

## PACKAGES OR NUCS – Basic Guidelines for “First Timers”

**Beginning Beekeepers** – Get at least two colonies; you will be able to compare colonies and learn management techniques more quickly. Should a colony become queenless, you will have the other colony to supply brood necessary to raise a new queen or to introduce a new queen.

**Package Bees:** 3 lb. packages are most common; 2 and 5 lb. packages are also available for special needs. In any case, appropriate size cages are designed so that when bees are shaken down in cage, bees are level with the cross bar that supports the syrup can. It is normal to see a few dead bees in the bottom of the cage when the bees are clustered around queen.

**Nucs:** should consist of 3-5 several frames with at least two frames of brood in all stages of development, a young laying queen, stored pollen and honey and enough bees to fully cover each frame. A laying, accepted queen eliminates many of the introduction and queen problems associated with packages. Nucs build up faster than packages when put into a full size hive since it is already a functioning colony. Feeding will enhance quick build up of the nucleus colony. Nucs are preferred over packages for honey production and colony development.

Cost and availability can be limiting factors with nucs; nucs are usually about twice the cost of packages, and have a slight risk of brood diseases. Packages have no brood so there is no threat of brood diseases. Beginning beekeepers starting with packages save money, and develop their beekeeping experience as their colonies develop.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ASKING, GETTING & WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

#### PACKAGES

Have equipment and location ready well before arrival date.

IMMEDIATELY pick up package(s) when notified.

Late afternoon install is best; cloudy/rainy day is okay; no bee flight weather is best.

A frame of brood from another colony will boost package performance.

Have pollen patties and 2:1 sugar syrup made up and ready to dispense.

When installing package, check for live queen in queen cage. **DO NOT RELEASE QUEEN** at package installation; only expose candy by removing cork. Bees will do the rest in time.

***If queen is dead upon arrival,*** notify package supplier ASAP for replacement; keep dead queen in cage as proof if needed.

Six days after installation, if queen is still in cage, release her. Use little or no smoke, be gentle. After 14 days check for eggs, no need to find queen. If no eggs, get another queen and add brood.

FEED - FEED - FEED until all foundation is drawn out. Hive top feeder is best.

#### NUCS

Have equipment and location ready well before arrival date.

Be prepared to pick up nucs when notified.

Suppliers should be inspected by state department of agriculture and certified disease free.

What size do you need? Full or medium depth, top bar hive?

Any frame exchange, comb, foundation (what type)?

What treatments if any for mites, nosema, etc.?

Nuc box supplied (deposit) or bring your own hive?

If transferring nuc at supplier, have hive ready to move (staples, straps, screen, etc.). Find out what you need to bring.

Place nuc on location, release bees to fly.

Transfer frames into center of hive ASAP - keep frames in order and together - do not intersperse with empty frames.

FEED - FEED - FEED until all foundation is drawn out. Hive top feeder is best.

**If considering use of used or deadout equipment, have them inspected first for disease by a trusted beekeeper or apiary inspector well BEFORE packages or nucs arrive. Disease-free combs of leftover pollen and honey can be used to boost food stores.**

**Be ready with extra equipment before it is needed. If you are not sure of what you are seeing or doing, ask trusted beekeeper (mentor) or apiary inspector.**