

- Check that there is adequate insurance cover, either through the beekeeping association or through the BBKA.
- Select a source of suitable colonies and a backup.
- Select a team of competent bee handlers to inspect the bees and a knowledgeable person to give the commentary. Make sure the owners of the bees are happy with the selected demonstrators handling their bees.
- Brief all participants. A guidance sheet can be useful and emailed to everyone.
- Any protective clothing that is worn should be clean to create a good impression.

Preparation of a colony

- Select healthy and docile colonies that are well provisioned. They should have brood in all stages and preferably a marked queen. There should be no active queen cells
- Inspect the colonies for AFB and EFB about a week in advance.
- 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 for flying. If there is no adjacent stock to take the flying bees, place a weak stock on the original stand. An alternative is to gradually move the selected colony next to another, then move it 3m or more away.

Preparation of the site

- There should be a screened area large enough to contain the hive(s) when dismantled and give the demonstrator space to work unhindered.
- The screen should be erected before the bees are released and should be a minimum of 2m 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 it may be wise to use cover cloths when demonstrating, but this should be a last resort.
- Ensure that adequate beekeeping equipment is available at the demonstration site at all times and in particular spare smoker fuel.
- Put up a sign in a prominent place **'Caution – Live Bees'**

Dealing with a medical emergency

- Read BBKA leaflet L002 'Bee Stings' before the event. Keep it available in case it is needed. There is a separate sheet L002A with a summary of actions.
- If emergency medical personnel are available at the show, they should be briefed in advance as to when and where the demonstrations will be held. This should be done in conjunction with the show organizer.
- Establish an agreed means of summoning help should medical assistance be required urgently. Mobile phones should be fully charged and a check made on signal strength.
- If medical assistance is available they should take the lead in managing the patient. An ambulance should be called to a medical emergency unless it is deemed unnecessary by professional personnel at the scene.
- When medical assistance is not readily available dial "999" and ask for an ambulance.

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. A soapy water sprayer should be placed in the screened area for use in emergencies.

- A demonstrating team should be appointed with a leader. One should be outside the screened area to deal with the public and the possibility of stings.
- Observe conditions (including weather) both inside and outside the screened area and terminate the demonstration if necessary. It is easy for a demonstrator who is concentrating on the colony to miss warning signs of agitation. This may be of little consequence in an apiary but could be catastrophic when the public is present.
- If possible the demonstrator should not wear gloves, unless disposable ones for hygiene reasons. This ensures that the first signs of agitation are felt.
- In the event of a colony becoming over defensive, close it up 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.
- Don't keep the bees open too long, 15-20 minutes should be adequate, with at least an hour between demonstrations.

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.

Observation Hives

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

In addition:-

- When preparing a nucleus box type observation hive, ensure bees have not collected on the screen under the body of the hive before moving.
- An observation hive should be setup in shade and in a manner where there is no danger of it being knocked over, but with free access to both sides.
- The hive should be in good condition with adequate ventilation. It should have a facility where water can be dribbled or sprayed onto the bees to cool them. Clean water should be available at all times.
- Observation panels should be toughened glass or plastic, not standard glass which may break.
- Ensure that the conduits (for flight access) are secured against upset and dislocation.



Managing live bees at shows

This leaflet is a guide for the safe management of live bees used for demonstrations to the public, either in full sized or observation hives.

Preparation before the show

- Appoint one person to have overall control and responsibility for the event. This should ensure that nothing is missed.
- Read the terms and conditions of the show.
- Inspect the proposed site with the show organizer and ensure that it is suitable. Where bees are free flying you should avoid other activities such as children's play areas, tethered animals, footpaths, car parks, etc.
- Agree the maximum number of colonies to be placed on the site.



BKA - supporting bees and beekeepers

General points:

This leaflet is one of a series intended to help beekeepers and non-beekeepers. If you believe the contents of this leaflet are relevant to you, please seek further advice from an experienced beekeeper or your tutor.

Information is updated regularly – please check with the BKA web site at: www.bbka.org.uk – for the latest information.

This leaflet supersedes 'Managing Live Bees at Shows' (BS 2006 3rd edition)

Note: The same information is published in our data sheet L005 available to download from the BKA web site.

Disclaimer:

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

Risk Assessment

Organizers are advised to do a written risk assessment of the event, identifying hazards and the steps taken to minimize 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 or <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/inddg163.pdf>



After the event

Assess what went wrong and what went right. Make notes for future events and update any briefing or guidance notes. If any helpers proved to be unsuitable they should be told what was wrong with a view to improvement for the future.