

BEST PRACTICES FOR NEW BEEKEEPERS

1. **Acquiring Colonies and Registration:** New beekeepers should begin with a package or nuc. Per state law all colonies should be registered with DEM annually.
2. **Hive Type:** New Beekeepers should keep colonies in a conventional 8 or 10 frame Langstroth hive. Two deep boxes or three medium boxes should be available to the colony as brood and food storage chambers.
3. **Safety:** At a minimum, a protective veil should be used. An Epi-pen should be present.
4. **Smoker:** A smoker should always be lit when a colony is opened, even for just a quick peek.
5. **Cross Contamination:** All efforts should be made by all beekeepers to reduce the probability of spreading diseases or parasites from one yard to another. Gloves should be freshly washed (or use disposable gloves) prior to visiting another bee yard. Tools should not be transported into others yards unless thoroughly cleaned.
6. **Feeding Hives:** An internal feeder or a top feeder should be used with new colonies to avoid robbing. Open feeding or entrance (Boardman, for example) feeding should not be used with new colonies.
7. **Hive Examinations:** Outside frames should not be pulled first: best practice is to pull a frame (number 2 or 9, in a 10 frame hive) adjacent to the outside wall frame first so as to create room to manipulate other frames, including the outside frame if necessary. This prevents rolling bees against the outer wall.
8. **Colony Assessment and Recordkeeping:** A full colony assessment should always include evaluation of the brood pattern, the queen, population size, food stores, colony and brood virus and disease presence, mite testing and integrated pest management techniques. All assessment details should be documented for future reference.
9. **Colony Inspection:** Brief colony inspections are recommended when a complete assessment isn't needed. This may include a brief check to see if a new queen was released, a check for brood or queen cells, etc. These are inspections with a very brief and specific reason. Reasons will vary during the season to do a brief inspection or if a full inspection is needed.
10. **Mite Testing:** Testing should be done to determine if a treatment is needed. Testing should be repeated after treatment to assess treatment effectiveness. Research recommends the alcohol wash as the most accurate technique but the sugar shake is also acceptable. Testing should continue through the season until it is too cold to sample bees.
11. **Mite Treatment:** Only EPA approved treatments should be used, in accordance with label instructions, and with appropriate protective equipment. Integrative Pest Management techniques should be used and evidence based techniques can be found listed in the Honey Bee Health Coalition Varroa document. <https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroa/>
12. **Fall Management:** Preparing the hive for winter may include tasks such as mitigating robbing, applying mouse guards, 2:1 syrup feeding, combining hives, and re-organizing frames for optimum food availability.

13. **Winter Management:** Typically, a shim is in place to create space to add emergency or maintenance food. The colonies food supplies should be assessed and managed as appropriate through the winter. Common emergency food sources are table sugar, fondant (without corn starch), and winter patties. Pollen patties are added in small amount when appropriate.

Other Optional Common Practices

1. Queen excluders are recommended if a honey super is placed on a new colony especially if the new beekeeper has difficulty identifying their queen.
2. During the winter many wrap their hives (numerous materials and techniques used such as foam board or tar paper), add an upper entrance, and apply a moisture absorbing material below the outer cover (also many materials and techniques used such as homosote, duck cloth, quilt box, etc). Insulation foam board may also be placed below the outer cover above the moisture absorbing material.