

Helpful Hints for WV Beekeepers

There is no one single way to manage an apiary; these are just a few helpful hints to assist you in your operation.

Apiary Location

- ✘ Secluded area away from traffic and disturbance by animals or humans. Screen colony and divert flight above and away from humans, animals and traffic. Place colonies as far away from neighbors as possible with bees' flight across your property and not the neighbors'. Post warning signs in areas of approach to the apiary.
- ✘ Full sunlight or locations shaded in the afternoon. Southern or eastern exposure for morning sun.
- ✘ Good air circulation and no low stagnant air pockets.
- ✘ Good water drainage in area above flood level.
- ✘ Source of freshwater within a quarter mile. If not readily available provide water to minimize bee visits to neighbors' swimming pool.
- ✘ Protection from direct wind especially in winter.

Disease Control

- ✘ Beekeepers should monitor their hives regularly for pests and diseases.
- ✘ Beekeepers should be extremely cautious about mixing hive equipment or purchasing used hives from sources that they are not certain to be disease free.
- ✘ Do not feed your bees honey and pollen from another apiary.
- ✘ Beekeepers should maintain up to date information on pesticide and treatment applications and only treat by the manufacturers recommendations.
- ✘ Only treat for a pest or disease if present. Treating when not warranted can lead to developing resistance to the controlling agent.

Maintain Healthy, Gentle, Productive Queens

- ✘ Mark queens for quick identification, to assist in tracking age, genetic stock, etc.
- ✘ Regularly re-queen hives with young vigorous, well mated queens; less than 2 years of age is suggested though the beekeeper should monitor their queens for good brood pattern
- ✘ If hive becomes aggressive, requeen with gentle stock (European stock suggested)¹

- ✿ Hives should be managed to minimize swarming by ensuring the queen has room to lay eggs by making hive divisions and or adding additional drawn combs and that the queen is not genetically disposed to swarming.
- ✿ Queens within newly collected swarms should be monitored for genetic traits such as aggressiveness and replaced with queens of known genetic stock if warranted.

Robbing

- ✿ Robbing can lead to spread of diseases as well as initiating defensive behavior.
- ✿ Control robbing by reducing hive entrances.
- ✿ Minimize robbing by only working hives for short periods of time during a nectar dearth.
- ✿ Clean up all spilled honey as soon as possible.

Outyard Beekeeper/Landowner Agreements (things to consider)

- ✿ Date of agreement (how long are the bees going to be in this location).
- ✿ Is there a limit in the number of hives to occupy this location.
- ✿ How often may you visit the yard, accessibility through gates, wet or dry conditions, type of conveyance allowed.
- ✿ Area that you are required to maintain beyond the limits of the bee yard.
- ✿ Maintenance methods allowed, gasoline string trimmers, herbicide use, hand tools only, etc.
- ✿ Predator prevention measure that you may be allowed to take (i.e. electric fences for bear protection).
- ✿ Notification timelines should the landowner use or anticipate the use of insecticides that may affect the bees.

This is a general list of items that might be addressed in a landowner/beekeeper agreement. Each agreement should be tailored per the conditions and situations as required to meet the needs and expectations of both parties.

¹ colony with unusual defensive characteristics such as stinging, attempting to sting without provocation or noticeable stress related conditions should contact apiary inspector or other authority for testing of possible Africanized traits.