



UNIVERSITY OF
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IFAS EXTENSION

Good Neighbor Guidelines and Ordinances¹

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To be a beekeeper in the 1990s demands a good deal of public relations. Honey bees sting and neighbors generally will not put up with stinging insects near their living area. A major problem in Florida during summer is bee foraging at swimming pools. Threat of proclamation of ordinances is very real in most communities. With the advent of publicity about the African honey bee, more pressure will be exerted on beekeepers to give up the activity. Every beekeeper must, therefore, become the best of neighbors. The following are some suggested procedures to avoid potential problems that could evolve into ordinances against keeping bees.

1. Place colonies away from lot lines and occupied buildings. If near buildings, locate colonies away from used entrances and lines of foot traffic.

2. Erect a six-foot barricade between the bees and lot line. Use anything bees will not pass through: dense shrubs, fencing. An alternate solution may be to place bees on a roof. Anytime bees are flying close to the ground and across the property line of a neighbor, there are potential problems.

3. Provide a watering source. If a natural water source is not located nearby, and especially if

swimming pools are in the vicinity, a tub of water should be placed in the apiary with wood floats to prevent the bees from drowning. Water should be changed periodically to avoid stagnant mosquito breeding.

4. Minimize robbing by honey bees. Work the bees during nectar flows if possible and keep exposed honey or sugar water to an absolute minimum. Use entrance reducers to prevent robbing of weak colonies. Robbing bees are usually aggressive and will be more likely to sting passersby.

5. Prevent swarming. Although swarming bees are the most gentle, a large, hanging ball of bees often alerts neighbors to beekeeping and may cause undue alarm.

6. Keep no more than three or four beehives on a lot less than one-half acre. If more colonies are desired, find a nearby farmer who will allow bees to be kept on his/her land in exchange for some honey.

7. Work bee colonies when neighbors are not in their yards.

8. Requeen overdefensive colonies.

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9. Give a pound or two of honey each year to the neighbors.

If all else fails and ordinances are considered by the town or city council, the following model can be looked to for guidance:

Section 1. Location of Beehives and Other Enclosures

It shall be unlawful for any person to locate, construct, reconstruct, alter, maintain or use on any lot or parcel of land within the corporate limits, any hives or other enclosures for the purpose of keeping any bees or other such insects unless every part of such hive or enclosure is located at least seventy-five (75) feet from a dwelling located on the adjoining property.

Section 2. Number of Hives (colonies of Bees) Regulated

On lot sizes of 15,000 square feet or less, no more than four hives (colonies of bees) will be permitted. The hives shall be no closer than fifteen feet from any property line. On lots larger than 15,000 square feet additional hives will be permitted on the basis for one (1) hive for each 5,000 square feet in excess of 15,000 square feet.

Section 3. Type of Bees

This ordinance shall pertain only to honey bees maintained in movable-frame hives, and it does not authorize the presence of hives with non-movable frames or feral honey bee colonies (honey bees in trees, sides of houses, etc.).

Section 4. Restrictions on Manipulating Bees

The hives (colonies) of bees may not be manipulated between the hours of sunset and sunrise unless the hives are being moved to or from another location.

Section 5. Penalty

The violation of any provision of this ordinance shall constitute a misdemeanor punishable upon conviction by a fine not exceeding fifty (\$50) dollars, or imprisonment not exceeding thirty (30) days; provided that each day that a violation exists or continues to exist shall constitute a separate offense.

Section 6. Effective Date

This ordinance shall be effective from and after the _____ of _____, 20__.