are in bloom. Keep in mind that honey bees (Fig. 1) may take a few days to orient to your farm and begin actively foraging. If you are supplementing with bumblebees, quads can arrive 2-3 days before bloom starts, but any earlier and you risk their food supplies running out.

Ideal foraging conditions for honey bees include sunny (cloudless) weather, temperatures around 70–75°F, and little to no wind. Under these conditions, you should observe approximately one bee entering or exiting the colony per second. If activity appears lower, this does not necessarily indicate an unhealthy colony—weather conditions are often the primary factor affecting honey bee activity.

If you observe reduced foraging, consider the following:

**A) Temperature extremes.** Is the temperature below 50°F or is the internal hive temperature above 95°F? At lower temperatures, honey bees cannot generate enough heat to warm their flight muscles. At higher temperatures, more bees remain at the hive entrance and use their wings to ventilate and cool the colony.

**B) Cloud cover or rain.** Honey bees rely on the sun for navigation. Heavy cloud cover or rain can make it difficult for foragers to locate fields and return to the hive. This effect is more pronounced when temperatures are also near 50°F.

**C) Wind.** Honey bees are unable to fly effectively in winds above 12–15 mph and will typically remain in the hive under such conditions.

While bees (honey bees or commercial bumble bees) are present on your farm, follow these Best Management Practices. The goal is to implement as many of these practices as consistently as possible:



Fig. 1. Hoey bee visiting a blueberry flower.



1. **Avoid overspraying hives.** Turn off nozzles when passing over hives to prevent direct pesticide exposure. Also consider shutting off sprays at row ends to avoid treating puddles or non-target vegetation.
2. **Time pesticide applications carefully.** Minimize applications during bloom whenever possible. Apply pesticides later in the day to avoid peak foraging periods, which begin in the morning and typically peak in early afternoon before declining.
3. **Communicate with your beekeeper.** Share your general pesticide application plan for the season so the beekeeper knows what to expect. Confirm whether and how often they will inspect the hives. Ensure that anyone checking hives follows your farm protocols (e.g., signing in, notifying appropriate personnel, and avoiding visits during pesticide applications).