



The competent Beekeeper

Lancaster Beekeepers advisory leaflet No 12

Beekeeping is a traditional pastime which, if carried out competently, can provide years of safe enjoyment and challenge for almost anyone. Like every other active pastime however, there are some risks. These are virtually eliminated by competent beekeepers, who have acquired the necessary knowledge and developed appropriate skills.

To enable anyone to become a competent beekeeper, Lancaster Beekeepers have created a six stage development programme, which lasts two years but is usually spread over three seasons, designed to support novice beekeepers until such time as they are competent to manage their own bees.

- Stage 1: An afternoon with bees
- Stage 2: Introduction to basic beekeeping
- Stage 3: Basic beekeeping competencies
- Stage 4: Apiary Training
- Stage 5: Acquiring your first bees
- Stage 6: BBKA basic beekeeping qualification.

THE COMPETENT BEEKEEPER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Stage 1: An afternoon with bees

Under the guidance of an experienced tutor you will look inside an active hive. This will enable you to decide whether or not you are comfortable wearing a bee suit and working whilst surrounded by literally thousands of flying bees. These courses usually take place in July and August.

Stage 2: Introduction to basic beekeeping

This one day workshop, usually held in March, is designed to raise awareness of the what is involved in keeping bees. By the end of this workshop participants should be in a position to decide whether or not beekeeping is for them. The workshop covers all the basic theory of beekeeping and allows participants to see and handle beekeeping equipment.

Stage 3: Basic beekeeping competencies

Held at the Club's apiary, this is a three day course (held over three weekends) which combines theory with hands-on experience. Held in Spring, the course is designed to ensure that new beekeepers begin to develop the competencies necessary for safely and effectively managing a colony of bees. The course is designed to be a "follow-on" from *Introduction to basic beekeeping*. Protective clothing is provided.

Stages 1 to 3 are open courses for which there is a fee. Numbers on Stage 3 are strictly limited.

Stage 4: Apiary experience

Members of Lancaster Beekeepers who have completed stages 1, 2 and 3 are encouraged to continue developing their skills at the Club's apiary, for the rest of the season. Those who intend to acquire bees the following season are encouraged to start planning their own apiary and acquiring the necessary equipment.

Stage 5: Acquiring your first bees

One of the Club's prime objectives in creating the apiary is to provide new beekeepers with a strain of bees which is docile, healthy and well suited to the local environment. During this stage you will assist with the creation of nucleus hives which you can purchase at well below market prices to become the first bees in your new apiary

Stage 6: Basic beekeeping qualification

As soon as you feel ready, but not before, you will be encouraged, but not required, to take a simple, practical and theoretical examination leading to the awarding of the **Basic Beekeeping Certificate** of the British Beekeepers' Association. This certificate is a recognised qualification and is an external accreditation that you are now a competent beekeeper. The examination usually takes place around July and pre-examination training is provided.

Stages 4 to 6 are restricted to club members. There are no fees for the training involved but members will be required to meet the costs of the external examination.

It is Lancaster Beekeepers' policy to discourage new beekeepers from obtaining their own bees until they have acquired the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills to manipulate bees safely and competently.

It is also the Club's policy to encourage all members who wish to keep bees to:

- become registered members of the British Beekeepers' Association, one of the many benefits being public liability insurance
- achieve the *Basic Beekeeping Certificate* of the British Beekeepers' Association as an external validation that they are competent beekeepers.

Lancaster Beekeepers welcomes new beekeepers of all ages but those under the age of 18 will need parental consent and be accompanied by a parent