

# Beekeeping Records



## The Record Book

The record book is used to give an overview of the beekeeper's beekeeping activities and to help plan the work in the season. If it is kept as a Filofax it is possible to insert the hive record cards into the book to provide a complete record of the beekeeping season. However, many beekeepers prefer to keep their hive record cards with their hives. If this is done it is important to keep the cards dry and away from the bees otherwise they will chew up the card and the records will be lost. The record book comprises three parts:

- **The apiary layout**

This can be a pictorial record to show the location of each colony in the apiary and its identifying mark. Hives on out-apiaries should be marked to reduce the possibility of theft and so that the owner can be identified. Talk to your local beekeeping Association about the marking system used in your area. Individual record cards may also be kept with this section.

- **Plans for work in the season**

This section will hold your plans for managing the colonies in the apiary. It is particularly useful to record the activities and timing you plan to use for queen rearing and swarm control. It can also be used as a reminder for repairing hives or buying new equipment. There is no special format for this section but most record keepers find it useful to plan activities using a simple diary approach.

If there is any concern over the general vigour or health of the colonies it can be marked here as a reminder to replace certain queens or re-site colonies.

Information may also include the dates when specific operations must be carried out e.g. for queen rearing or preparation of an observation hive for a particular occasion.

- **Records of the season**

This will give information on the quantity of honey collected during the season and the quality of the queens. Records will also include the state of the hives and the work needed during the winter months to prepare for the next season.

*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.*

© BBKA 2006 (3rd edition), The British Beekeepers' Association,  
The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

A requirement for attaining the 'Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry' is to maintain a record book of beekeeping for at least a season. Most beekeepers develop their own approach over the years and find that keeping records help them to manage their stocks more effectively. There is no specific format of records required for the Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry as long as the records are sufficiently comprehensive to show the work the beekeeper has done over a season and how the colonies have progressed.

This leaflet gives guidance to those who have not developed their own recording system and is a good starting point. There are no foolproof ways of keeping records. Some beekeepers use computers, others use Filofaxes or filing cards and diaries. The important aspect is to record adequate and useful information in a readily accessible format.

Records comprise two elements:

- Hive or colony records that indicate the state of the colony each time it is inspected.
- Record books that identify the location of your hives in your apiaries and are used to plan the management programme for the coming season.

## Hive Records

A hive record is a convenient way of showing the state of the colony each time it is inspected or manipulated. A simple marking system will give sufficient information to make decisions on what needs to be done next time and whether the colony will be useful for breeding new queens etc. The diagram on the next page illustrates a record card with columns that can be used to record the state of a colony. The columns are also described with a suggested marking system that you may find helpful. In time, beekeepers who keep records will develop their own marking system to suit their approach to the bees. This is fine. The important point is that records are kept.

## Example of a Hive Record Card

Apiary 2 Colony 4								Queen bred from Apiary 1 Colony 1 in 1999				
Date 2000	Q	QC	Brood	Stores	Room	Health	Varroa	Temper	Feed	Supers	Weather	Notes
4/3	x	X	✓	5	5	✓	l	10	1 LS	0	S, 15	Removed mouse guard
1/4	x	X	e ✓	5	5	✓	l	10	1 LS	+1	S, 17	Replaced floor board with varroa floor
22/4	✓ B	X	e 4 ✓	10	5	CB	200	9	0	+2	C, 19	Roof needs repainting
7/5	✓	X	e 7 ✓	25	5	✓	200	10	0	-1	S, 21	Cut grass under hive

- **Date** Date of the inspection
- **Q** Presence of the Queen  
[✓ Queen seen, x Queen not found, c Queen clipped, **W,Y,R,G,B** Queen marked with appropriate colour code]
- **QC** Presence of Queen cells  
[x = none seen, 10X = 10 seen but all removed, 2L = 2 seen and left alone]
- **Brood** State of the brood  
[e = eggs seen, ✓ = brood pattern ok, 3 = brood covering 3 frames, x = no brood]
- **Stores** The quantity of stores available  
[10 = equivalent of 10 super frames available]
- **Room** The available space for the queen to lay eggs  
[5 = equivalent of 5 brood frames available]
- **Health** The state of the brood and adult bees  
[✓ = all ok, CB? = Possible chalk brood, EFB? = Possible EFB, etc.]  
If you are not sure whether a disease is present, it is advised that you consult a more experienced beekeeper. If you think EFB or AFB may be present it is mandatory that you call the Appointed Bee Inspector.
- **Varroa** The number of Varroa mites in colony  
[l,m,h = low, medium or high, (say) 1000 = the estimated Varroa population in the hive calculated from natural drop, or other estimation methods].  
It is recommended that the mite drop is checked regularly and a numerical value of the Varroa population estimated.
- **Temper** The docility of the colony  
[10 = nice calm bees, 8 = bees agitated, 6 = bees sting, 4 = bees that follow too much, etc]
- **Feed** How much feed given  
[2 LS = 2 litres of light syrup, 1 HS = 1 litre of heavy syrup, etc.]
- **Supers** How many supers removed or added  
[+1 = one super added, -0.5 = 5 frames removed, etc]
- **Weather** The temperature and cloud cover  
[c = cloudy, s = sunny, r = rainy, f = fair]
- **Notes** Anything of interest to add  
[lot of propolis, brood box needs repair, etc.]

The examples given in brackets illustrate how a numerical scoring system can be derived. If the records are to be used for the Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry the scoring system should be explained to the assessor.

Either metric or imperial units may be used.

**The headings marked in bold are important and must be maintained for the Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry.**