

The 2009 AGM voted to allow members to apply to keep a Hive on their plot

We have since decided we will limit this to 2 plot holders.

In 2018 our 2 plotholders with bees are 4B (Christine) 119 (David)

All Members are advised to read the following

Benefits:

To allotment holders -

- Increased pollination and production.

To the bee keepers –

- As above, plus honey and the pleasure of watching these amazing creatures at work!

To society, agriculture, horticulture and bio-diversity –

- Keeping bees responsibly is essential to maintaining the bee population, which is under threat from a number of sources.
- Falling bee numbers threaten the environment, as well as harvest failures.
- We recommend members applying to keep bees are members of OBKA and BBKA and take appropriate courses to ensure that they keep bees responsibly. Please register the hive with DEFRA on Beebase.

Risks:

Swarms –

Level of Risk: Swarming happens when bees feel ‘crowded’ in their existing colony. They rear a new queen and when she is ready to take over the old queen leaves with most of the adult population to find a new home, leaving the youngsters in the old one. Bees in hives are managed (see below) to prevent swarming – so most swarms are wild honeybees, or bees from hives with inattentive keepers. Swarms are not dangerous if left alone, unless they are in a house or other enclosed space. They can become aggressive if poked or otherwise approached by someone who doesn’t know what they are doing (see note below re. Swarm Officer contact). On the allotment swarms are most likely to be in a tree.

How can it be managed:

1. **By the beekeepers:** Essentially we will manage this risk by keeping an eye on the bees which is one reason why we need inspect regularly during the active season. We will check that the bees have enough space in their hive by adding additional frames to the hive as needed and that they aren’t rearing a new queen behind our backs! If the existing queen is a few years in to her breeding life the hive may decide to supersede her with a new one, but when they do so they will remain in the old hive (generally the old queen gets bumped off). If they seem determined to swarm we can ‘fool’ them by doing what is called a ‘shook swarm’ in to a new brood box (the bit of the hive where the queen lives and the young are reared). They find themselves in a new home, all clean and ready to go and think they have ‘swarmed’.
2. **By allotment holders:**
 - **If you see a swarm,**
 - **call the OBKA Swarm Officer Clifford**
 - **01993 774895 and 0777 077 5827**
 - Diane and Caro will make sure that this number is updated and posted on the notice board and at the entrance to their allotment plot 151.

Stings –

Particularly relevant to anyone with an allergy.

Level of Risk:

There are wasps, hornets, wild honey bees, solitary bees and bumble bees on the allotment already, giving an underlying risk of stings.

It would seem that most stings are from wasps, bees are less likely to sting unless they feel they are under threat. Most beestings happen when people tread on bees barefoot or put their hands around them when gardening.

Kept bees are less likely to be aggressive because they are bred to be handled and more used to having their hive approached.

How can it be managed:

By the beekeepers:

1. The level of aggression in the hive can be managed by the beekeeper.
2. If the Queen is 'nice' so will her hive be - we will be getting a queen bred for a VERY nice nature, we have no desire to have 'moody' bees!
3. If a hive becomes more aggressive it will usually be after a change in queen as a result of the 'daughter' queen breeding with drones from the wild bee population.
4. If this happens the hive can be 're-queened' with a queen of better stock, if that doesn't work (which it usually does) the bees can be destroyed and the hive repopulated with a more amenable crew.
5. We can also minimise the risk by only opening the hive (which causes more bees to fly about) at times when our neighbours are not on their plots such as early morning or later in the evening.
6. This is a good idea anyway as more bees will be home then for us to look at in our checks for diseases and other problems.

By allotment holders:

1. Allotment holders can manage their risks by not wandering barefoot too much,
2. wearing gardening gloves and
3. not approaching the hive (most bees will take no notice of you until you are within a few meters, so you'd need to be on our allotment to do so).
4. Allergy to wasp stings is more common than to bee stings and those who have a known allergy to either will already know how to manage the risk,
5. but I have attached items on the symptoms and treatment just in case.
6. Anaphylaxis, the most serious type of allergic reaction, is extremely rare and sufferers would be advised by their doctors not to expose themselves to risk by gardening in any form and will carry pens to administer adrenaline shots.

Vandalism:

Level of Risk: Difficult to assess – unlikely that thieves on the allotment would approach the hive, and if they do so the risk is largely to them. If they risk stings enough to destroy the hive there would be an impact to the beekeepers (we are insured as members of OBKA) and the bees would leave. This could lead to a swarm on the allotment (see above). There have been reports of badgers attacking hives weakened by disease, with the same risks.

How can it be managed:

1. Make the plot as badger secure as possible.
2. Screen the hive so passing human vandals looking for a thrill wouldn't see it easily,
3. ensure that all long-handled implements are kept secure to further remove temptation.
4. Beekeepers should have contact details on a notice on our front gate so that any problems with the hive can be easily reported to us by concerned plottolders.

Above all, if we can't manage the risks of keeping bees on the allotment to the satisfaction of allotment users we will stop keeping them – we recognise that your safety and peace of mind (and ours) are important for enjoyment of Cripsey Meadows and we want our bees to enhance that, not detract from it.