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RAISING BEES

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Bees and the keeping of bees fascinate many people. However, it is a very specialized field, and for this reason the beginner should start with only a few colonies. He should build up slowly or, better still, work at beekeeping a season or two with a successful beekeeper. Thus he will learn to perform and understand all phases of commercial beekeeping work. Anyone interested in beekeeping should take at least one good beekeeping magazine and read it regularly.

Utah beekeepers should secure a copy of Utah Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 124, dealing with “Pollen and Nectar Plants of Utah.” Also valuable are Utah State Agricultural College Extension Service Bulletins 237 and 238, which deal with spring feeding and the use of honey bees in pollinating the alfalfa seed crop. A copy of these can be obtained without cost.

A home yard of bees does not need to be large to be interesting and profitable.

A few suggestions for the new beekeeper are:

Get acquainted with your county Bee Inspector. His advice on bee problems and bee diseases should be helpful.

When you start beekeeping, buy good hives of bees recently inspected for freedom from disease. Purchase bees only from a reliable beekeeper. Learn to recognize American foulbrood disease and keep your bees free of it. Should this disease ever appear, your County bee inspector should be called
Bees should be observed several times during the season for general condition and honey storage, and to watch for any disease.

He will advise you on proper disposal of infected colonies. In Utah, all bees must be inspected for disease at least once each year.

Locate your hives of bees near available sources of nectar, pollen and water. All three of these are necessary.

Work into commercial beekeeping gradually. Experience and an interest in beekeeping are essential if costly mistakes and losses are to be avoided.

As a rule, you should begin beekeeping in the spring, when fruit trees are coming into blossom.

Have the following equipment in addition to modern hives: Bee veil, smoker, bee gloves and a hive tool. As you expand you will need to secure 28 gauge wire, a spur imbedder and wax foundation for frames and an adequate number of supers to use when the honey flow is on. Most beekeepers house their bees in standard 10-frame, two-story, factory-made hives.

Italian or Caucasian bees usually are best for the beginner. Both races are hardy, industrious and fairly gentle to handle.

Bees must always have an abundant store of honey. Starvation occurs if they go into winter or into long periods of cold spring weather without adequate stores. If enough frames of natural honey have not been saved for spring feeding, heavy sugar syrup may be fed in “feeder cans” to each colony. This will tide them over until natural sources are adequate.

Some excellent bee supply houses are located in Utah, the addresses of which can be obtained by writing the Extension Service in Logan. Personnel at these supply stores can give good advice on types of beekeeping equipment to buy and on similar problems.

If you like bees, why not start out with a few colonies and minimum equipment and see how fascinating it is? Many persons enjoy beekeeping as a hobby.