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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jury Convicts West Sacramento Bee Thief

(Woodland, CA) – February 21, 2014 – Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that yesterday a Yolo County jury found Viktor Zhdamirov, 51, of West Sacramento guilty of felony receiving stolen property.

On September 11, 2012, employees of local commercial beekeepers, Tauzer Apiaries, discovered that two separate locations of bee hives had been ransacked and parts of hives were stolen totaling 80 bee hives. Based on 40 years of experience in the industry, owner Mark Tauzer estimated that the theft had occurred approximately eight days prior based on the behavior of his bees. According to Tauzer, bees alter their behavior in a predictable way when they lose their queen.

The stolen hives were distinctively marked inside and out so that Tauzer and his employees did their own hunting and investigating into the theft. They found that the lids to the hives had been abandoned on the side of Jefferson Boulevard between West Sacramento and Clarksburg along with an empty five gallon bucket of green paint. Two days later, they discovered the stolen hives which were partially repainted green. Their hives were mixed in with hives owned by Zhdamirov. The Tauzer markings and brands were still visible despite attempts to putty and paint over them.

The Yolo County Sheriff's Department and Yolo County Department of Agriculture helped investigate the theft and the hives were recovered. Despite the recovery of the property, the damage to both the hives stolen and those ransacked totaled \$65,000. Sheriff Deputy Don Harmon contacted Zhdamirov, who admitted to owning the apiary, taking the bee hives, and trying to cover up the markings.

"The theft and malicious destruction of the beehives in this case is an example of the type of agricultural crimes that the District Attorney finds intolerable," said Deputy District Attorney Martha Holzapfel who prosecuted the case. "We would not have had the success in this case without Mr. Tauzer's proactive marking of hives and a dedication to finding and recovering the bees," concluded Holzapfel.

Zhdamirov is facing a local prison sentence of up to three years and will also be required to reimburse Mark Tauzer for the monetary damages he caused. Sentencing is scheduled for April 4, 2014 before the Honorable Stephen Mock.

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