



Caring for Bees

Beekeeping is becoming more popular in Wellington. Bees are important for pollinating crops and gardens but can cause problems in urban areas, so good hive management is important.

Beekeeping - the basics

Bees forage for nectar, pollen, and water within a 3 kilometre radius of the hive. Too many bees in an area can cause competition for food. It's not recommended properties in urban areas have more than four hives. This ensures there's enough food for all bees in the area and that bee numbers do not become a nuisance or intimidate neighbours. You should speak with neighbours before getting a hive.

Minimising nuisances

Flight path management

Hives should be positioned in a sheltered and sunny spot. Avoid placing hives close to a neighbour's house or driveway, or near frequently used areas such as vegetable gardens, clotheslines, or children's play areas. In residential areas, the hive should be behind a 2 metre high fence, trellis, or hedge so that the bees have to fly up and above anyone walking around - especially your next door neighbour.

Bees have small, round, waxy yellow droppings that are left in their flight path. Beekeepers sometimes get complaints from neighbours about bee droppings on windows, cars and washing. This may be fixed by turning the hive so that the entrance faces a different direction or moving it to another location on the section. Move the hive no more than 1-2 metres per day otherwise bees may get lost. It's important that flightpaths are not directed across walkways. Beekeeping associations can provide more advice about flight paths.

Water

There should be water from a natural or provided source within several metres of the hive. This will reduce visits by thirsty bees to neighbours' wet washing, swimming pools, and bird baths. Provide water by letting a tap drip slowly into a shallow dish of sand or pebbles, so bees won't drown when drinking.

Nectar/pollen

Bees should have access to a variety of bee-friendly plants and trees close to the hive. You can visit <http://www.treesforbees.org.nz> to find out more about what plants attract bees.

Swarm prevention

Although swarming is the natural means of dispersal of honey bee colonies, responsible beekeepers can minimise swarming in urban areas by re-queening on an annual basis, splitting a nucleus colony from populous hives (artificial swarming), and re-queening colonies that have been started from swarms.

Community beekeeping

Permission is required to keep bees on any Council land, such as parks and reserves. Applications are assessed by the Council, and may be granted subject to conditions. If your application is approved, you'll need to pay a fee. For more information please see our Guidelines for Community Beekeeping on Public Land, available on our website.

Legal requirements

It is not necessary to obtain a licence from the Council to keep bees on private land in Wellington City.

Beekeepers are legally required to register their apiary withASUREQuality Ltd. This is so all hives can be monitored for exotic pests and diseases that can harm honeybees. Beekeepers must display their Apiary Registration Number at each apiary (usually on each hive). More information about this can be found at afb.org.nz.

Colony loss

Colony loss is estimated to have affected 10% of colonies in 2016. To reduce colony loss:

- Ensure bees have enough food through winter and the beginning of spring.
 - Honey contains pollen which the bees will use.
 - In autumn, leave enough honey in the hive for the bees to eat through winter. There will be times the bees can't forage due to bad weather.
 - If all the honey is consumed feed the hives with sugar syrup. Make sure there is plenty for the bees to store.
- Control varroa, an external mite that feeds on honey bees and their pupae, with registered miticides in spring and autumn.
- Control wasps in the area with registered baits. Wasps can kill honey bee colonies that have reduced in size over winter and can't defend the pupae or winter stores.

Starting with bees

The best way to test your liking for beekeeping is to gain practical experience before you get hives of your own. You can do this with an individual beekeeper or by joining the local beekeeping club.

If you aren't prepared to regularly manage and look after hives, don't get any. Neglected hives are a nuisance to the public and a potential source of bee diseases. Hives will usually need to be checked or 'worked' by the beekeeper at least once every three weeks in summer and about once or twice over the winter months.

Beekeeper costs

To start beekeeping, you'll need:

- a protective suit (usually a one-piece that includes a veil)
- gumboots, gloves, a smoker and hive tool
- an initial hive with four boxes
- a nucleus colony of bees with a new queen
- Apiary Registration with ASUREQuality Ltd.

You should be prepared to initially spend about \$1000 setting up your first hive. Two hives will cost about \$1650 in total to set up. It's recommended that you start with two nucleus colonies as an insurance against one queen failing. If this happens you can unite the hives or swap broods between them.

Resolving issues

If your neighbour's bees have become a source of nuisance, we recommend you speak with them about the situation. Issues can usually be resolved the most quickly by dealing with your neighbour directly.

If problems persist, please call us on 499 4444.

Further information can be found on our website wellington.govt.nz/animalpolicy

Further information:

- www.wellington.govt.nz/animalpolicy
- Animal Bylaw (2016)
- Domestic Animal Policy (2017)
- Animal Welfare Act
- Wellington Beekeepers Association
www.beehive.org.nz
- American Foulbrood Pest Management Plan
www.afb.org.nz
- Trees For Bees
www.treesforbees.org.nz
- ASUREQuality
www.asurequality.com
- Apiculture NZ
www.apinz.org.nz