



City of Vancouver *Planning - By-law Administration Bulletins*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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URBAN HONEY BEEKEEPING

Authority - Director of Planning

Effective February 27, 2006

Amended March 2, 2015, April 23, 2015, and November 14, 2022

Cities across Europe and North America (including several municipalities in Metro Vancouver) support urban beekeeping within the city. Through good management practices, urban beekeeping is a safe and suitable activity in urban areas.

Bees are responsible for the majority of plant pollination and are therefore integral to ensuring biodiversity. Even more important is the role of bees in protecting our food supply with approximately one third of the food crops we eat requiring a pollinator.

Because domesticated honey bees need human management to survive, it is important that standards are met to ensure public safety and bee health. Maintaining bee health is also essential for reducing the transfer of diseases and pathogens to wild bee populations. The following City guidelines complement Provincial regulations and promote good management practices for urban beekeeping in Vancouver.

Urban honey beekeeping is permitted everywhere in the city, however site-specific requirements need to be considered for residential and commercial areas or if beekeeping is taking place in community gardens. Section 1 outlines general requirements followed by the specific requirements in Section 2.

1. General Requirements

- (a) All beekeepers in Vancouver must register with the BC Ministry of Agriculture as is the case throughout BC (see page 4 of this bulletin for contact information).
- (b) It is the responsibility of the owner of the property or the beekeeper managing beehives on the property to:
 - Adhere to good management practices and maintain beehives in a condition that will reasonably promote bee health, and prevent swarming and aggressive behavior.
 - Provide adequate water to prevent bees from seeking water in neighbouring swimming pools, hose connections, birdbaths, ponds or other community bodies of water.
 - Ensure the beehives are located in such a way as to ensure adequate sun exposure and airflow for the health of the bees.
 - Ensure compliance with City by-laws and other regulations that may be related to the installation of beehives, particularly those on rooftops (e.g. safety, Vancouver Building By-law c, structural integrity of building to support the weight of beehives, building height, roof access, railings, etc.).

- (c) Urban honey beekeeping is discouraged before completing a recognized course in beekeeping and/or seeking membership in a local bee club. Contact the Provincial Apiculturalist for a list of local bees clubs (contact information on page 4 of this bulletin).
- (d) Urban honey beekeepers are strongly encouraged to notify surrounding neighbours about the installation of beehives to alleviate possible concerns. Beekeepers should be prepared to manage anaphylactic shock and have an EpiPen as part of their first aid kit.

2. Site Specific Requirements

(a) Beehives located in Residential Areas

- A maximum of two (2) beehives on a parcel of land with an area less than 10,000 square feet.
- A maximum of four (4) beehives on a parcel of land with an area over 10,000 square feet.
- Beehives are restricted to rear yards.
- In order to ensure the appropriate height of honey bee flight path, a beehive should be situated: (a) behind a solid fence that is six (6) feet (1.8 meters) in height running parallel to the property line; (b) a minimum of ten (10) feet (3 meters) away from neighbouring property lines with the beehive entrance directed away from the neighbouring properties (unless such siting compromises the healthy functioning of beehives because of poor sun exposure or excessive wind exposure, for example); (c) if a six (6) foot fence is not present, beehives should be located at least eight (8) feet (2.4 meters) off the ground (on a rear deck for example).

(b) Beehives located in Industrial or Commercial Areas

- A maximum of two (2) beehives on a parcel of land with an area less than 10,000 square feet.
- A maximum of four (4) beehives on a parcel of land with an area over 10,000 square feet.
- Beehives are restricted to locations to the rear of buildings (i.e. not street facing).
- In order to ensure the appropriate height of honey bee flight path, a beehive should be situated: (a) behind a solid fence that is six (6) feet (1.8 meters) in height running parallel to the property line; (b) a minimum of ten (10) feet (3 meters) away from neighbouring property lines with the beehive entrance directed away from the neighbouring properties (unless such siting compromises the healthy functioning of beehives because of poor sun exposure or excessive wind exposure, for example); (c) if a six (6) foot fence is not present, beehives should be located at least eight (8) feet (2.4 meters) off the ground (on a rear deck for example).
- For beehives on rooftops in industrial or commercial locations, see section 2(d) for additional requirements.

(c) Beehives located in Community Gardens

- A maximum of two (2) beehives per community garden.
- In order to ensure the appropriate height of honey bee flight path: (a) the beehive entrance should be directed away from pedestrian pathways; and (b) the beehive should be located a minimum of ten (10) feet (3 meters) away from neighbouring properties and / or children's play areas.
- The beehive should be located within a secure enclosure to prevent vandalism. The enclosure should be a minimum of six (6) feet (1.8 meters) in height and made of material that does not create a visual barrier (i.e., fencing material should be permeable).
- A sign should be posted near the beehive that provides contact information of the beekeeper and / or community garden representative in case of concerns.

- For beehives that are located in a community garden in a City park or on City property (e.g. adjacent to roads or City-owned lots), the beekeeper and community gardeners must work with the Park Board or the City to gain permission for the project.

(d) Beehives located on Rooftops

- A maximum of four (4) beehives per rooftop location except in cases where large institutions or educational sites have demonstrated capacity to care for multiple beehives.
- Rooftop locations should have access via an enclosed staircase or elevator, and have adequate structural integrity to support the additional weight of beehives.
- Appropriate railings around the perimeter of the roof should be considered for the safety of beekeepers.
- To preserve the integrity of roofing material, paving stones or a walkway from the roof access point to the beehive should be considered.
- Installation of a windbreak structure is recommended as bees may have trouble foraging if wind inhibits hive access.

(e) For all other land uses or sites not named in this bulletin

- Contact Department of Social Policy and Projects for clarification (contact information on page 4 of this bulletin).

(f) Letters of Understanding

- For industrial or institutional buildings, permission to install beehives is at the discretion of the property owner, and, a letter of understanding between the property owner and the beekeeper is encouraged.
- For multiple dwellings, permission to install beehives is at the discretion of the strata council or property owner. If permission is granted, a letter of understanding between the strata council or property owner and the beekeeper is encouraged.
- For beehives that are located in a community garden on private property (i.e. not City property), a letter of understanding between the property owner and the beekeeper / community garden representative is encouraged.

For further information about beekeeping in Vancouver, please contact:

Food Policy
Social Policy and Projects
City of Vancouver
Phone: 604-871-2007
Email: food.policy@vancouver.ca

Registration with the BC Ministry of Agriculture

The guidelines for urban beekeeping in Vancouver complement the BC Ministry of Agriculture (AGRI) Beekeeper and Apiary Registration program for British Columbia. The Provincial Animal Health Act requires anyone in BC who operates honey bee colonies to be registered with this provincial ministry. The location of the apiary must also be registered. In cases of non-compliance, AGRI Apicultural Staff have the authority to issue penalties. The Provincial Animal Health Act also enables AGRI to respond to complaints, conduct inspections and to control diseases that affect bees.

To register an apiary online, please go to the following website:
<http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/apiculture/index.htm>

For further information on beekeeper and apiary registration, please contact:

Paul van Westendorp
Provincial Apiculturist
Phone: 604-556-3129
Fax: 604-556-3015
Email: Paul.vanWestendorp@gov.bc.ca

For inspection services, please contact:

Scott Gordon
Provincial Inspector
Phone: 604-220-0336
Email: beeexcellent@hotmail.com