



Keeping Backyard Honeybees in the Cariboo Regional District



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In recent years, many communities in BC and across North America have adopted bylaws to enable property owners to produce some of their own food, promote local food security and engage future generations in the process of food production. In light of declining global bee populations and to support residents who are interested in producing their own food, the Cariboo Regional District now permits residents to keep backyard honeybees on residentially zoned single family properties that are not traditionally zoned for agricultural uses. These bylaw amendments were passed on June 6, 2014.

Urban beekeeping, or apiculture, is interesting, educational and a great method of ensuring that plants in your garden and your community as a whole are well pollinated, leading to better fruit and vegetable production – plus you get honey! This guide has been created to provide you with the information you need to determine whether keeping backyard honey bees is appropriate for your lifestyle and property, as well as some things to consider.

Which properties are permitted to have honey bees?

In addition to rural zoned properties which have always been permitted to keep honeybees, any property zoned R1, R2, RS, RS1, RS2, RL, or RL2 can now keep bees. Properties with multi-family dwellings (three or more homes), mobile home parks, Institutional use or Commercial zoning are not permitted to keep honeybees.

Any restrictions set out in the bylaw do not apply to properties located within the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) or to properties otherwise zoned to allow for agricultural operations. Keeping bees is only permitted ancillary to a residential use. This means that bees can only be kept on a property where there is an occupied dwelling.

Where can I find the bylaw or my property's zoning?

CRD Zoning Bylaws can be found on our website at cariboord.ca/resources/bylaws. If you do not know the zoning or Bylaw for your property, you can also research this on the CRD website via the Property Search function found at cariboord.bc.ca/CityViewPortal/Property/ or by contacting planning department staff at the CRD by phone or by emailing your request for information to them at zoning@cariboord.bc.ca.

How many bees can I have on my property?

The number of colonies you are permitted to have in an apiary on your property depends upon the size of the property.

Property Size	Number of Honeybee Colonies
Less than 0.1 hectare (0.25 acre)	Maximum of two colonies and two nucleus colonies
Between 0.1 hectare and 0.2 hectare (0.49 acre)	Maximum of four colonies and four nucleus colonies
Greater than 0.2 hectare (0.49 acre) and less than or equal to 0.4 hectare (0.99 acre)	Maximum of six colonies and six nucleus colonies
Each additional 0.4 hectare (0.99 acre) for properties over 0.4 hectare in size	Six additional colonies and six additional nucleus colonies

These restrictions do not apply to properties located within the Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) or to properties already zoned to allow agricultural uses, such as R/A or RR zonings.

Where should I place my hives?

Hives should be located a minimum of 7.6 metres (24.93 feet) from any property lines, unless the beehive is situated either 2.5 metres (8.2 feet)

above the adjacent ground level or, less than two metres (6.6 feet) above the adjacent ground level and behind a solid fence or hedge more than two metres (6.6 feet) in height, running parallel to any property line and extending at least six metres (19.7 feet) beyond the hive in both directions.

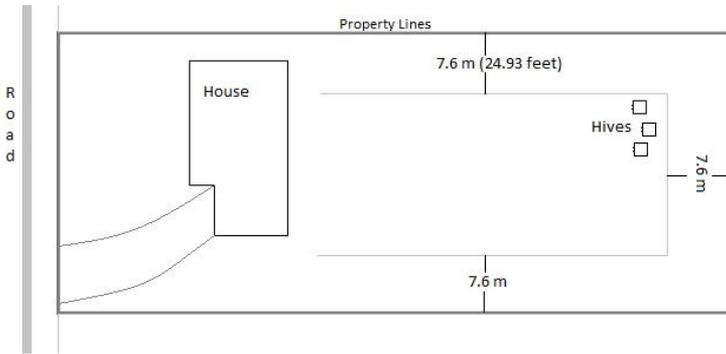
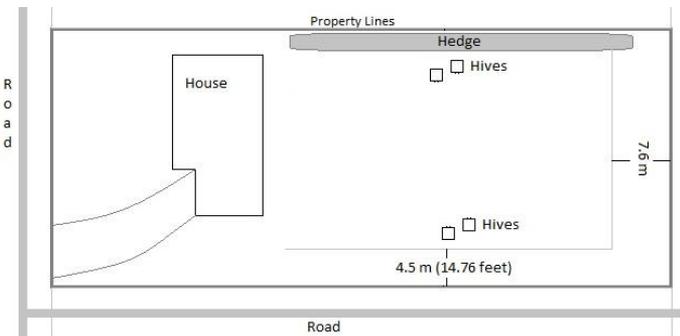


Figure 1 Sample Standard Property Line Setbacks for Honeybee Hives

Bees must not be located within 4.5 metres (14.8 feet) of property lines fronting a highway or road, and, to prevent potential human-wildlife conflicts, hives must be located so that they can be seen from a safe distance in any direction from which a reasonable person may approach.

Figure 2 Sample Road or Hedge Setbacks for Honeybee Hives



Can I sell the honey I produce?

Yes, you may sell the honey that you produce on your property in accordance with the descriptions of a “Home Occupation” or a “Home Industry” in your local zoning bylaws.



What else does the bylaw require if I want to keep bees?

Every person who owns or keeps bees or on whose property bees are kept in the CRD is required to adhere to good management practices by providing unlimited access to water for your bees so they will not venture into neighbouring properties searching for water.

Beekeepers (apiarists) are required to maintain the bees in such a condition as to prevent aggressive bee behaviour and undue swarming.

Another requirement of a backyard beekeeper is that they must deter other animals and protect the hives from disturbance, using a suitable means of prevention, such as fencing or hedging.



Do I need to fence my hives?

You are not required to fence your hives under CRD bylaws unless you wish to locate them closer than 7.6 metres from a property line adjacent to a neighbouring property. We do, however, recommend that you thoroughly investigate methods of preventing predators such as bears from accessing your hives.

No matter how small your apiary is, whether one hive or twenty, you are required to register all your beehives and nucleus colonies with the provincial apiculture registration system coordinated by the BC Ministry

of Agriculture Apiculture Program, under the authority of the *Provincial Bee Act, [RSBC] 1996*.

This act requires anyone in BC who operates a honey bee colony to be registered with this provincial ministry. The location of the apiary must also be registered. If a person refuses to register their hives or apiary, BCMAL Apicultural Staff have the authority to destroy or dispose of the honey bees or beehive equipment. The Provincial Bee Act also enables BCMAL to respond to complaints, conduct inspections and to control diseases that affect bees. To register an apiary online, please go to the following website: al.gov.bc.ca/apiculture/index.htm.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Helpful Hints and Some Interesting Honey Bee Facts

Provision of plentiful water for your bees is especially important during the spring and on hot summer days. If you are going to place a large pot of water out for your hives, consider floating a piece of wood in it or planting a small water garden in the pot or barrel so the bees will have something to settle on when they come in to drink.



Many apiaries successfully use electric fencing to protect their hives from animal scavengers, but if your hives are elevated above their reach, this may not be necessary. There are many resources available to inform your process of setting up your hives. Local apiarists, in particular the local beekeeping association, are a valuable resource for insight.

Honey bees are social insects with a marked division of labor between the various castes of bees in a colony. These castes include a queen (hives will only ever have one queen at a time), drones and workers.



Honey bees can communicate details about the location, quality and quantity of food sources with the rest of their hive. This allows honeybees to access and use food sources efficiently at great distances. No other bee species communicates this way with the rest of its colony.

Honey bees are vegetarians. They gather nectar to produce honey and pollen for raising their brood. Honeybees also collect water to control the temperature of the hive. While they are gathering nectar from plants, pollen grains are also transported on their bodies, leading to plant pollination.

Honey bees are extremely important pollinators to BC's agriculture. They play a critical role in the production of many crops, representing a value of more than \$14 billion per year in North America. Honey bee pollination services are often 60 to 100 times more valuable than





the market value of the honey.

Swarming is not an aggressive behaviour, but rather a sign that the hive is crowded.

Swarms of bees are usually gentle because prior to swarming, they gorge themselves on honey. If you see a swarm, you can contact a local apiarist to collect it. In your own apiary, you may find it useful to locate an empty nucleus colony box with a frame of comb inside somewhere in your yard in a sheltered, elevated, shady location away from your hives. If available, sometimes a swarm from a hive will move into a nearby nucleus box.

Honey bees only sting when they or their hive are threatened. Wasps on the other hand, are carnivorous scavengers and may sting as they hunt for food. While wasps and hornets are attracted to any area where food remnants can be found during the summer season, honey bees generally do not visit picnics, barbeques or garbage cans in search of food.



Being a good neighbour

Fences are very useful for a beekeeper because not only do they keep animals from accessing the hives as easily, fences also keep bee hives



out of sight of other neighbourhood residents. People may become nervous when they know a beehive is nearby, but if they cannot see the hives, there will likely be less concern. Growing some flowers in your own yard that bees find irresistible will give them a food source close to home, ensuring your colonies are healthy, and happy.

Some beekeepers believe that bees more accustomed to having movement near their hives tend to be less defensive. They recommend locating shrubs, trees, flags or other objects that move with a light wind near the hive. Healthy bees that have good access to nectar and water should not be aggressive.



Useful Resources for Hobby Beekeepers

Inclusion on this list does not in any way constitute an endorsement of these organizations or products by the CRD. They are collected here only for the convenience of property owners who are considering becoming backyard beekeepers.

Central Cariboo Beekeepers Association (CCBA):

John Hoyrup President, CCBA

Tel: 250-296-3588 (150 Mile) hilltop4@telus.net

Petr Herman CCBA Liaison to the City of Williams Lake
250-392-3899

Beginner course trainers:

Ann Carter, Secretary, CCBA Tel: 250-398-7250 anncarter@shaw.ca

Diane Dunaway, Dunaway Ranch Bee Happy Honey
5914 Soda Creek Macalister Road
Williams Lake, BC, V2G 5A5 Tel: 250-297-6399
beehappyhoney@dunawayranch.com

Quesnel Beekeepers Association

Lorne Smith, President Tel: 250-747-2294

Provincial Apiculturist

Paul van Westendorp Paul.vanWestendorp@gov.bc.ca

Books and Websites

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