



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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120 Stolen Beehives Recovered in Swift Multi-Agency Operation; Sacramento Man Arrested

Woodland, CA – On February 10, 2026, deputies from the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office, in collaboration with the California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force (CRCPF), arrested 47-year-old Leonid Terzi of Sacramento in connection with the theft of 172 beehives reported stolen from Merced County on February 6, 2026. Terzi faces multiple felony charges, including grand theft and possession of stolen property.

The hives, conservatively valued at \$450 each, reflecting the year-round care, maintenance, and pollination services provided for each colony, represented an estimated total loss of \$77,400. The hives were illegally placed on private property in a remote area of northeastern Yolo County. CSBA Vice President Trevor Tauzer was alerted to the suspicious colonies and quickly identified them as matching those reported stolen in Merced County. CSBA member Deputy Rowdy J. Freeman then contacted CRCPF team member and Yolo County Sheriff’s Sgt. Matt Wirick, who responded immediately. This rapid coordination led to surveillance, the suspect’s arrest within approximately four hours of the hives’ discovery, and the successful recovery and return of the colonies to their owner within twelve hours.

California State Beekeepers Association (CSBA) President Ryan Burris issued the following statement: “The CSBA extends its sincere thanks to the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office and the California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force for their swift and decisive action in apprehending the suspect and recovering these stolen hives. This outcome is a rare and welcome success in the ongoing fight against agricultural theft.”

Sgt. Matt Wirick credited the strong networks: “I really credit the CSBA and the Rural Crime Task Force for facilitating these great networks. If it weren’t for our organizations working together, this recovery wouldn’t have happened. It’s important to continue supporting one another!”

The hives' owner, Teresa Breshears of Washington state, expressed profound relief: “I had already suffered a huge loss this year and didn’t have as many hives as usual. Hearing they were stolen was devastating, but learning that the majority were recovered was an incredible relief. I was mesmerized to get them back—it was just so awesome that the CSBA and local law enforcement came together to make it happen.” When asked about the deputies involved, she added: “I just love them to pieces. The utmost respect—I cannot thank them enough.”

Burris reiterated the industry's appreciation: "Every beekeeper in California owes a debt of gratitude to the Yolo County Sheriff's Office and the entire California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force team for their dedication and professionalism."

This incident underscores the critical importance of collaboration between beekeepers, agricultural organizations, and law enforcement in combating hive theft, a persistent threat to California's beekeeping and almond industries.

As this case continues to unfold, it is essential that the public remains aware of this issue. Potential hive thieves should understand that the CSBA and rural agricultural communities are committed not only to recovering stolen hives but also to pursuing prosecution and ensuring these criminals face justice. Greg Totten, CEO of the California District Attorney's Association, commented: "These troubling crimes harm the farming industry and adversely impact the food products we rely upon. Consequently, California prosecutors take these cases seriously and look forward to partnering with the beekeeping industry to address this challenge and support the continued health of beekeeping and agriculture in our state."

Reminder to Beekeepers: If you suspect or discover hive theft, report it immediately to local law enforcement and to the CSBA. Reports to the CSBA can be made online at californiastatebeekeepers.com/issue-hive-theft/ or sent to calstatebeekeepers@agamsi.com.

In 2025, the CSBA launched the Commercial Hive Theft Prevention Program in partnership with the Pipkin Detective Agency. This initiative provides voting CSBA members with complimentary investigative support in the event of a theft. Additionally, the CSBA offers a reward for information leading to the recovery of stolen member hives and the successful prosecution of those responsible.

The association remains fully committed to these measures as part of its broader efforts to deter hive theft, promote prevention strategies, and support the prosecution of offenders.

Prompt reporting enables rapid mobilization of resources, supports recovery efforts, and helps bring perpetrators to justice. Together, we can protect our hives and our industry.

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About CSBA:

The California State Beekeepers Association is an organization that exists to support professional beekeepers and California's pollination needs. CSBA values all kinds of bees whether they're commercial, non-commercial or native pollinators. But our primary concern is protecting commercial bees who are doing the work of feeding the world. CSBA funds research designed to improve bee health and advocates to help commercial beekeepers in the face of several critical issues. For more information on the organization and how to join, please visit <https://www.californiastatebeekeepers.com/>