

Purchasing Honey Bees or Equipment in Alberta

Questions to ask and things to consider

Buyer Beware

There are many places to purchase bees within Alberta; however, it is a buyer-beware market. Even when purchasing from a reputable source it is important to ask questions and understand what to look for, even when only purchasing equipment. It is imperative you do your homework before purchasing bees.

Where Can I Buy Bees?

Many suppliers now offer packaged bees:

- Imported packages and/or queens shipped internationally have been inspected prior to entering Canada
Note: bees are not allowed from the United States; only queens.
- Many operations/beekeepers sell nucleus colonies and singles:
- Check online with your local beekeeping organization, Kijiji, Alberta Bee News, or ask other beekeepers. Many operations sell bees during the early spring.

What Should I Ask?

1. Is the seller registered with the province of Alberta?
 - It is regulated under the Bee Act that all persons owning bees and/or equipment within Alberta be registered. Anyone who is registered should be able to provide a valid registration certificate.
2. What diseases has the seller seen in the past?
 - If they have had American Foulbrood (AFB) in the past and are still using the same equipment, it is recommended to not to purchase the bees or equipment.
 - AFB and EFB can remain on equipment for years and infect bees put into it.
3. What medications or treatments has the seller used (if any)?
 - Antibiotics such as Tylosin or Oxytetracycline may leave residues in the equipment.
 - Antibiotics can also mask symptoms of AFB or EFB and flare up once the antibiotic usage stops.
4. Has the equipment been decontaminated (scorched, irradiated, etc.)?
 - Consider decontaminating any empty equipment upon purchase.
5. Has the seller had an inspection done? When?
 - Sellers can request a pre-sale inspection. As the buyer, ask for a copy of a recent inspection report.
6. Have these bees come from another province?
 - Bees from outside Alberta are required to have an inspection done by the province of origin, and must have an interprovincial movement permit from the Alberta government. The seller should be able to provide proof of a permit.
 - Currently, no colonies or package bees are permitted to be imported from Ontario; only queens with a valid permit.

Other Things to Consider:

1. Buy new equipment
 - To avoid the risk of chemical residues or diseases exposure, put your bees in new equipment or new frames with decontaminated equipment.
2. If buying used comb, how old are the frames?

- The darker the comb, the longer it has been used in a hive and the more likely it is to carry diseases or contain chemical residues.
3. How old are the boxes/other equipment?
 - Check to see if the equipment is damaged from storage or use
 4. Has the seller seen, been monitoring for, or been tested for other disease or pest levels?
 - Such as Varroa mite levels, Nosema levels, AFB/EFB.
 - If yes, do not hesitate to ask for records.
 5. What is the treatment history of the hive?
 - Have antibiotics been applied? If so when, and which antibiotics?
 - Remember, antibiotics do not cure AFB/EFB, they mask symptoms.
 - Was the colony treated for parasites? If so when and with what?
 6. Does the colony have everything it needs?
 - A nucleus (nuc) colony should contain stored pollen and honey, a mated queen, brood, and adequate worker bees to cover the brood
 7. Use your judgement!!
 - Educate and reeducate yourself on the different diseases and pests and inspect them for yourself! Evaluated experience is the best teacher!

I Have Decided To Purchase Bees, Now What?

Great! Now it is your responsibility to [register or update your registration](#).

Good luck with the upcoming season!

Your Bee Health Assurance Team

For any questions, please email bee@gov.ab.ca

A printable version of this document is available online: [Purchasing Honey Bees or Equipment in Alberta: Questions to ask and things to consider](#)