

Beverley Beekeepers' Association

(A District of Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association)

Beverley Beekeepers' Association currently has a membership of approximately 150 which ranges from those about to start exploring the hobby to those with decades of beekeeping experience. We advise that all those who are interested in taking up beekeeping should make contact with their local association to plan the best way forward for their own circumstances.

The wide variety of knowledge of experienced members is available to help, guide and nurture anyone who wishes to find out more about beekeeping and / or develop their skills in handling bees.

The Beverley Beekeepers' Association covers the East Riding of Yorkshire and Hull. We work with adjacent Beekeeping Associations to preserve and promote Honeybees in our area.

Starting Out:

If you have thought about becoming a beekeeper, or are just interested in bees and beehive products, then here are a few answers to some questions you may have.

Time and commitment ?

Managing one or two hives requires about two hours of time input every week between April and September. Less time is required in the quieter winter months, which allows for reading about bees, attending winter association meetings, hive maintenance and enjoying your honey harvest as well as planning for more honey next year.

Where to keep Bees ?



Bees will fly up to 3 miles to reach flowers. They will fly over gardens and into surrounding areas seeking plants to harvest the nectar and pollen they require. What is important is not necessarily having a large garden but that you plan fences or hedges around your hives so that the bees will fly up over the fences and stay above head height until they reach the flowers. This helps keep them away from neighbours. You don't want to spoil your neighbour's enjoyment of their garden environment, and therefore hives and the bee's flight paths to and from the hives should be positioned to avoid areas where people congregate e.g. patios, sunbathing spots, children's playgrounds etc. Before

acquiring bees we recommend that you always seek advice from an experienced beekeeper about the siting of hives. Discuss your plans with neighbours!

Honey ?

Honey is the bees' food store and how much you can remove depends on how much they have stored in the hive. Honey production is dependent on the weather, the abundance of local forage (flower, crops etc.) and the strength of the honeybee colony. The bees must store sufficient honey to survive the winter months when forage is very limited. You do not want to starve your bees in the winter, so leave them with sufficient honey to survive into the next year – and then you can look forward to more honey in the following season. Some beekeepers move their hives to a productive source of nectar and pollen to maximise the honey production.

Stings ?

We all get stung from time to time but this can be minimised by the way you handle your bees. Our courses will show you the best ways which are least upsetting to the bees. Bees are protective of their colony and, if upset, will defend their community to the point of self sacrifice.

Cost to Start ?

New equipment can be expensive; most beekeepers often use 'seconds' quality hive parts. When starting the hobby we suggest that you buy only the essentials but ensure that you allow funding for sufficient equipment to cope with hive growth and management. Some used equipment is available from springtime Beekeeping Auctions; Websites are informative for costings.

You will also need personal protective clothing, smoker, tools etc. 'Getting started' basic requirements can vary, but including 2 empty hives experiences suggest an outlay of between £300-£500. Extractors can be borrowed from the association.

Prices of Bees to go in the hives vary according to the colony size. Bees should be purchased only from known, disease free sources - preferably locally, such as our association members. You should seek advice before making purchases / acquiring equipment, especially in relation to the quantity that you will need and when considering pre-owned hive parts.

How to Learn about Beekeeping ?

Beverley Beekeepers' Association holds a weekday evening practical course for beginners during May and June extending over 6 weeks at our apiary site close to Beverley. Demand often exceeds the evening course capacity and therefore we may offer a full one day course in the summer. 'Taster' sessions may also be arranged for those who wish to find out if beekeeping is an appropriate hobby for them. We can lend students protective clothing when we open up beehives to carry out structured management of the colonies. Experienced beekeepers are on hand to instruct, advise and answer any questions. You will learn how to handle bees, recognize the different types of bees - workers, drones and the queen – and find bee eggs and larvae. Most importantly you will find out if you really enjoy being in amongst and handling bees. At the time of printing the course fee is £30.

Do I have to go on a course before I start keeping bees ?

No, it is entirely up to you; however all Beekeeping Organisations strongly recommend that you learn some practical skills before you obtain your own bees. Some of our members may offer to 'mentor' new beekeepers by taking them on as assistants at their own apiaries. This is an excellent way to pick up practical knowledge and will enable you to link up with your beekeeping guru for advice later when you have your own bees. Before you start on our beginner's course / mentoring you should read some books on beekeeping. Many are available. Suggested books: 'Haynes Bee Manual' – Claire & Adrian Waring; Green Guides 'Keeping Bees' – Pam Gregory & Claire Waring; 'On The Keeping of Bees' - John Whitaker; 'Keeping Healthy Honey Bees' - David Aston & Sally Bucknell; 'Keeping Bees' - Vivian Head; 'Bees and Honey' - Ted Hooper. The Association library has books and CDs available for members to borrow.

Should I join a Beekeepers Association ?

The British Beekeepers' Association, Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association and its affiliated Beverley District would strongly advise both anyone thinking of keeping bees and established beekeepers to join a local beekeeping association for the many benefits offered - Public Liability Insurance, Newsletters, Winter and Summer meetings, Support and Advice from fellow members, Bulk purchase discounts, Reduced magazine subscriptions etc.

Membership categories vary from £5 for those without bees to £23 for all inclusive benefits.

Still want to keep bees ?

Our Association always welcomes those interested in finding out more about bees and honey. Please visit our website at www.beverleybeekeepers.co.uk and follow the enquiries link or contact:- The Secretary enquiries@beverleybeekeepers.co.uk or Tel 01482 656018.