

## Beehive thieves hunted by Fresno County sheriff's deputies

By Jim Guy

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Bees gathered on a hive.

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The trending crime of beehive theft is getting the attention of Fresno County sheriff's deputies after two high-value heists last week.

Sheriff's spokesman Tony Botti said crooks made off with 80 hives valued at \$32,000 from a Coalinga ranch and 48 hives worth an estimated \$20,000 from the Firebaugh area.

As spring approaches, growers of a number of crops count on bees to pollinate fruit and nut trees. Botti said the thieves usually have experience with beekeeping and sometimes use the stolen hives to supplement their inventory.

Most thefts occur at night and the thieves often appear to be a legitimate work crew.

Beekeepers are being warned to mark their hives or even use global positioning devices so stolen hives can be tracked.

Anyone with information about bee theft can call the Sheriff's Office at (559) 600-3111 or Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-STOP.

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