

## **Beekeeping Basics**

Just beginning your beekeeping adventure?  
Here's some info to get you started.

### **1. Some basic knowledge**

Beekeeping requires a fair amount of specific knowledge in order to be successful. There is so much great information available online and we have gathered a few links here to help you on your way.

**Click here to download this free 44-page guide by** beekeeping expert Russell Goodman in conjunction with the Victorian Government. A very useful starting point for beginners.

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/compliance/code-of-practice>

Click here for a video on rookie mistakes to avoid

<https://youtu.be/-oMRFL1NGG8>

Click here to learn about the equipment needed for your first year of beekeeping

<https://youtu.be/4psC0-CecdQ>

Click here to watch US WVDA State Apiarist Wade Stiltner demonstrates how to handle beehives and what to look for in a healthy colony

<https://youtu.be/S-nLvEiyApA> (not all information is relevant to Australia, but there are loads of useful tips for all beekeepers).

### **2. Time to dedicate to your bees**

A few hours a week after the initial setup is probably the minimum amount of time you need to devote to checking your hive and any maintenance that may be required. You will need to invest a few more hours when it's time to harvest the honey.

### **3. Space for your bees**

While having a large area to keep your hive in is a luxury, it's not a necessity; many beekeepers successfully keep bees in regularly sized backyards. The main problem with a small space isn't that it bothers the bees, but it may bother your neighbours. You are required by law to move the hive if it bothers people living near you, so this is a consideration.

If your neighbours are cranky and you have a poor relationship with them, they could make life hard for you. Keeping the hive as high as possible tends to alleviate some of these problems because the higher the bees are the less likely they are to bump into humans. Some neighbours will be far more receptive to the bees if they receive some fresh honey at the end of each season, so consider being generous with your honey once you've harvested.

### **4. You'll need bees**

You can collect a swarm yourself or take over a second-hand hive, but if you're getting started, then buying some bees will be the easier way to go about it. We offer a variety of options to get you started, click here to visit our shop.

## **5. You'll need a home for your bees**

There are several options available when choosing a hive for your bees. Bees will take up residence basically anywhere, but we recommend using a Langstroth style hive if you want to maximise your honey production and keep your bees as healthy as possible.

The Langstroth hive is the most common type of hive and it's probably what comes to mind when you think of a beehive. Frames slide into the hive and each frame has hexagonal wax moulds that the bees can then use to build their own comb on top of.

The hive has a cover over the top and bees enter from a small gap in the bottom.

Flow hives have become quite popular these days, with many individuals favouring them for the ease of honey extraction. These still require regular inspections and maintenance, as with traditional hives, however the design allows for honey to be removed at the turn of a dial.

We offer a variety of hive options to get you started,  
**click here to visit our shop.**

<https://www.honeybeehives.com.au/shop>

## **6. Beekeeping equipment**

You will need some equipment to keep you safe, and specific tools to perform regular beekeeping tasks such as inspecting your hive. We have various tools & equipment starter kits available, click here to visit our shop.

## **7. Beekeeper Registration**

Bees are constantly under threat from a range of devastating pests and diseases, many that are not present in Australia, as well as the impacts of chemicals and pollution.

If you are a beekeeper, you can play your part in protecting our bee populations and the role they play in pollination by registering your hives.

In fact, in NSW, beekeepers must be registered with NSW DPI. Compulsory registration helps prevent the spread of diseases and unwanted pests including Varroa and tracheal mites.

**Click here to register**

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/bees/beekeeper-registration>

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**Click on the links below for more great info:**

- A guide to keeping bees in your own backyard

<https://www.homeadvisor.com/r/bringing-up-bees-at-home/>

- The Top 10 Mistakes Most Newbie Beekeepers Make

<https://modernfarmer.com/2016/06/top-10-mistakes-newbie-beekeepers-make/>

- Essential Gear, Tools, and Supplies for the Home-Based Beekeeper

<https://www.angieslist.com/articles/essential-gear-tools-and-supplies-home-based-beekeeper.htm>

- Making a Beehive – Plans and Instructions on How to Build Your Own Beehive  
<https://www.diydoctor.org.uk/projects/beehive.htm>
- Beekeeping 101: Learn How to Use the Bee Smoker  
<https://thehoneybeeconservancy.org/2017/09/03/bee-smoker/>
- How Do You Harvest Honey?  
[https://www.tractorsupply.com/know-how\\_pets-livestock\\_bees\\_how-do-you-harvest-honey](https://www.tractorsupply.com/know-how_pets-livestock_bees_how-do-you-harvest-honey)
- Tips for Beekeeping in Cold Climates  
<https://beekeepclub.com/tips-for-beekeeping-in-cold-climates/>
- TheBeekeeper.Org: beginner beekeeping course  
<https://www.honeyflow.com.au/pages/online-beekeeping-course>
- Ecrotek Beekeeping Video Series  
<https://www.ecrotek.com.au/learn/videos>
- Plant Health Australia's Biosecurity for Beekeepers Online Training  
<https://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/resources/training/biosecurity-online-training/>

## Ongoing Tasks

Once your hive is up and running there are a few tasks you need to perform on a regular basis to ensure that your hive stays healthy. Your job as the beekeeper is to maintain the health of the hive, watch out for disease and prevent swarming.

The end of Winter or beginning of Spring can be a tricky time for the hive. This is when the brood is expanding and the hive requires honey to meet the demands of the new members of the hive. If nectar flow slows down low enough, the colony could starve and die out. To prevent this from happening, some beekeepers feed their hives sugar water.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has created a PDF that explains everything you need to know about **feeding sugar to honey bees**.

[https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/532260/Feeding-sugar-to-honey-bees.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/532260/Feeding-sugar-to-honey-bees.pdf)

Fat Bees Skinny Bees: DPI manual on **honey bee nutrition** for beekeepers

[https://a5043008-ce07-47d1-b49b-1c6eb4597d14.filesusr.com/ugd/44c9c6\\_11a5f15347b040cc881b48f740e71b57.pdf](https://a5043008-ce07-47d1-b49b-1c6eb4597d14.filesusr.com/ugd/44c9c6_11a5f15347b040cc881b48f740e71b57.pdf)

As the colony expands, you need to monitor its growth. If you feel that the colony is growing too fast, you may need to **add a super to your hive** to prevent the bees from swarming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvQsl076MHs>

If you fail to add a super in time, the colony could swarm; leaving you with only half a colony left.

To perform these tasks, you will need some special equipment called a hive tool. This allows you to more easily manipulate parts of the hive and do the tasks you need to do.

### ***Honey Harvesting***

Honey harvesting requires a fair bit of instruction, so here are a few video links to get you started:

#### **Hobby Farms Guide to Harvesting Honey**

<http://www.hobbyfarms.com/how-to-harvest-honey/>

#### **Dengarden's Guide to Harvesting Honey**

<https://dengarden.com/gardening/How-to-Extract-Honey-from-a-Beehive>

#### **Dadant Beekeeping's Video Guide to Harvesting Honey**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot\\_BJpvuH9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ot_BJpvuH9g)

### ***Beekeeping Safety***

Unfortunately, bee stings are a fact of life as a beekeeper, but there are simple steps you can take to keep the stings to a minimum. Most people react with a small amount of pain which subsides quickly, yet there is a small percentage of the population who will have an allergic reaction to bee stings that can result in anaphylactic shock. Anaphylaxis can be life-threatening, so if you've not experienced a bee sting before, it's a good idea to not be alone when handling bees.

Keeping the bees' stress levels down will help minimise stings as bees are not generally aggressive when they're calm.

Using protective clothing is essential in preventing stings and it is advisable to be protected at all times when near the bees.

A good quality veil smock or full suit and long gloves will protect you if used correctly and consistently. White is the best choice as it does not disturb the bees.

Bees are more likely to feel under threat & attack in response to:

- Dark objects
- Furry objects
- Carbon dioxide

A smoker is a great tool to reduce the likelihood of stings when you need to get up close and personal with the bees. Smoke causes an instinctual reaction where the bees ingest as much honey as possible in preparation for needing to find a new home due to the threat of fire to their existing home. The bees are much more docile when their bellies are full & are less likely to attack.

Here's a great video on using a smoker.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBb2DtSXF0>