

Hive Location, Ownership, and Management of Bee Colonies in Connecticut

Hives

All honeybee colonies should be housed in hives with frames that can be easily removed. This does not preclude the use of any size or shape of hive, other than the usual 16 x 20 dimensions. Hives should be kept off the ground on wooden pallets or cinder blocks to prevent wood rot. They should be painted and any bad wood replaced. The area around the hives should be mowed and any debris removed. Periodic inspection for disease is recommended.

Locating honeybee colonies

In residential areas, especially near walkways or areas of increased public use, bees need to be encouraged to fly over people's heads. It is suggested that a 6-foot high flyway barrier be built so that when the honeybees leave the hive, they are forced to fly upwards to avoid contact with people. A flyway barrier can be made of wood or plastic at least four millimeters thick and suitably braced. Hay bales or dense vegetation can also be used. Be very careful in areas where children might play.

Honeybee colonies should not be kept in direct sunlight, with proper ventilation and a fresh water source.

Water

In Connecticut, by March 15th, beekeepers in urban or suburban areas should provide a continuing source of clean water for their bees. This should be placed within 25-50 feet of the hive (s). Bees become dependent on this source and so will not congregate at nearby swimming pools, animal watering bowls, birdbaths or other water sources used by humans or domestic animals.

Maintenance of Honeybee colonies

Beekeepers should ensure that no burr comb, honey, miticide strips or related materials be dropped around the apiary site. All such material should be disposed of promptly and in sealed containers. Do not leave wet supers recently extracted out for cleaning by the bees, near areas where people or animals frequent. Robber bees that might visit can become unusually aggressive. Where many hives are kept together, place equal strength hives together. This will reduce the tendency of strong hives robbing weaker ones. Hives become more aggressive in late summer and fall or when nectar supplies are reduced. Hive inspections should be curtailed during these periods. During nectar flow, the best time for inspection is between 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. when temperatures are over 60° F.

If there is a need to feed bees or there is a robbing problem, feed the bees at night removing the sugar source by dawn. During late summer and autumn, reducing the size of hive entrances can reduce robbing.

Some bee colonies may persist with unusually aggressive behavior. Replacing the queen might help. Contact a more experienced beekeeper or inspector for help and advice, if this proves to be too difficult.

In residential areas, place hives out of public view. Place hives behind trees or shrubs, using them as natural flyway barriers. Painting the hives a green or brown to blend them into the landscape may be desirable. In Connecticut, it is not necessary to paint the hives a traditional white. Weather is relatively cool in the state and bees can easily regulate interior hive temperatures.

Offering neighbors gifts of honey is good public relations. In the future, they may be called upon to sign a petition or testify that your bees were no trouble to them. Be a good neighbor. Think that it is a privilege to be able to keep bees, not a right assured by law.

Honeybees are considered wild animals. It may be prudent to contact an insurance company to determine insurance coverage for bee stings.

Hive densities in neighborhoods

Many hives in a heavily residential neighborhood is not a good idea. One or two hives is better. Common sense should prevail. Contact the State bee Inspector or advise.

Ownership and marking of hives

It is suggested, that any **apiaries not on** the beekeepers own land, should have a clear visible sign, showing the name and telephone number of the owning beekeeper. One sign could be placed on each end hive. Alternatively, a small sign might be placed next to the apiary. If there is no sign, then it is assumed that the apiary belongs to the owner of the land on which the hives have been placed. If there were a complaint, then the landowner might be contacted.

Summary

The above suggestions are made in the hopes of avoiding "bee problems". At times, as a beekeeper, you may be blamed for wild bee activities. Hopefully these suggestions will minimize problems and make us better managers of our bees.

List your name with the local police and fire departments as a person willing to collect bee swarms. Everyone benefits from a quickly collected swarm. Registering your name with the deputy state entomologist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven as someone willing to collect swarms, both benefits you and the community. The station telephone number is (203) 974-8479.

Joining a bee club is recommended, [Ctbees.com] they will provide source information, support, and keep you up to date with new ideas and developments in the beekeeping industry. It is also the law to register honey bee hives with the State Entomologist. www.ct.gov/caes The State bee Inspector at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is trained to help you be a better beekeeper and to help you prevent the spread of honeybee diseases and can be contacted at 203-530-5743.

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