

## Canadian Beekeepers' Practical Handbook to Bee Biosecurity and Food Safety

Modern beekeeping requires beekeepers to keep track of a lot of information to meet current regulations for bee biosecurity and food safety. One of the challenges they face is sorting through extensive documents that they are sometimes overwhelming and confusing. **The Canadian Beekeepers' Practical Handbook to Bee Biosecurity and Food Safety** is a new tool to help beekeepers keep track of the information needed to meet current regulations. It is available on the Canadian Honey Council (CHC) website ([www.honeycouncil.ca](http://www.honeycouncil.ca) on the left hand panel under "Beekeepers' Handbook").

Two essential recent documents which all beekeepers should read are the Honey Bee Producer Guide to the National Bee Farm-Level Biosecurity Standard (i.e. the Bee Biosecurity Standard), and the Canadian Bee Industry Safety Quality Traceability Producer Manual - Good Production Practices (i.e., CBISQT). They are important resources which extensively outline biosecurity and food safety requirements for Canada's beekeeping industry. Although valuable, both are information dense and can be difficult to negotiate. The Handbook helps to overcome these difficulties by providing beekeepers with:

1. a reference source to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT,
2. tools to help beekeepers to meet biosecurity and food safety protocols, and
3. tools to help new inexperienced beekeepers achieve required standards.

The Handbook is a collection record keeping templates that are each accompanied by a general information page which lists the target user, frequency of use, reasons why the information is useful to maintain, general comments about the table and also references to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT. Those references make it easy to locate where to look in those documents for the more detailed, essential information. There are 34 stand-alone templates in this handbook. This may seem like a daunting amount of record keeping, but some of these records are used very rarely (e.g., for product recall), once a year (e.g., facility inspections), or never (e.g., beekeepers who do not have pollination contracts will not need the template concerning moving bees for pollination contracts).

The Handbook is designed to be customized by beekeepers to meet the needs of their individual operations and record keeping preference. From the CHC website the Handbook can be downloaded as a PDF or Word file. Each template is also individually available in Excel spreadsheets or as a Word table.

Many large commercial beekeepers already maintain bio secure and food safe operations. These beekeepers may find this handbook is mainly useful as a reference guide to the biosecurity and food safety documents. They may benefit by reviewing the handbook to determine if there are any minor alterations to their record keeping practices. As well, it may help those operators communicate with inexperienced beekeepers about what is required to run biosecure and food safe operations.

Less experienced operators and new beekeepers will benefit from this Handbook because it will help them to negotiate through the various types of records which need to be kept. All beekeepers need to run food safe and bio secure operations, no matter how many colonies are run. In particular, if there is a lapse in bee biosecurity neighbouring beekeeping operations can be impacted because bees may interact if they are within flight distance.).

These records are important for biosecurity and food safety, but also offer the additional benefit of helping beekeepers run more efficient, and thereby, profitable operations. They are an organizational tool to help beekeepers be aware of their bees' needs, know what is going on within their operation, schedule tasks effectively, communicate with staff and inspectors, as well as customers, reduce confusion and redundancy. Lapses in any one of those aspects of beekeeping can lead to loss of time and money, as well as increased frustration and ultimately poorer beekeeping.

If there are any questions or comments about the Handbook please contact Svenja at [svenja@honeycouncil.ca](mailto:svenja@honeycouncil.ca).