

Check list

Preparation

- Plan and organise the meeting carefully.
- Determine who will run the meeting – one person only.
- List all essential equipment and who will provide it.
- Inform attendees what protective clothing is needed and arrange for them to borrow some if necessary.
- Make sure the landowner knows your plans.
- Make sure any neighbours who could be affected are aware of the meeting.
- Have a mobile phone to hand and know the exact location of the apiary and the nearest public phone.
- Identify whether any of the attendees have a known allergy to bee venom.

At the meeting

- If any of the circumstances are not right, cancel the meeting.
- Make sure that people do not stand in the flight path of the bees.
- Watch that the apiary is not over-congested.
- Do not attempt to administer any medical treatment unless you are qualified to do so.
- Put all brace comb, etc, in a container and remove it from the site.

Risk Assessment

Organisers are advised to do a written risk assessment of the event, identifying hazards and the steps taken to minimise them and their outcomes.

The Health and Safety Executive has produced a very helpful leaflet 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' available from the Environmental Health Department of your District Council. Just follow the guidelines.

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Stoneleigh Park, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

Organising an apiary meeting



This leaflet is provided as guidance for beekeepers who have the responsibility of organising or managing apiary meetings. It highlights some of the do's and don'ts of apiary meetings. It is not however a definitive list of all the issues and does not absolve the individual beekeeper from exercising all sensible precautions.

Who is in charge of the meeting?

This is the first issue that needs to be addressed: there can only ever be one person in charge. It may be the apiary manager if the apiary is an Association apiary, or it may be an official of the association, the apiary owner or an invited guest. Whoever it is, there must be only one person.

What is the purpose of the meeting?

Meetings are sometimes held without any defined purpose - often they are a convenient event for beekeepers to meet together on a nice summer afternoon. But as with all aspects of beekeeping, a little thought in advance will be of benefit.

The prime objective may be to assess the strength or health of colonies, to demonstrate a particular technique or item of equipment, to host a visit from your Regional Bee Inspector or to hold a beginners' meeting.

Whatever the purpose, advance preparation will help. Some of the questions which could be asked beforehand include:

- Will they all be experienced beekeepers?
- Will there be any beginners or members of the public attending?
- How many people are expected to attend?
- Will everyone have protective clothing?
- What are the forecast weather conditions?
- Is there adequate parking and access generally?
- Has permission been sought from the landowner?
- What is the temperament of the bees at the site?
- Is there a nectar flow on?

Each of these questions could potentially provide information which would make the meeting different from any other. For example, it is rarely a worthwhile exercise to manipulate bees when there is no nectar flow. More particularly, these (and other) questions will enable the organiser or manager of the meeting to decide exactly what he or she is seeking to achieve at the meeting.

Identify the objectives of the meeting

Unless the notice of the meeting has given a clear indication of its purpose or intent, attendees will have come along with very varied expectations of the outcomes. It can therefore be very helpful to list the objectives of the meeting and make sure that those attending are in agreement from the outset. This can have the added advantage of establishing firmly who is in charge of the meeting.

Always clarify the objectives before opening any hives. There is no harm in revising them if some of those attending want to achieve extra or different objectives, but make sure that this is done before the bees become aware that they are the subject of a meeting. Confused bees do not make a good recipe for a successful apiary meeting.

Arrange the apiary site

Give some thought in advance as to where all the visitors will stand and how they will all get the opportunity to see what is to be demonstrated.

Arrange the viewing area so the flight path of any colony is not blocked. Often, whilst everyone is absorbed with the colony which is currently open, no thought is given to the returning or departing bees at the next colony. Everybody then comments on how bad tempered the bees are when that colony is opened.

Consider keeping all of the attendees behind the hives or well in front so that the bees can come and go unhindered. Rope off a 'no go' area if necessary.

Rarely can about more than four people adequately observe manipulations within a hive at close range, so it may be appropriate to consider taking items of interest to the audience to ensure that all have an equal chance of seeing the key points. But remember that this approach will take longer and a delicate balance must be struck between answering all of the questions and keeping the hive open for an unduly long period. Assess which questions can be dealt with after the hive has been reassembled.

Apiary hygiene

Good bee husbandry demands that the use of equipment from other beekeepers or sites should be avoided. Make sure that if other persons are carrying out manipulations, they do not use any of their own equipment (particularly hive tools or cover cloths).

Always practise the same standards of hygiene as you would at any apiary site. Leave the site clean and tidy with all hives in a sound, weatherproof condition. It is particularly important to ensure that any smoker materials are fully extinguished if left in the apiary. Do not leave brace or burr comb lying around the site - this can be a cause of robbing and spreading disease quite apart from being a waste of a valuable resource.

Make sure that any security or access arrangements are restored as you leave the site.

Precautionary arrangements

A few simple arrangements can help the success of the meeting.

- Even if you have the landowner's permission for the apiary site, be sure that you have specific permission for the meeting.
- Talk in advance to any neighbours who may be affected.
- Clearly understand the terms of any insurance which is applicable.
- Carry a mobile phone or know the location of the nearest public phone.
- Identify if any of the attendees have a known allergy to bee venom.

Most beekeepers who exhibit an allergic reaction are aware of it and will also be aware of the extent of their reaction. Persons with a known allergy should not be permitted to attend meetings unless they have with them any medication which has been prescribed and are capable of administering it themselves.

Occasionally, the allergic reaction in some individuals can become suddenly worse or an allergy can develop where none was present before. However, unless you are qualified to diagnose any unexplained condition you should not assume that it is a reaction to bee venom; the symptoms may be due to some entirely unrelated condition.

Organisers should familiarise themselves with the information provided in the BBKA Advisory leaflet B2 'Bee Stings'. This gives advice on how to deal with stings including severe reactions.