

Manitoba Beekeepers' Code of Practice

Manitoba beekeepers have access to and maintain stewardship of a valuable resource that allows them to harvest honey and simultaneously provide ecological services through crop pollination. The ability to continue to do this is dependent on their relationship in the community that they operate in. This code recommends ways to maintain that co-operation with landlords, other beekeepers and the community at large. It provides a standard for the management of beehives which Manitoba 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, enhance the public perception of honey bees and comply with all the laws that govern their industry.

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. In addition to the honey and hive products produced by honey bees in Manitoba, the economic and social value of honey bees through pollination services is substantial. Although honey bees are not plentiful in all agricultural regions, it is an achievable goal that our Association wants to strive for.

Registration

- All beekeepers are required under the Manitoba Bee Act to register with the Manitoba Department of Agriculture. This registration requirement aids in disease control, the gathering of industry statistics and in the distribution of information to beekeepers. This registration is free. A copy of the [Manitoba Bee Act](#) and other useful documents are located on the Government of Manitoba's "[Managed Bees](#)" webpage.

Location

In Urban Areas:

- When keeping hives in urban areas check with municipal guidelines to ensure keeping hives is permitted and follow local guidelines and bylaws that are specific to Municipalities concerning locations and bee management. 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 neighbors. Bees require water and often become a nuisance when collecting from taps, air conditioners and open pools. Establishing and maintaining a clean water source near your hives before moving them into a location can help prevent bees becoming attracted to these sources. Water should be provided in spring before the snow melts and continuing late into fall. Try to avoid placing hives adjacent to yards with sources such as 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. Follow local guidelines to ensure you do not overload the area with hives so that bees become a nuisance.
- Follow any restrictions on maximum numbers of colonies that can be maintained on a residential lot specific to the part(s) of the city in which you reside.

In Rural Areas:

- Locate your apiary a reasonable distance from other apiaries. It is poor etiquette to place apiaries within a two 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 to inform beekeepers who have recently set up bee yards in their territory, of the location of active bee yards and work together to ensure a two kilometer distance is maintained.
- Almost anywhere honey bees are kept in rural Manitoba, apiaries consisting of 30 to 40 beehives can be maintained at two kilometer intervals. While small scale beekeepers should have the right to maintain bees on their own property, it is unreasonable for a beekeeper with very few colonies to expect to monopolize such a potential resource by claiming an exclusive right to that area and the 2 km restriction would not apply.
- It is unacceptable to knowingly put bees right next to someone else's established bee yard or honey house.

- Stocking rates above the level recommended above sometimes occur such as in cases where a beekeeper is following the request of pollination contracts for more densely placed hives/acre, where beekeepers are moving bees into yards for wintering (indoors or outdoors), for temporary spring or fall management or for the purpose of queen rearing and this is acceptable practice
- Keep apiaries neat, clean of debris and leave them in a clean state after removal of the hives.
- Prevent situations where mice can enter hives or equipment to prevent contamination and disease.
- Ensure all apiary locations and hives are adequately marked with the name and contact information of the beekeeper as per the Provincial Bee Act.

Disease

- Beekeepers should familiarize themselves with proper biosecurity protocols and should be using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for the control of pests and diseases to ensure the health of their bees, those of their neighbors, and of native pollinators. Only registered chemicals should be used and only in accordance with label instructions to ensure the purity of honey, the health of bees, mitigate the development of disease resistance to treatments and disposal of registered chemicals.
- Beekeepers should make regular checks of their hives for disease and pests and should they require it, seek assistance from the Provincial Apiarist, the Knowledge Research Transfer Program (KRTP), or other beekeepers.
- If American Foulbrood (AFB), other reportable diseases and pests, or other unusual conditions or abnormalities are observed, immediately contact the Provincial Apiarist with Manitoba Agriculture.
- Unused beekeeping equipment should be stored under cover (either tarps or inside a building), to minimize bee access thus reducing the potential spread of disease both at bee yards and honey house locations.
- Wax moths are an increasing problem and beekeepers should be monitoring for infestations and take control measures if moths are present.
- Beekeepers are encouraged to render their wax yearly, as stored cappings could become a reservoir for spread of pathogens and establishment of pests such as wax moth and small hive beetle. For transport of cappings and old comb for rendering; see the Wax Rendering Facility Biosecurity Best Management Practices on the MBA website.
- Beekeepers are encouraged to swap their old dark comb for new comb in brood chambers regularly as this is good bee management.

Feeding

- Stimulative feeding must not take place during honey flows. Our entire industry depends on the integrity of all beekeepers to keep their produce pure and free of foreign sugars.

Open Feeding

- While open feeding is permitted in Manitoba, it is generally not recommended (especially in urban areas) because it encourages robbing behavior and may spread disease. Open feeding also presents an unacceptable risk of contaminating honey of your own or neighboring apiaries since bees regularly forage over distances of 3 km and can forage over distances of up to 12 km. Therefore, open feeding should not occur when any beekeepers in the region still have honey supers on their colonies. Usually this means beekeepers should not provide bees with unrestricted access to open containers of sugar syrup during spring, summer or fall honey flows.

Water

- Water should be readily available in close proximity to the apiary and established before bees are moved into apiary sites in both urban (see above) and rural regions. 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 protected by a properly constructed electric fence where there is a potential problem of damage by bears. In dry areas, beekeepers should integrate ground rods into the fence design to ensure proper functioning of the fence so that hives will be protected. Please consult Manitoba Conservation document on Bees and Bears - https://www.gov.mb.ca/nrnd/fish-wildlife/pubs/fish_wildlife/coexistence-of-apiaries.pdf

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.

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 (eg. avoid robbing). Manage colonies to minimize swarming through such techniques as providing adequate room for egg laying, providing space for bees, ventilating hives, and regularly requeening colonies.

Public Relations

- Where possible, beekeepers should advise and/or assist the public in situations where bees may be a nuisance such as swarms, bees in buildings and trees, etc.
- 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).
- Beekeepers engaged in pollination should maintain good communication with their growers as the farmer's livelihoods' depend on timely placement of hives when crops are flowering.
- Care should be taken to keep pets and non-target species safe when trapping for skunks and raccoons.

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 and/or beekeeping equipment into or out of the province is regulated under the Provincial Bee Act. Contact the Provincial Apiarist with Manitoba Agriculture to request a permit before transporting bees or equipment across the provincial boundary. A guide for the interprovincial movement of bees can be found here: [Interprovincial Bee Movement Requirements – Canadian Honey Council](#).

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. Beekeepers should have fire proof storage containers if transporting lit smokers.
- Mowed bee yards are a proven method of reducing the risk from grass fires from bee smokers or catalytic convertors on vehicles.

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.
- All beekeepers should have access to a refractometer to test moisture levels and monitor all honey being packaged or sold in bulk. Wet honey will ferment and degrade the quality of honey being sold.