

Observation Hives

Many of the foregoing considerations apply to the management of observation hives at shows. In addition:

- Ensure that the hive and conduits are secured against upset and dislocation.
- Ensure the conduit exit is well above head height or is suitably screened.
- The hive ventilator must be resistant to mischievous probing.
- A suitably qualified and properly equipped attendant should be present at all times when the public is nearby.
- Closing screens must be available in case of an accident such as broken glass or a damaged ventilator. A large sheet can be used to wrap up the whole hive.
- The beekeeper in charge should ensure that the hive does not overheat, especially if the bees are not allowed to fly. A water spray should be available.

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.

This leaflet is provided for general interest and information only. No liability is accepted for any injury or loss arising out of the contents of this leaflet.

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Managing live bees at shows



This is intended as a guide to assist beekeepers in the safe management of live bees for demonstration to the public at shows and exhibitions.

Preparation before the show

- Check with the show organiser that the site for the hives is compatible with activities such as children's play areas, tethered animals, candy floss sellers, etc. Agree the number of colonies to be placed on the site.
- Check that there is adequate insurance cover, either through the beekeeping association or through the BBKA.
- Select and ask at least two competent beekeepers to provide the colonies and undertake the demonstration.

Preparation of a colony

- Select a compact, healthy colony, well - provisioned with stores and with bees of known docility. It should contain foundation, partly-drawn comb, etc.
- Inspect the colony for AFB and EFB and reject any colony in which disease is found.
- Ensure that the hive is of good, sound construction and is secure and well-ventilated for travel.
- Bleed off the flying bees by moving the hive within the apiary 2-3 days prior to removal to the show. Allow longer if the weather is poor. If there is no adjacent stock to take the flying bees, place a weak stock on the original stand.

Preparation of the site

- The screened area must be large enough to contain the hive(s) when dismantled and give the demonstrator space to work and move around unhindered.
- The screen at the demonstration site should be erected before the bees are released and should be a minimum of 2 metres high. It should be secured against casual entry by the public.
- The bees should be flying on site at least 24 hours prior to public access.
- Avoid any danger of robbing (which will put the bees into a defensive state) by restricting the entrance at all times. If other bees are present or wasps are prevalent, use cover cloths when demonstrating.
- Bees should be given water within the hive/enclosure if there is any danger of them seeking water from unsuitable sources.
- Ensure that adequate beekeeping equipment is available at the demonstration site at all times.

Briefing medical personnel

- If a Doctor/St John' s Ambulance/First Aider is available at the show, he/she should be briefed in advance as to when and where the demonstrations will be held.
- Establish an agreed means of communication should medical assistance be required urgently.
- When medical assistance is not readily available, ensure that a suitably qualified person will be available to attend and is able to give artificial respiration. Ask the Red Cross to check that those who will be attending are competent to give the necessary medical attention.
- Suitable treatment for severe reaction should be available near to the demonstration area.

Demonstrating

- When more than one stock is present, the demonstration should be carried out on only one colony at a time and demonstrators should alternate the stocks used unless there is an overriding reason not to do so. All equipment should be made ready before the demonstrations and a soapy water sprayer should be placed in the screened area (for use in emergencies).
- At least two competent beekeepers should be present at all times. One should carry out the demonstration. The other should act as a steward outside the screened area to describe what his/her associate is doing and also to deal with any spectator problems.
- The steward should also observe conditions (including weather) both inside and outside the screened area and advise the termination of the demonstration, should conditions become unsatisfactory. Such advice should **always** be complied with, since it is easy for a fully-protected demonstrator who is concentrating on the performance to miss warning signs of agitation. This may be of little consequence in an apiary but could be catastrophic when the public is present.
- The demonstrator should not wear gloves, if at all possible. This ensures that the first signs of agitation are felt.
- In the event of complete loss of control, close up the colony completely (suffocation of the bees is not a consideration). Simultaneously, clear the public from the area. Use soapy water spray to destroy bees returning to the hive and remove the colony or colonies as soon as possible from the site.

Removal

- Prepare the hive(s) for travelling. Leave the bees until the evening and after the public has left the site. Try to ensure that all flying bees have returned to the hive(s) before closing the entrance(s) and removing from the site.