

Locating an Out-Apiary Site

Looking for an out-apiary site? Here are some issues to think about...

1 How to find a possible site

It is best not to walk around land uninvited, especially not dressed in a bee suit!

Google Earth, in combination with an Ordnance Survey map provide a really good way to explore private land.

Some beekeepers do not like to let others know where they keep their bees - so you may find that an occupier says yes to you ... only to find that you have strayed onto another beekeeper's patch! Ask if anyone else brings their bees there and if the other beekeeper is not in our club, we will try to follow them up through BBKA. They may only use the site infrequently.

Would you like to share the apiary with others? A notice in Bee Talk or Warwickshire Beekeeper or the website would find others.

2 Approaching the occupier

Many farmers will have had dealings with previous beekeepers. Unfortunately you do not know if that was a good or bad experience so perhaps be ready for both? Will it be more helpful to stress that you can be flexible (colony numbers, times of year etc) or to clearly set out a minimum requirement?

Should you arrange to walk around the property together?

Should you have a sheet to leave behind with your contact and with an outline of what you would be looking for, and what you would offer?

3 Choosing the location for the hives

Here is a check list of issues to think about:

sun/shade? wind protection? frost pockets? overhead trees?

flat terrain? undergrowth in summer? winter flooding?

privacy+ security? footpaths/other public access?

vehicle/trolley access (summer and winter)? equipment storage?

pollen + nectar sources? water?

animals (stock or pets) with access to the colonies or nearby?

Whilst you will not need to undertake a full scale risk analysis, it would be helpful to be thinking about risks as you select a site. Other questions for you to think about:

Do you want to trial a few different sites for a season before agreeing the final site?

Will the colonies be there all year; all winter/summer; only for a particular nectar flow; or only periodically?

How many hives are you thinking about and does this make a difference to the site?

4 The management plan

Unless you are arranging to use land owned by a business or institution, you are unlikely to need to set out a full management plan in writing, but here are suggestions that you might want to talk about and verbally agree:

Who will be responsible for maintaining access to and around the colonies?

How 'tidy' will the apiary need to be kept?

How much will the apiary site be 'developed' for instance gates, gate locks, stock fencing, bee fencing, paving/hard standing, storage, hive stands etc.

How close can vehicles get or where should they be parked?

Who will pay for and maintain any of these attendant works?

How flexible will the occupier be on how many colonies you have?

Would the occupier like limits on when or how often you can access the site?

How many beekeepers will be involved and have they all been introduced to the occupier?

Would your children and dogs be welcome?

Payment - in pollination benefit/hard currency/pots of honey?

What would be fair notice to quit?

Are there any other issues of 'good neighbourliness' including procedures for swarm avoidance and removal - provide (several) telephone numbers in case of swarms or other 'emergency'?

Is the occupier (or a nearby property) likely to ever use garden or field sprays? Can you check the labels on the field sprays and agree how will you be warned of spraying if necessary?

Should you keep a veil where the occupier can access it in case of need?

Would the occupier like to see your bee insurance?

Would the occupier welcome involvement in bee inspections/ cups of tea with you up at the apiary?