Official curriculum for the NCSBA Master Beekeeper Program Certified Level course of instruction

Keeping bees in populated areas

Many people think we harbor dangerous animals

- Fears are not easily overcome
- Too often hives are like landfills. Everyone wants them around, but not next door.
- Keeping bees in town requires a good understanding of basic bee biology, property rights, and human psychology.
- Bees must be managed without being a nuisance to our neighbors.

Good management practices

- Using good management practices it is possible to keep bees is crowded suburban areas, on tiny lots, and on roof tops in large or small cities without problems.

- However some areas may not be practical to keep bees.

  Near schools
  Public parks
  Child care centers
  Retail areas
  Hospitals & clinics

- But how far away should the hives be?

How do we achieve happy beekeepers and neighbors?

Multiple issues should be addressed.

- Stinging
- Swarming
- Water foragers
- Flight zones
- Etc.

Your going to be considered the expert

You need to be able to identify all those stinging insects that are not honeybees

Bumble Bee

Carpenter Bee

Paper Wasp

European Hornet

Yellow Jacket (wasp)

Bald faced Hornet
(actually a wasp)

Mud Dauber (wasp)

Cicada Killer

Wingless Wasp
(Velvet ant/Cow killer)

Bee flight zones

- Bees crashing into neighbors is a bad thing.
- Bees should fly at least 6 feet above ground when crossing property boundaries.
- Planting a hedge or erecting a fence or wall at least 6 feet high forces bees to fly above head level.
- Hives can also be placed on roof tops.
- Barriers also provide another important feature, seclusion. Unseen hives cause less worry to neighbors.
- Out of sight, out of mind.

Number of Hives - suggested

- Small Lot (less ¼ acre) - 2 hives
- Average Lot (¼ – ½ acre) - 4 hives
- Large Lot - 8 hives
- Rural - No limit

- Overstocked hive locations could result in bees taking their cleansing flights over your neighbors' car.

Hive Location

Hives should be kept:

- In the backyard out of sight if possible.
- At least 25 feet from the sidewalk, alley, street, or road.
- Preferably not within 15 feet of property boundary line.
- In full sun. Bee hives in full sun tend to be less aggressive than those in shade.

Entrances

- Top entrances are probably best avoided, especially in summer.
- When a top entrance hive is opened there are more confused bees. Their entrance is gone.
- Bottom entrance only hives still have an intact entrance. Returning foragers are not impeded from entering their hive.

When to Inspect Hives

- Whenever a colony is opened or disturbed, it is at its most dangerous state. Only when the hive itself is disrupted will the bees attack in number.
- Inspect when many of the older workers are foraging.
- Take measures to reduce robbing which could put thousands of angry bees in the air.
- Weather. Inspect hive on warm sunny days, preferably mid day.

Water

- Bees generally collect water from the nearest source.
- Bees collecting water from swimming pools, bird baths, and wading ponds could quickly become a nuisance to your neighbors.
- Once bees start using a particular water source, it is difficult to keep them from returning to it.
- To prevent this the beekeeper should provide a constant supply of water close to the hives as soon as the bees start flying in the spring.

Stinging Bees

- Angry bees are attracted to movement, animal odors, and vibrations.
- Don’t open a hive while your neighbor is mowing the grass, etc.
- Only keep gentle bees. Mean bees are better for the open country.
- If a colony becomes aggressive re-queen with gentle stock.

Keeping Control

- When opening a hive, the beekeeper must maintain control at all times.
- A rural beekeeper may ignore a hives organized defense system by wearing protective clothing and/or taking multiple stings and ignoring them.
- In urban or suburban settings the consequences could prove harsh due to the close proximity of neighbors

How do we maintain control?

- Smoke is the most important tool.
- Work carefully and without haste.
- Do not wear gloves.
- Stings on the hands can quickly be removed.
- Glove stings are not felt, but the scent associated may anger other bees in the hive causing them to attack.
- Fully protected the beekeeper may not notice as the attack builds.
- By working with bare hands, one is less clumsy and will be less likely to let bees get out of control.

Control Swarming

- Although swarming bees are gentle and not inclined to sting they may induce fear in your neighbors.

- Steps should be taken to prevent swarming.

  - Re-queening
  - Population control
  - Reversing brood hive boxes
  - Provide room for adequate honey storage and brood.
  - Know how to capture swarms.

Public Relations

- Keep the apiary neat and tidy.
- Be on speaking terms with neighbors.
- Gifts of honey or other bee products.
- Be informative to your neighbors about honeybees and beekeeping.
- Befriending a neighbor will make it a lot easier to calm them down if they become angry with you and your bees.

Public Relations (cont.)

- Community involvement.
- Local beekeeping assoc.
- Fairs
- School field days
- Capturing swarms

Etc.

Governmental Issues

- Fieldwatch.com (beecheck)
  - Could prevent insecticide spraying.

- State inspector can inspect for disease/pests.

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