



## A CODE OF PRACTICE

Produced by

**NOVA SCOTIA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Humans and honey bees have lived in harmony for over 7,000 years. This code recommends ways to maintain that co-operation and provides a standard for the management of bee hives which Nova Scotia beekeepers are asked to honour. By following the code and learning all they can about honey bee habits, apiarists will choose the best sites for their hives, keep their bees healthy, maintain good relations with their neighbours and comply with all the laws that govern their industry.

Bees are kept in most areas of Nova Scotia despite the province's great variability in climate, soils and vegetation. Beekeepers vary in their reasons for keeping bees and their management techniques. This code of practice is designed for all beekeepers - recreation or hobbyist, part time and commercial, as well as beekeeping associated with research and educational institutions.

### Location

- When keeping hives in urban areas check with municipal guidelines to ensure keeping hives is permitted. Municipalities may set their own regulations concerning locations. Where guidelines do not exist use common sense to ensure the bees will not become a nuisance or safety concern.
- When keeping hives in residential areas, discuss your intentions with close neighbours. Do not place hives adjacent to yards with swimming pools.
- Locate hives so flight paths avoid high pedestrian and traffic areas. In urban areas, locate hives adjacent to high fences or high shrubbery to keep flight paths over the heads of pedestrians. Do not overload the area with hives so that bees become a nuisance
- Locate your apiary a reasonable distance from other apiaries. It is poor etiquette to place hives within a three kilometer distance from other established apiaries. Doing so presents an unacceptable risk of disease transmission, unfair competition for limited floral resources and increases robbing of hives by bees from another bee yard.
- It may be difficult to determine where bees are located as many beekeepers intentionally keep hives out of view. However, new beekeepers have a moral obligation to try and ascertain whether an area is occupied by discussing with local beekeepers and property owners.
- Established beekeepers have a moral obligation to try and inform beekeepers who have recently set up bee yards in their territory, that the area is already occupied, in a timely manner.
- When it becomes apparent that two or more beekeepers are occupying the same 2 mile area the newcomers should vacate their bee yard and move hives to a more suitable area.
- Almost anywhere honey bees are kept, 30 to 40 bee hives can be maintained at two mile intervals. It is unreasonable for a beekeeper with one or very few colonies to expect to monopolize such a potential resource by claiming an exclusive right to that area.
- It is totally unacceptable to knowingly put bees right next to someone else's established bee yard.
- Keep the area around your hives neat, clean of debris and leave in a clean state.
- Ensure apiary locations and hives are adequately marked with BK codes, a cautionary descriptive sign and electrified fencing signs as applicable.

### Disease

- Beekeepers should be using an integrated pest management approach for the control of pests and diseases. Only registered chemicals should be used and only in accordance with label instructions to ensure the purity of honey, the health of bees, and mitigate the development of disease resistance to treatments.
- Beekeepers should make regular checks of their hives for disease and pests and should they require it, seek assistance from other beekeepers or from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture.

- If American foulbrood or other unusual conditions or abnormalities are observed immediately contact the Apiculturalist with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture.
- Unused beekeeping equipment should be stored to minimize bee access thus reducing the potential spread of disease.

### **Open feeding**

- Beekeepers are not to provide bees with unrestricted access to open containers of sugar syrup during the period May 15 to September 15. Doing so presents an unacceptable risk of contaminating honey.

### **Bee Temperament**

- Gentle bees are best, especially in urban areas. Requeen any hives that are too aggressive and manage your colonies to minimize the bees' defensive behavior.
- Manage colonies to minimize swarming through such techniques as providing adequate room for egg laying and regular requeening of colonies.

### **Water**

- Water should be readily available in close proximity to the apiary. This will keep bees from using watering troughs or swimming pools. When the beekeeper judges there could be a shortage of water, they should take steps to provide a source.

### **Protection from bears**

- Colonies should be fastened on pallets or protected by an electric fence where there is a potential problem of damage by bears.

### **Keeping up to Date**

- Beekeepers should keep abreast of all industry development, changes in legislation and other management improvements both locally and federally. This can best be achieved by joining the beekeeping association, reading beekeeping journals and attending field days and meetings.

### **Public relations**

- Where possible beekeepers should advise and/or assist the public in bee situations such as swarms, bees in buildings and trees.
- Beekeepers should deal promptly with concerns and questions about bees and hive products.
- Beekeepers should be prepared to undertake an occasional act of public relations to help the industry as a whole (e.g. addressing a school, commodity group or the general public at exhibits and fairs).

### **Transportation**

- Ensure that all loads are properly secured following Department of Transportation regulations. Move hives when bees are not flying (i.e. during darkness or in wet or cold weather).
- When working with your bees park your vehicle so it does not block traffic or interfere with the landowner's use of the land. Remember to close any gates you opened.
- Movement of bees into or out of the province is regulated under Bill No. 173, the Bee Industry Act & Regulations. Please contact the Apiculturalist with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture to request a permit before transporting bees across the provincial boundary.

### **Fire prevention**

- Extreme caution should be used whenever you use your smoker especially during high fire danger periods. Exercise care when lighting and extinguishing smokers and placing smokers on dry grass.

### **Registration**

- Beekeepers are required under Bill No. 173, the Bee Industry Act & Regulations to register annually with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. This registration requirement aids in disease control, the gathering of industry statistics and in the distribution of information to beekeepers.

### **Marketing**

- Honey and pollen are food products that should be packaged in clean and appropriately marked containers in accordance with Canadian Food Inspection Agency requirements.