



## GUIDANCE FOR SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ON KEEPING BEES IN GARDENS WHERE CHILDREN MAY BE PRESENT

*The following notes are intended to help Scottish beekeepers ensure the safety of children in circumstances where beehives are kept in domestic gardens.*

### Location:

- Place the hive(s) in a quiet corner of the garden, away from main play areas, footpaths, and washing lines. Bees follow a regular flight path in and out of the hive, so avoid setting up toys, swings and other play equipment in these routes. If this isn't possible, a hedge or fence as a barrier between hives and play areas can ensure that bees fly up and over parts of the garden where children might be present.

### Teaching:

- Children should be taught that bees are not aggressive, but they will defend their hive. Instruct children to stand still if a bee is buzzing around them. The bee is likely just investigating and will fly away on its own. If a bee lands on them, they should be taught to stay calm and gently blow on it to encourage it to move on. Encourage calm movements, avoid swatting, and teach that watching from a distance is safest.
- Even if children aren't participating in beekeeping, it would be a good idea to have small-sized bee suits and organise observation days. This will encourage them to feel involved, whilst being protected against stings. For older, interested children, involving them in the beekeeping activities can be a great educational experience. This can foster a deeper respect and understanding of honey bees. Start with simple, supervised tasks away from the hive, such as preparing equipment, and gradually introduce them to hive inspections as they demonstrate maturity and a calm demeanour.

### First Aid:

- Have a plan in place in case of stings. Have antihistamines available and know how to identify signs of allergic reactions. If your child has a known allergy, consult with a GP about the advisability of having an epinephrine auto-injector on hand. Know how to remove a honey bee sting - by scraping it out with a credit card or fingernail. Teach children how to do this, too.

### Beekeeping Tasks:

- Open the hive and do inspections when children are indoors or occupied elsewhere—mid-morning on a calm day is ideal. Extra care should be taken during more disruptive beekeeping manipulations, such as splitting colonies or conducting full health inspections.
- Swarming bees will likely cluster on a tree or shrub near to their hive, before heading off to a new nesting site further afield. Although swarm clusters tend not to be defensive, children should be taught to avoid going near to a swarm and to notify an appropriate adult if one is discovered. Adopt good swarm management techniques. Should swarms appear in the garden, have a plan and the necessary equipment for removing them.

### Other Considerations:

- The temperament of honey bee colonies can vary. It's especially important for the safety of children that colonies with excessively defensive traits are re-queened from more docile stocks. Bear in mind, though, that even a normally placid colony can become defensive, for example, when a strong nectar flow comes to an end or when they are being robbed by wasps.
- Whilst feeling the grass between your toes is enjoyable, it would be wise to establish a "shoes on" rule in the garden during the bees' active season, especially in areas with clover or other flowering ground cover where bees may be foraging.
- Beekeepers use dangerous materials, such as pesticides for treating mite infestations and strong acids for sterilising hives. Make sure that these products aren't accessible to children and are properly labelled with warning information.