

*Best Management Practices for Honey Bee Colonies: Good Neighbor Guidelines and Ordinances
Amended by: Danielle Downey*

Introduction

Beekeeping is becoming increasingly popular in Utah. Utah currently has approximately 600 registered beekeepers, who manage ~30,000 honey bee colonies. Beekeeping provides honey for home consumption, pollination services for farmers, and general enjoyment for those who practice it. Despite the many benefits of honey bees and beekeeping, bees can sting people and require proper and responsible management so they do not become a nuisance to neighbors. Additionally, the discovery of the African honey bee in Utah places more pressure on beekeepers to properly maintain their colonies (for information about African honey bees, see: <http://ag.utah.gov/news/africanmainpage.html>)

This document is intended as a reference for proper honey bee management in Utah, with particular emphasis on siting apiaries in urban/suburban locations. It may serve as a guideline for local governments, a resource for information to reinforce community confidence in the safety of beekeeping, a standard reference should complaints or conflicts about beekeeping activities arise, and a compendium of best management practices that all Utah beekeepers are encouraged to follow.

It is intended that these Best Management Practices (BMPs) form a prescription for harmonious cooperation between beekeepers, neighbors, and landowners. The guidelines for bee colony management in these BMPs also constitute a standard that beekeepers operating in Utah may follow and could be recognized as such by apiarists, decision-making authorities, and the general public. Finally, in the case of ordinances enacted by local authorities, the BMPs provide a consistent approach for clarifying and resolving issues.

Definitions

As used in this document, the following words and terms have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the context of their usage clearly indicates another meaning:

1. Apiary means the assembly of one or more colonies of bees at a single location.
2. Beekeeper means a person who owns or has charge of one or more colonies of bees.
3. Beekeeping equipment means anything used in the operation of an apiary, such as hive bodies, supers, frames, top and bottom boards, and extractors.
4. Colony or Hive means an aggregate of bees consisting principally of workers, but having, when perfect, one queen and, at times, many drones, brood (immature honey bees – eggs, larvae, pupae), combs, honey, and the receptacle inhabited by the bees.
5. Honey bee means all life stages of the common domestic honey bee, *Apis mellifera*.
6. Tract means a contiguous parcel of land under common ownership.
7. Undeveloped property means any idle land that is not improved or actually in the process of being improved with residential, commercial, industrial, church, park, school or governmental facilities or other structures or improvements intended for human use occupancy and the grounds maintained in association therewith. The term includes property developed exclusively as a street or highway or property used for commercial agricultural purposes.

Requirement to Register

People keeping bees (any number of colonies) in Utah are required by law to register with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF- <http://webapp.ag.utah.gov/LicenseLookup/>). Renewal forms are sent annually to previously registered beekeepers for return to the UDAF-Division of Plant Industry along with the appropriate annual fee specified in the fee schedule. For more information on registering bee colonies in Utah, see: <http://ag.utah.gov/licensing/documents/1201a.pdf>

Hive Type

All honey bee colonies should be kept in hives with removable frames. The hives should be kept in sound and usable condition.

Fencing of Flyways

In instances where colonies are situated within 25 feet of a public or private property line of the tract upon which the apiary is situated, as measured from the nearest point on the hive to the property line, the beekeeper should establish and maintain a flyway barrier. The barrier should be at least 6 feet in height consisting of a solid wall, fence, dense vegetation or combination thereof and should run parallel to the property line. The barrier also should extend 10 feet beyond the colony in each direction so that all bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least 6 feet above ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the apiary.

Water

Beekeepers should ensure that a convenient source of water is available to their bees so that the bees will not congregate at swimming pools, pet watering bowls, or other watering sources where they may contact humans, birds, or domestic pets. Some sources of water that beekeepers can provide include: (1) a tub of water with wood floats to prevent the bees from drowning, (2) a faucet in the apiary that is left to drip steadily, or (3) filling Boardman entrance feeders (quart jars with holes in the lids) with water and placing them on the colony(ies). If using tubs of water, the water should be changed periodically to avoid stagnation and mosquito breeding. Water must be provided between March 1 and October 31.

Robbing Behavior

When nectar is scarce, honey bees may rob honey from other hives. Under such conditions, beekeepers should work hives for only a very short time, if at all. Keep exposed honey or sugar water to a minimum and use entrance reducers to prevent robbing. **Honey extraction** must be done in a location and manner such that bees do not start this feeding frenzy.

General Maintenance

Each beekeeper should ensure that no bee comb or other materials are left on the grounds of the apiary site. Upon their removal from the hive, all such materials should be disposed of promptly in a sealed container or placed within a building or other bee-proof enclosure.

Africanized Honeybee in Utah

The Africanized Honeybee has been detected in Washington, Iron and Kane Counties but could be moved unknowingly from those areas to anywhere in the state. Thus it is recommended that all beekeepers follow these practices to minimize risk. Beekeepers are encouraged to follow Utah's

Best Management Practices for Maintaining European Honey Bee Colonies.

1. Beekeepers shall maintain a valid registration with UDAF.
2. A Utah apiary may be deemed as EHB (European Honey Bee) with a minimum 10% random survey of colonies using the FABIS (Fast African Bee Identification System), the computer-assisted morphometric procedure, ie. Universal System for the Detection of Africanized Honey Bees (AHB) (USDA-ID), and/or other methods approved by UDAF on a yearly basis as requested.
3. Honey bee colony divisions or splits should be queened with production queens or queen cells from EHB breeder queens following "Best Management Practices for Producing Honey Bee Queens in Utah".
4. Utah beekeepers are discouraged from collecting swarms that cannot be immediately re-queened with queens acquired from EHB queen producers.
5. Utah beekeepers should practice good swarm prevention techniques to prevent an abundance of virgin queens and their ready mating with available AHB drones that carry the defensive trait.
6. Maintain all EHB colonies in a strong, healthy, populous condition to discourage usurpation (take over) swarms of AHB.
7. Do not allow any weak or empty colonies to exist in an apiary, as they may be attractive to AHB swarms.
8. In areas known to host AHB, recommend re-queening with European stock every six months unless using marked or clipped queens and having in possession a bill of sale from an EHB Queen Producer.
9. In areas known to host AHB, immediately re-queen with a European queen if previously installed clipped or marked queen is missing.
10. In areas known to host AHB, maintain one European drone source colony (250 square inches of drone comb/colony = both sides of 1 deep frame) for every 10 colonies in order to reduce supercedure queens mating with AHB drones.
11. Treat all honey bees with respect.

Queens

All colonies should be maintained with marked queens produced by breeders following “[Best Management Practices for Producing Honey Bee Queens in Florida](#)” or similar best management practices. When a colony exhibits unusual aggressive characteristics by stinging or attempting to sting without due provocation or exhibits an unusual disposition toward swarming, the beekeeper should re-queen the colony with another marked queen.

Apiary Identification and Location

In addition to the State of Utah Apiary Inspection Law regarding identification of honey bee hives the beekeeper should conspicuously post a sign setting forth his/her name, phone number, and/or license number.

The beekeeper should be the person or persons who own or otherwise have the present right of possession and control of the tract upon which a hive or hives are situated. If the beekeeper does not own the land, written permission to keep bees there is required.

To protect public safety and reduce beekeeping liability, apiaries should not be sited in proximity to tethered or confined animals, students, the elderly, general public, drivers on public roadways, or visitors where animal/bee and people/bee interactions may have a higher likelihood of occurring.

Inspection

Each Utah Apiary should be inspected and a report issued by an authorized representative of UDAF at such intervals as UDAF deems best for detection of honey bee pests and unwanted races of honey bees.

Selected References

**This document adapted from Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Document prepared by Jerry Hayes and Jamie Ellis.**

O'Malley MK, Ellis JD, Neal AS. (2007). African honey bee information for school administrators. *EDIS*. ENY-141. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN739> (December 2007).

Ellis JD, Ellis Amanda. (2009). African Honey Bee, Africanized Honey Bee, Killer Bee, *Apis mellifera scutellata*, Lepelletier (Insecta: Hymenoptera: Apidea). *EDIS*. EENY-429. http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/document_in790 (February 2009).

Best Management Practices for Maintaining European Honey Bee Colonies. FDACS-DPI. <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/plantinsp/apiary/apiary.html>

Best Management Practices for Producing Honey Bee Queens in Florida. FDACS-DPI. <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/plantinsp/apiary/apiary.html>