



Note 3.01
(Previously Note #1)

BEES AND BEEKEEPING IN NORTH CAROLINA

Who Keeps Bees? Anybody can keep honey bees. In North Carolina, farmers, businessmen, homemakers, carpenters, children, doctors, university professors, and just about anyone else you can imagine keeps bees.

Where Can Bees Be Kept? Bees can be kept almost anywhere. There are beekeepers in deserts, small towns, in rural areas, in suburban areas, in large cities, and on beach front property. There is even at least one beekeeper in New York City who keeps several hives of bees on the roof of his penthouse apartment.

What is a Bee Colony? A bee colony is merely a large family of bees. It consists of one queen who is the mother of all of the other bees in the hive, between 15,000 - 50,000 worker bees and several hundred drones (male bees).

How Popular is Beekeeping in North Carolina? Beekeeping is a very popular hobby and interest seems to be on the increase. There are over 10,000 beekeepers in the state and about 1,200 of them belong to the N. C. State Beekeepers Association. In addition, the NCSBA has beekeeping chapters in most of the N. C. counties.

Are There Beekeeping Education Programs in N.C.? Yes, there are many programs such as regular courses on honey bees at N.C. State University, short courses offered at the annual NCBA conventions (twice a year) and at local NCSBA chapter (county) meetings, and of course the N.C. Master Beekeeper Program. The N.C. Master Beekeeper Program is the largest and most long-lived state master beekeeping educational program in the United States. The program is completely free of charge to N.C. residents and is sponsored by the N.C. State Beekeepers Association, N.C. State University (Extension Service), and the N.C. Dept. of Agriculture.

What is the North Carolina State Insect? The honey bee!

Is North Carolina an Important Beekeeping State? Definitely! North Carolina ranks in the top ten states based on its number of beehives. In addition, there are more beekeepers in North Carolina than any other state. The great majority of the state's beekeepers are hobby beekeepers with less than 10 hives of bees per beekeeper.

Why Is Beekeeping Important in North Carolina? In a typical year, North Carolina's beekeepers (with a little help from their bees) produce between 5 and 6 million pounds of honey with a value of approximately \$10 million dollars.

In addition, they also produce over 120,000 pounds of beeswax. But that is only part of the story. Honey bees also contribute another \$70 million plus to the state's agricultural economy through the pollination of such crops as apples, blueberries, cucumbers and other vine crops.

Does a Bee Sting Hurt? Yes, but few things in life are free, not even honey. It is also important to note that a good beekeeper learns how to reduce the chances of being stung.

What North Carolina Crops Really Benefit from Honey Bee Pollination? Many of our fruit and vegetable crops such as apples, blueberries, cucumber, melons, pumpkins, squash, strawberries, and watermelons show increases in yield and quality from honey bee pollination. In addition, a sizeable portion of the diet of North Carolina's wildlife (birds, squirrels, bears, etc.) feed on bee pollinated plants.

How Much Does it Cost to Get Started in Beekeeping? The first hive of bees and the equipment to work the bees should cost about \$175.00. Additional hives cost less because some of the equipment is interchangeable and reusable.

What Are Some of the Ways to Earn Money from Honey Bees?

- ! sale of honey
- ! sale of beeswax and beeswax products such as candles
- ! renting bee colonies for pollination
- ! sale of queen and package bees
- ! sale of specialty bee products such as pollen, bee venom and royal jelly

How Much Money Can a Hobby Beekeeper Earn Per Colony of Bees? In N. C. the average hobby beekeeper can expect to earn approximately \$60-\$80/colony from honey sales. This amount may fluctuate from year to year and the beekeeper may also earn income from other sources such as the sale of beeswax, pollination, etc.

Where Can I Obtain Additional Information on Beekeeper?

1. Office of your local (county) Cooperative Extension Agent
2. North Carolina State Beekeepers Association - (information on membership including dues, benefits, and annual meetings):

Mr. Paul Madren, Treasurer
104 Woodland Drive
Cary, N.C. 27513
Phone: (919) 467-7065

Visit the NCSBA web site:
www.ncbeekeepers.org

3. Extension Apiculturist at N. C. State University (general information on beekeeping and beekeeping education programs):

Dr. David R. Tarpy, Extension Apiculturist
Campus Box 7613
N. C. State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7613
Phone: (919) 515-1660

Visit the NCSU web site:
<http://entomology.ncsu.edu/apiculture>

4. NC Dept. of Agriculture (information on bee disease inspection services and state regulations on beekeeping):

Mr. Don Hopkins, Apiary Inspector Supervisor
N. C. Dept. of Agriculture
PO Box 27647
Raleigh, NC 27611
Phone: (919) 233-8214

Visit the NCDA web site:
www.agr.state.nc.us/plantind/plant/apiary/apairy