

Scottish Honey Survey 2024

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It has been a good number of years since a survey of the yields and prices of honey has been taken in Scotland amongst the hobbyist sector, so it was felt that it would be useful to re-establish this as an annual activity undertaken by the SBA.

Now more than ever we are focused on the promotion of local honey, and the public is increasingly aware of issues relating to honey fraud, so it is vital that we not only support local honey production wherever possible, but also ensure that local beekeepers are receiving a fair price for their premium product. With changing climate and the challenges of beekeeping increasing each year, knowing the overall productivity of our colonies and being able to compare yields by region and by year is also important in allowing us to better understand each new season and look at long-term trends in honey production.

The survey aimed to record information on the yields and prices of honey harvested in 2024 among hobbyist beekeepers in Scotland, not limited to SBA members. The survey was anonymous, only recording the region (postcode area) of the respondent. The questions were divided into 3 broad categories:

- 1.About the beekeeper** – region, number of hives, hive type.
- 2. Prices** – for different types of honey by the jar, and also in bulk.
- 3. Yields** – for different types of honey.

279 beekeepers responded to the survey, with respondents in every region except the Western Isles. As expected,

the majority of responses were from the more populated areas, or those with a strong history of beekeeping, but there was also often good representation from more remote areas.

Postcode Area	Count	Responses
AB Aberdeen	6.3	43
DD Dundee	9.5	6
DG Dumfries & Galloway	7.7	11
EH Edinburgh	6	55
FK Falkirk & Stirling	3.7	15
G Glasgow	6.3	15
IV Inverness	5.4	30
KA Kilmarnock	5.6	20
KW Orkney	7	12
KY Kirkcaldy	6.8	19
ML Motherwell	3.2	6
PA Paisley	4.2	21
PH Perth	3.6	17
TD Scottish Borders	4	8
ZE Shetland	1	1
Average	5.7	279

Table 1 Reponse Location

Most of the data is self-explanatory, and is provided in the tables accompanying this article (all results have been standardised to price-per-lb, or lbs-per-hive yield for simplicity). However, there are some interesting observations to be made.

The range of price for honey was much more variable than expected – for example the average price for a 1lb jar of runny honey ranged from £7.29 in Perthshire to £12.74 in Glasgow. Obviously there is an expectation of higher prices in the big cities, but there may also be scope for local producers in rural areas to reconsider their pricing.

Postcode Area	Price	Responses
AB Aberdeen	£9.21	27
DD Dundee	£7.60	5
DG Dumfries & Galloway	£9.75	6
EH Edinburgh	£11.06	35
FK Falkirk & Stirling	£9.05	7
G Glasgow	£12.74	11
IV Inverness	£10.64	14
KA Kilmarnock	£10.04	17
KW Orkney	£11.36	6
KY Kirkcaldy	£9.32	13
ML Motherwell	£12.60	5
PA Paisley	£10.98	12
PH Perth	£7.29	7
TD Scottish Borders	£9.84	4
ZE Shetland		0
Average	£10.24	169

Table 2 Runny Honey Average Pricing (per 1lb jar)

The survey asked respondents to record information for set honey where the honey would have to be sold as set (e.g. OSR), rather than for honey which could have been sold as runny honey. This was to try to see if the common perception of runny honey having a premium over set honeys

like OSR, held true. However, the average price for set honey in most regions was not significantly lower than for runny honey, indicating that this is also considered a valuable product by our customers.

Postcode Area	Price	Responses
AB Aberdeen	£8.77	19
DD Dundee	£7.84	3
DG Dumfries and Galloway	£7.84	3
EH Edinburgh	£10.04	22
FK Falkirk and Stirling	0	0
G Glasgow	£14.03	4
IV Inverness	£8.52	11
KA Kilmarnock	£8.94	5
KW Orkney	£10.02	1
KY Kirkcaldy	£9.09	10
ML Motherwell		0
PA Paisley	£12.12	6
PH Perth	£8.00	5
TD Scottish Borders	£10.00	3
ZE Shetland		0
Average	£9.48	92

Table 3 Set Honey Average Price (per 1lb jar)

The overall average yield for runny honey across Scotland was just under 22lbs per hive, ranging from a low of 18.6 in Aberdeen to a high of 30.1 in Glasgow. This average equates to around 1 super's worth per colony, which indicates the relatively poor summer faced by most beekeepers in Scotland. Heather yields were also very low in most areas, with the exception of Orkney.

Postcode Area	Yield	Responses
AB Aberdeen	18.63	31
DD Dundee	24.94	5
DG Dumfries & Galloway	22.53	7
EH Edinburgh	19.99	41
FK Falkirk & Stirling	27.98	13
G Glasgow	30.11	10
IV Inverness	16.40	16
KA Kilmarnock	22.51	15
KW Orkney	26.82	8
KY Kirkcaldy	25.58	10
ML Motherwell	26.25	5
PA Paisley	22.62	16
PH Perth	19.67	9
TD Scottish Borders	21.98	5
ZE Shetland		0
Average	21.96	191

Table 4 Runny Honey Yields (lbs per hive)

Postcode Area	Yield	Responses
AB Aberdeen	8.91	11
DD Dundee	3.68	2
DG Dumfries & Galloway	13.51	2
EH Edinburgh	6.64	7
FK Falkirk & Stirling	4.33	1
G Glasgow		0
IV Inverness	9.26	5
KA Kilmarnock		0
KW Orkney	19.29	2
KY Kirkcaldy	10.58	2
ML Motherwell		0
PA Paisley	3.96	2
PH Perth	2.20	1
TD Scottish Borders	4.09	1
ZE Shetland		0
Average	8.43	36

Table 5 Heather Honey Yield (lbs per hive)

In terms of what products are being sold, as expected runny and set honey were most common, with heather honey being rarer. Very few respondents sold chunk honey or baker's honey, so these are markets beekeepers might want to think about expanding into. Interestingly, the prices for different heather honey products were very variable – with the price-per-lb for comb being on average £5 more than by jar. This may of course just be down to the limited number of responses – though those selling heather honey by the jar may want to reconsider their products or prices!

Postcode Area	Price	Responses
AB Aberdeen	£12.35	12
DD Dundee	£8.50	2
DG Dumfries & Galloway	£11.41	2
EH Edinburgh	£16.14	6
FK Falkirk & Stirling		0
G Glasgow		0
IV Inverness	£9.97	5
KA Kilmarnock	£10.68	1
KW Orkney	£8.80	1
KY Kirkcaldy	£11.12	3
ML Motherwell		0
PA Paisley	£10.00	1
PH Perth		0
TD Scottish Borders	£14.00	1
ZE Shetland		0
Average	£12.10	34

Table 6 Heather (ling) Honey Jar Average Price (per 1lb jar)

Postcode Area	Price	Responses
AB Aberdeen	£17.35	4
DD Dundee	£22.70	2
DG Dumfries & Galloway		0
EH Edinburgh	£17.16	6
FK Falkirk & Stirling		0
G Glasgow		0
IV Inverness	£23.13	3
KA Kilmarnock		0
KW Orkney	£11.00	1
KY Kirkcaldy	£10.00	1
ML Motherwell		0
PA Paisley	£10.00	1
PH Perth		0
TD Scottish Borders		0
ZE Shetland		0
Average	£17.67	18

Table 7 Heather (ling) Honey Cut Comb Average Price (per 1lb)

The survey asked about both number and type of hives being kept. The number of hives being kept on average was around 5.5 hives per beekeeper, but there was quite a range, with the maximum being 60 hives. However, the most common response was 2 – indicating that most hobbyists are small-scale producers.

Type	Count
National	222
Smith	33
Langstroth	14
WBC	13
Commercial	4
Abelo 12 frame Poly	2
Long Hive	1
Langstroth jumbo	1
Layens type long hive	1
Nucleus	1
Wormit Commercial Hive	1
14x12	1

Table 8 Type of Hive

As expected, the majority of beekeepers are using National Hives, with around two-thirds using wood versus one-third polystyrene. However, there was no correlation between hive type, hive material or number of hives with overall yield – smaller operations generally did as well (or as badly!) as bigger ones.

The data from this survey has been shared with The Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS) of the Scottish Government. Their work feeds into the development of Environmental, Agricultural and Economic policies in Scotland and the UK, allowing the contributions and interests of the hobbyist beekeeping sector in Scotland to be considered.

Now that we have data for 2024, we hope to repeat this survey each spring to allow us to build up data over the years to compare seasons and look for long-term trends. One of the limitations of these types of surveys is the need for as many respondents as possible to avoid skewing the results (it is difficult to interpret data when there are only 1 or 2 responses for a question or region). Developing the survey and analysing the results also took longer than desired.

We hope next year be able to advertise the survey sooner, and allow longer for responses, giving us better data overall.

Many thanks to all those who responded, and we look forward to seeing what 2025's harvest brings!

If anyone wishes to provide any feedback on the survey, or would like access to the raw results data for their own analysis, please get in touch at beehealth@scottishbeekeepers.org.uk