



Best Management Practices

Missouri State Beekeepers Association Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Missouri Beekeepers

Introduction

The Missouri State Beekeepers Association (MSBA) has developed and offers the following best management practices as suggestions for people who currently keep, or are thinking about, keeping bees in Missouri. Show-Me beekeepers should note:

- MSBA intends for these to be concise “suggestions” of what to do, not a detailed explanation of how or why to do it. Details are readily available through other sources. Some links to MSBA reviewed and endorsed information are provided.
- Many of these practices will be recognized as common sense steps in being a “good neighbor” or pertain to keeping bees in an urban environment.
- Adherence to these management practices will provide benefits to the beekeeper, his apiary and the surrounding community while reducing potential conflicts.
- Things change. MSBA will revise and edit this list of BMP’s as new information becomes available and changes are warranted.

Recommended practices for maintaining honey bee colonies in Missouri include:

1. Make an informed decision before committing to the start-up expense and responsibility of keeping bees. Do your research, take a class and visit with area beekeepers. Seek out a mentor.

2. Read and understand all laws, regulations and ordinances which may apply to keeping bees in your specific area.

3. Keep healthy bees.

- Keep bees only in well maintained Langstroth, top bar or other appropriate hives designed with removeable frames allowing proper inspection and management of the individual combs of the colony.
- Become familiar with the diseases and pests which can affect your bees. A very good resource, [Honey Bee Diseases and Pests](#), has recently been developed by the University of Minnesota. This guide provides information concerning the identification of honey bee diseases and pests, along with currently recommended treatment options.
- Provide regular hive inspections for disease and strive to maintain strong active colonies by monitoring varroa mite and small hive beetle populations and taking appropriate action when necessary.
- Obtain bees from a trusted source. If buying an established colony, make certain it is inspected for disease and mite loads prior to purchase.
- Be wary of used equipment “bargains,” especially with woodenware.
- Varroa mite monitoring and control is best accomplished utilizing information provided by the Honey Bee Health Coalition. Check out: [Tools for Varroa Management-A guide to Effective Varroa Sampling & Control](#).
- If a colony’s population begins diminishing for an unknown reason, take immediate action. First response is to reduce the entrance so the remaining bees can better guard against robbing. Then research and/or seek help from others to identify the problem.

- Properly treat with a product approved for the specific conditions of concern, following all label instructions, or remove and destroy all diseased and/or pest infested colonies.
- A diagnosis of American Foulbrood should be taken very seriously as it generally is always fatal to the colony and readily spreads to others. Frames and combs should be burned and remaining woodenware scorched.
- Always do a thorough health check on any colonies from which you wish to make splits or before combining colonies.
- Rotate out of the apiary one third of the oldest brood comb each year.
- Take measures to reduce drifting and robbing within your apiary.
- Keep records of your queens, production and management of the individual hives in your apiary.

4. Immediately address any dying (too far gone) colony or dead-out upon discovery.

- Quick action is necessary to keep robbing activity from spreading mites and potential pathogens in your apiary and those of other beekeepers in the area.
- By taking quick action, the woodenware and comb can be spared the ravages of the wax moth and small hive beetle. Procrastination will lead to a loss of time and beekeeping resources. Guaranteed.
- Humanely dispatch any remaining live bees by shaking/brushing into soapy water.
- Place frames and combs in a freezer for 24 hours prior to reuse or storage to kill larvae of the small hive beetle and wax moths.

5. Practice proper management and control techniques to prevent colonies from swarming.

6. Maintain all colonies at least 10 feet away or the minimum distances required by any local ordinances from property lines. Placement in full sun or in areas of minimal shade can be helpful in reducing issues with small hive beetles.

7. Place a barrier between any colony and any human traffic area or any animal that is penned or tethered within forty feet. The barrier should be of sufficient density to establish bee flyways above head height.

8. Maintain a water source accessible to your colonies located at least half the distance closer than any water source on property owned by others.

9. Avoid opening or disturbing colonies when neighbors or the general public are participating in outside activities or using machinery within 150 feet of the apiary.

10. Do not tolerate colonies exhibiting excessive defensive behavior. Such colonies should be re-queened and the drone brood destroyed.

11. Healthy colonies are valuable and theft in some areas could be a problem. Consider colony placement out of sight of the general public.

12. Be a good neighbor by informing adjoining property owners of the placement of your hives. Address any concerns they may have.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, keep learning. Become engaged with the beekeeping community. Maintain a membership with MSBA. Regularly check the Missouri State Beekeepers Association's website. Join a local beekeeping organization, we have about three dozen that meet regularly in the Show-Me state. Learn from others and when you can, give back. Mentor others in beekeeping!