

Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers Association Mentor Program

1. Purpose

This document outlines the concept for the operation for the Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers Association (SVBA) New Beekeeper Mentor Program (NBMP).

2. Statement of the Challenge

The introduction of new pests and diseases, and the development of systemic pesticides have made successful beekeeping a far greater challenge than it was prior to 1986. Today, new beekeepers face a steep learning curve, as successful beekeeping requires knowledge and experience they have yet to acquire. Therefore, to improve their probability of success, the Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers Association resolves to assist its new members to become successful beekeepers.

3. Mission

The Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers Association encourages and recruits experienced beekeepers to provide one-on-one assistance to its new members, thereby improving the probability of them becoming successful beekeepers.

4. Concept of Operations

a. Vision of Service - the NBMP partners an experienced beekeeper (mentor) with a new beekeeper (mentee) for a minimum of one year, during which the mentor teaches the mentee the basic skills and seasonal management best practices necessary to be a successful beekeeper.

(1) While personal study, continuing education, and experience are paramount to becoming a successful beekeeper, a person new to the science and art of beekeeping benefits immensely from one-on-one interaction with an experienced beekeeper.

(2) New beekeepers usually lack the skills needed to successfully establish, manipulate and manage a colony of honey bees. The support of an experienced mentor may be the difference between success and failure during the mentee's first year as a beekeeper.

b. Responsibilities

(1) President, SVBA - recruit the NBMP coordinator

(2) NBMP Coordinator

(a) Recruit experienced beekeepers to serve as mentors

(b) Maintain an up-to-date roster of mentors

(c) Serve as the SVBA's point-of-contact for new members who need a mentor

(d) Maintain an up-to-date roster of mentees

(e) Keeping geography in mind, coordinate the partnering of mentor with mentee

(f) Maintain this document

(3) Mentor

(a) Make the initial contact with the mentee by text message, email or phone. Inform the NBMP coordinator upon successful contact.

(b) Arrange to meet with the mentee as soon as possible to assess the mentee's level of experience and future needs.

(c) Develop a plan of action for assisting the mentee during his/her first year as a new beekeeper. Seize the initiative. Do not assume the mentee knows the next step. As you approach a management milestone in your apiary, so inform the mentee that it's time to consider doing the same in his/her apiary. Invite the mentee to your apiary for hands-on experience. Demonstrate feeding techniques, show how to extract honey, help him/her assemble woodenware, etc. Visit his/her apiary to help install a package of bees, make a split, capture a swarm, or assess the level of Varroa mite and Small Hive Beetle infestation and recommend integrated pest management best practices. Direct the mentee to access copies of the SVBA Hive Inspection form (or other similar inspection checklist) and the Virginia State Beekeepers Association Practical Hive Inspection assessment form.

(d) After one year, assess the mentee's need for further assistance and so inform the NBMP Coordinator.

(e) Encourage the mentee to become a mentor.

(4) Mentee

(a) To be eligible to participate in the SVBA's NBMP, the mentee must be an association member in good standing (i.e., current year's dues paid).

(b) Seize the initiative - ask your mentor for help when you think you need it. Do not wait. If you think you have an issue or are not sure what to do, it is best to seek help before the situation becomes unsolvable or you do the wrong thing.

(c) Dedicate time to personal study about beekeeping, and take advantage of continuing education opportunities offered by SVBA.

(d) After two years of successful beekeeping, become a mentor and volunteer to assist new beekeepers.

c. Mentor Qualifications - a SVBA mentor should be able to teach the following tasks. The list below is not exclusionary. For example, having never marked a queen nor hived a swarm does not disqualify someone from serving as a mentor.

(1) Don protective gear

(2) Light a smoker

(3) Perform a hive inspection

(4) Differentiate between a worker, a drone, and a queen

(5) Differentiate between capped worker brood, capped drone brood, and capped honey

(6) Identify and differentiate between emergency, supersedure and swarm queen cells

(7) Perform an alcohol wash or sugar shake to assess the level of Varroa infestation and explain control options

(8) Identify Small Hive Beetles and demonstrate control methods

(9) Assemble woodenware - boxes, tops, bottom board, and frames

(10) Wire a frame and install foundation

(11) Extract honey using the SVBA's extractor

(12) Differentiate between robbing behavior and new bee orientation flights

(13) Collect and hive a swarm

(14) Install a package of bees

(15) Identify a wax moth infestation

(16) Demonstrate various feeding options - sugar cake, sugar syrup, fondant, pollen patty

(17) Identify symptoms of the most common honey bee diseases

(18) Prepare a colony for winter

(19) Demonstrate management techniques to discourage swarming

(20) Mark a queen

(21) Explain treatment options for bee stings

(22) Install a new queen

(23) Split a colony to form two colonies

(24) Find evidence of a laying queen

5. Communications - publicize the New Beekeeper Mentor Program

a. Post this document and the NBMP coordinator's contact information on the SVBA Web site.

b. During monthly SVBA meetings, provide sign-up sheets to gather names and contact information for those new beekeepers seeking a mentor, and for those wishing to volunteer their services as a mentor.

6. NBMP Coordinator Contact Information

a. Ronald Davis

b. Email – ronaldvernondavis@gmail.com

c. Phone – home: 757-865-7641; cell: 757-755-5177