



South Swindon Parish Council

Guidelines for Keeping Bees on Your Plot

Allotment holders do not have a statutory right to keep bees on allotments, requests have been received from allotment holders who would like to keep bees on their allotment and written permission must therefore be obtained from South Swindon Parish Council.

Allotment tenants have a duty as part of the Allotment Rules and Guidelines not to cause a nuisance to others. Beekeeping on an allotment plot is not recommended practice for the novice beekeeper and must complete the BBKA Basic Assessment and must present their certificate, membership and insurance before receiving permission to keep bees on the allotment. Novices must be supported by an experienced beekeeper who will act as mentor.

Guidelines on Beekeeping have been provided on behalf of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) who state that:

"Honey bees play a vital part in crop pollination, not just for food but also for that of many other plants and animals in the ecosystem. The increasing prevalence of diseases in bees means that they need more and more support from man to help them survive. Feral colonies are short-lived because of untreated mite infestations and so managed colonies of honey bees are vital to us all".

All beekeepers on all SSPC sites must have current, full membership of the BBKA via the local association. Memberships and insurance must be maintained while keeping bees on the allotment and up to date copies must be submitted to the Parish Office to be kept on file.

Failure to register bees as detailed in the revised Allotment Tenancy Conditions and individual tenancy agreements or meet the minimum standards in these guidelines may result in the termination of an allotment tenancy.

Representatives of Council or Allotment Association or other agencies have the right to inspect the Bees at any time. If the Council has cause to investigate complaints of poor management, maltreatment, costs of control or other official inspections will be passed to the tenant for payment.

When keeping of Bees on an allotment plot tenants should take all reasonable measures to minimise potential nuisances.

New colonies of bees should be obtained from a source where the temperament of the parent colony is known to be gentle. If a colony becomes aggressive, the beekeeper must take appropriate action, either re-queening or moving the colony to an alternative site away from the allotments.

All colonies on SSPC allotment sites must maintain their colonies in good state – carrying out regular inspections, practising swarm control and disease prevention and management (e.g. regular treatment against varroa). National regulations regarding notifiable diseases (e.g. European and American Foul Brood) apply and the number of hives **must** be registered with BeeBase:

www.nationalbeeunit.com/

No more than three active hives are allowed per plot, with the addition of a nucleus hive as and when required. Evidence suggests a maximum of three hives per acre is considered desirable. When considering new requests, the Parish Council will consider of the number and location of existing hives on the allotment site.

All honey bees try to swarm; this is a crucial reproductive activity for any social insect. The Beekeeper should be aware of how to deal with this.

In general, an inspection of each hive is required at least once a week during the 'swarming season', which is roughly April to July in the UK, although an experienced beekeeper will be watching for signs always. You should ensure that your beekeeper is aware of this need and is able to carry it out (for instance, what will he or she do during holidays?). There are several swarm control techniques, which a competent beekeeper will be aware of.

When swarming does occur, despite the best efforts of the beekeeper, there is no need for other allotment holders to be concerned. Despite the 'busy-ness' of the bees, the swarm will settle down in an hour or so and can be re-captured if it is safe to do so. Bees are NOT additionally aggressive when they are swarming.

Water:

Bees need water, just like any other living creature. They like 'damp things', such as pond margins, as they can drown in deep water. However, once bees have found a source of water that they like, they will continue to use it. Making them change if this is inconvenient may require co-operation of other allotment holders to temporarily cover water or some other intervention. Bees are also attracted to salty water, so the 'sweat of the brow' can also attract them to other people, in extreme conditions.

Vandalism:

Tenants are requested to try and ensure that long objects, such as stout poles and ladders are secured. Our experience is that these may be used to push over hives from a safe distance.

Spraying and pesticides: Honey bees are very vulnerable to the effects of pesticides. You should ensure that any applications under your control are made with due consideration of the bees and that other allotment holders are also aware of the correct procedures.

WELL BEING OF OTHER ALLOTMENT HOLDERS

Beekeepers should be aware of the concerns of other allotment holders and seek to mitigate any concerns.

Beekeepers should be willing to give advice to mitigate these concerns through good practice and courtesy. Information should be provided on site concerning whom to contact in an emergency and general advice on treating stings as follows:

Stings:

In general, bees will only sting if provoked to defend either their brood or the honey they have collected.

First Aid for stings:

Firstly, the sting should be scraped out sideways, to avoid pressing the poison sac and getting a full dose. Stings may cause swelling and itching for several days, this is normal. Any sign of dizziness is more serious; consult your GP. In the case of sudden fainting/collapse (or stings inside the nose or mouth) administer first aid and call an ambulance informing them that it is a bee sting reaction, this will alert the paramedics to have adrenalin ready. Stings near the eyes, throat and in and around the mouth should receive prompt medical examination. Remove rings etc. if stung on the hand.

Children who are stung should be observed for an hour to make sure there are no adverse effects.

Wasps and bees:

These are often confused, but wasps' nest in the ground or in open, 'paper' nests in sheds or suspended from bushes. Wasps can be a nuisance to bees, as they rob hives of honey. Care should be taken in the destruction of any wasps' nest near bees, as there is a risk of the transfer of pesticide to the bee colony, which will harm it. Use a licensed pest controller to deal with wasps' nests.

For more information contact:

The British Beekeepers' Association, The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

DEFRA Officials:

Honey bees are susceptible to a number of rare but serious infectious diseases. Some of these are 'notifiable' to DEFRA, under the same general regulations as other livestock diseases, such as foot and mouth disease in cattle. In these instances, the Regional Bee Inspectors (RBIs) and their assistants have statutory powers to access hives to deal with disease and to survey the extent of the spread of disease from other colonies. They can issue 'standstill' notices to prevent colonies being moved and 'destruction' notices which may require the affected colonies to be burnt and buried in-situ. Tenants must co-operate as fully as possible.