

Canadian Beekeepers' Practical Handbook to Bee Biosecurity and Food
Safety: Abridged Version for the Beginner and Small Operator

Prepared for the Canadian Honey Council

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The Canadian Beekeepers' Practical Handbook to Bee Biosecurity and Food Safety was prepared with assistance from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada.

The abridged version of the Canadian Beekeepers' Practical Handbook to Bee Biosecurity and Food Safety includes the recordkeeping templates that are most relevant to new beekeepers and small scale operators who mainly keep bees for interest and do not sell honey to the public.

Large scale beekeepers and beekeepers who sell honey should use the full version of the Handbook.

Introduction:

Modern beekeeping requires beekeepers to keep track of a lot of information to meet current regulations for bee biosecurity and food safety. One of the challenges they face is sorting through extensive documents that sometimes are overwhelming and seem confusing. Two essential recent documents which all beekeepers should read are the **Honey Bee Producer Guide to the National Bee Farm-Level Biosecurity Standard** (i.e. the Bee Biosecurity Standard), and the **Canadian Bee Industry Safety Quality Traceability Producer Manual - Good Production Practices** (i.e., CBISQT). They are important resources which extensively outline biosecurity and food safety requirements for Canada's beekeeping industry. Although valuable, both are information dense and can be difficult to negotiate. They offer sample record keeping tables which can be confusing when compared to one another because of repetition, different intents under similar titles, and similar records spread over several different tables.

This handbook is a practical tool which is designed to help beekeepers manage the more theoretical information presented in the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT. It provides beekeepers with:

1. a reference source to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT,
2. tools to help beekeepers to meet biosecurity and food safety protocols, and
3. tools to help new inexperienced beekeepers achieve required standards.
4. references to the **Canadian Best Management Practices for Honey Bee Health: Industry Analysis & Harmonization (BMP)**. This manual is a new tool in the Canadian Beekeepers arsenal

The handbook is a collection record keeping templates that are each accompanied by a general information page which lists the target user, frequency of use, reasons why the information is useful to maintain, general comments about the table and also references to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT. Those references make it easy to locate where to look in those documents for the more detailed, essential information.

Many large commercial beekeepers already maintain bio secure and food safe operations. These beekeepers may find this handbook is mainly useful as a reference guide to the biosecurity and food safety documents. They may benefit by reviewing this handbook to determine if there are any minor alterations to their record keeping practices which would help their operations. As well, the Handbook may help those operators communicate with inexperienced beekeepers and reduce potential conflict by providing them with templates of records they need to maintain.

Less experienced operators and new beekeepers will benefit from this handbook because it will help them to negotiate through the various types of records which need to be kept. All beekeepers need to run food safe and bio secure operations, no matter how many colonies are run. In particular, if there is a lapse in bee biosecurity neighbouring beekeeping operations can be impacted because bees may interact if they are within flight distance. One of the additional benefits of keeping records for in aspects of beekeeping operations is that protocols are followed which guide towards better beekeeping practices. The templates in the full version of the handbook will need to become incorporated by beginner beekeepers or small scale operators if their operations expand.

These records are important for biosecurity and food safety, but also offer the additional benefit of helping beekeepers run more efficient, and thereby, profitable operations. They are an organizational tool to help

beekeepers be aware of their bees' needs, know what is going on within their operation, schedule tasks effectively, communicate with staff and inspectors, as well as customers, reduce confusion and redundancy. Lapses in any one of those aspects of beekeeping can lead to loss of time and money, as well as increased frustration and ultimately poorer beekeeping.

Frequently asked questions:

1. Are the templates in the abridged version different than in the full version?

There are minor differences which make the templates more relevant to small scale operations and beginners. Beekeepers can easily make adjustments to their tables when needed. The simplified versions are to help beekeepers as they begin to keep records of their beekeeping activities.

2. Does a beekeeper who keeps only a few colonies still need to keep these sorts of records?

Yes because:

1. By keeping records of bees and yard activities beekeepers are better able to manage their bees.
2. Reducing the spread of disease within and between beekeeping operations.
3. Improved recordkeeping can help to reduce excess expenditures.
4. Improved food safety which is important, particularly if produced honey is sold.

The 11 templates in this abridged version of the Handbook are a bare minimum and are most important for the beginner or small scale operator who does not sell honey to the public. The full version of the Handbook will become increasingly relevant as beekeepers expand their operations.

- 3.. What is the difference between this handbook and the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT documents?

This handbook is a practical supplement to the two recent, more theoretical documents which detail current Canadian government biosecurity and food safety guidelines to beekeepers. These documents contain information which is important for all beekeepers, regardless of how many colonies are run.

This handbook integrates bee biosecurity and food safety protocols which sometimes overlap and reduces the overlap and possible confusion between them.

4. Do beekeepers still need to read and become familiar with the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT?

CHC recommends that all Canadian beekeepers review the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT. Greater detail on the suggested practices can be found within the original documents. Beekeeper need to understand clearly both programs.

5. Are the record keeping templates in this handbook voluntary?

Yes. This guide is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT which are currently voluntary programs. The CHC recommends that all beekeepers, no matter the size of their operation, conform to the protocols and requirements in those documents. These templates are one way to help achieve that goal.

6. How can the record keeping templates in this handbook be used?

Beekeepers can use these forms in whichever way best suits their needs and record keeping styles. The most important consideration is that records are kept for the important aspects of bee biosecurity and food safety. Such as traceability or auditing if needed.

The forms have been designed to be brought into the bee yard for record keeping, either paper copies or electronic devices (smart phones or tablets) with forms.

As well, additional record keeping can easily be incorporated into these records. For example, the economics of the operation can be made more apparent by including costs of treatments, honey production, queen sales etc. for each hive or bee yard. Such information would be beneficial for preparation of business plans and operation management if beginner or small scale operators want to expand their beekeeping.

No matter the method of record keeping, it is highly recommended to have backup copies which are stored in a separate location. Keeping electronic records could make it easy to cloud store files.

7. Why doesn't this handbook have a table of contents?

A table of contents wasn't included to reduce the potential for embedded errors, as well because there are no page numbers. It is designed to be taken apart and for each template to serve as a standalone record.

The first template serves the dual function keeping track of the location of biosecurity and food safety records and their backups, as well as indicating in order of presentation the templates which are included.

8. What is the form reference #s included at the top of the templates?

This is a section that beekeepers can be used if beekeepers keep track of their files through reference numbers. Those numbers would be different for each operation.

9. Why are there no page numbers?

To make the handbook as flexible as possible, and reduce the number of embedded features page numbers were not included.

10. Why are the templates not numbered?

The templates are not numbered to make them as flexible as possible for beekeepers to modify and incorporate into their operations.

11. Why is this handbook available in PDF, Word and Excel formats?

It is designed to be flexible so that beekeepers can use how they prefer. The templates can be printed and photocopied or downloaded for electronic use. Some beekeepers may find certain templates are most useful in their Excel format which has expandable cells.

If the handbook is printed double-sided in from either PDF or Word files, each template will be printed with its accompanying information page.

The PDF is not writable, but beekeepers can modify the Word file to suit their needs. Each template is obviously a table, but each of the information pages is also a table in which the lines have been removed. If the tables become merged when they are manipulated, split them from the last row of the top table.

Abridged Handbook templates		
	name of person responsible location of record	last update (d/m/y)
General records		
Contact list		
Beekeeper training		
Bee records:		
Bee: colony assessment		
Bee: disease log (monitoring and treatment)		
Bee yard: maintenance log		
Bee yard: map		
Bee yard: off-hive disturbance record		
Honey records:		
Honey: removing full honey supers for extraction		
Inventory records:		
Inventory: feed/ medication - inventory and disposal record		
Inventory: supply inventory and disposal (excluding feed, medications, hive equipment and bees)		

Contact list

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - communication
 - ease of contacting people relevant to the operating of the beekeeping operation
 - helps to ensure correct actions taken by having ready access to communication with key people
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: page 86
 - CBISQT: page 102
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 9.0 (page 151)
4. General comments:
 - keep contact information updated and easily accessible
 - provincial government contact information can be found in the Bee Biosecurity Standard Appendix A: Provincial contact info (page 86)
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a paper copy of this information in their bee truck/vehicle
 - **neighbouring beekeepers should be made aware of any beeyards which are within flight distance. Open communication between neighbouring beekeepers is valuable for reducing the spread of disease between operations.**

Beekeeper training

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - this record provides accountability that beekeepers is trained for food safety and bee biosecurity
 - it provides a record of what training is required (i.e., helps to assign tasks)
 - bee biosecurity
 - may lead to improved biosecurity
 - food safety
 - may lead to improved food safety
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 66-68, 81-85, 121 and 123
 - CBISQT: pages 15, 24, 33, 48, 51, 78, 86, 92, 94-98 and 102
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 11.0 (page 153), and CBISQT forms 11.0.1 (page 150) and 11.0.2 (page 151)
4. General comments:
 - small operators who use family and friends to assist with beekeeping should make sure that they are properly trained to ensure food safety and bee biosecurity standards are met

Landowner and bee yard information

1. Frequency of use:
update or reference as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - provides background information to the bee yard which can be useful for assessing value of the yard to the operation
 - organized yard records may increase the saleability of the operation
 - communication
 - handy location information (e.g., land locations) make it easier to give directions to bee yard visitors (e.g., provincial apiarist, crop insurance, bee inspectors, visiting beekeepers)
 - in case of emergency, bee yard contact and location information should be readily accessible to the beekeepers staff, family and others
 - facilitates contact between neighbouring beekeepers - timely communication of disease can lead to greater profitability for all concerned (better honey production, increased winterability, fewer medication costs, less employee/beekeeper time spent treating diseased colonies)
 - ease of contact with landowners
 - bee biosecurity
 - beekeepers should contact their provincial apiarists and bee inspectors when they have questions about disease and recommended treatments
 - when there are disease and issues (e.g., treatment resistance) arise operators (in particular small or new beekeepers) should contact neighbouring beekeepers (in particular large and/or experienced beekeepers) to maintain good neighbourly relationships and high standard of bee biosecurity
 - food safety
 - bee yard descriptions and location information may help trace origins of contaminants
 - knowing the environment around a bee yard may reduce the risk of honey contamination
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard, CBISQT and BMP:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 19-25 and 116
 - CBISQT: pages 9-14
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 4.0 (page 142)

 - BMP pages 3-5 and 49-50
4. General comments:
 - *** neighbouring beekeepers should be contacted if bees are within flight distance. Open communication between neighbouring beekeepers is valuable for reducing the spread of disease between operations ***
 - keep an up to date copy in bee truck/vehicle in case need to contact yard owner immediately while in bee yard
 - beekeepers should consider a yearly evaluation of their bee yard descriptions to ensure they are current and reflect the environment to which their bees are exposed
 - small and/or new beekeepers will likely need more assistance with disease problems than those with large scale operations
 - removal of disease ridden equipment is important to keep bees healthy in the bee yard as well as in other bee yards which are within flight distance
 - all hive equipment should be thoroughly inspected and inventoried at least once per year

Bee: colony assessment

1. Frequency of use:
 - the frequency of assessment will depend on the size of the operation, beekeeper preference and their reason for doing the assessment (e.g., checking for disease, suitability for breeding)
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - it helps new beekeepers should get familiar with these sorts of assessments to learn more about their bees
 - it helps beekeepers detect disease before it becomes widespread in hive, bee yard or is spread to neighbouring bee yards
 - it is a management tool to assist with scheduling hive activities (e.g., when to treat, feed, super, split, move frames, re-queen)
 - it is a tool to help reduce the amount of medication used
 - the information in the table is useful for queen selection
 - increased honey production
 - it is a tool to increase honey production by knowing what management (e.g., when to treat, feed, super, split, move frames, re-queen) is needed for each hive
 - communication
 - it can serve as a communication tool between beekeepers and staff
 - bee biosecurity
 - it helps to trace disease in colonies
 - it is part of overall management to reduce disease loads and spread through bee yards
 - food safety
 - it is part of overall management to reduce potential contaminants in honey
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard, CBISQT and BMP:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 27-39
 - CBISQT: none
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 2.0 (page 133-135)

 - BMP: pages 43-48
4. General comments:
 - beekeepers with many colonies may need to alter this template if a random selection of hives in a bee yard is assessed rather than all colonies,
 - beekeepers may find it useful to photograph their colonies/frames if there are any questions or odd findings. Images can then be compared with those of healthy colonies/frames, and emailed to experts (e.g., provincial apiarist, extension staff, bee inspector) if there is a question about disease presence or declining colony health.
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a few blank paper copies of this template (or their equivalent) in their bee truck/vehicle for crews to communicate and record odd or unexpected bee behaviour
 - one reviewer suggested using colour markers (e.g., push pins) on hives to indicate queen age

Bee: colony assessment

form reference #:							
bee yard # / location	hive #:						
assessment date d/m/y							
colony moved from another location since last assessment y/n							
queen presence and condition							
# queen / swarm cells							
brood pattern p = poor a = acceptable vg= very good							
colony strength p= poor f =fair, s = strong, c = crowded							
comb building p = poor a = acceptable vg = very good							
aggressiveness (jumping, stinging) l= low a = average h= high							
winterability p = poor a = acceptable vg = very good							
dead bees on bottom boards approximate # n = none f=few s=several e = excessive							
mite levels l= low a = average h= high							
drone cells n = none f = few s = several e= excessive							
cleanliness # cells cleaned out of 100 cells killed with liquid nitrogen after 24 hours							
bee behaviour normal / abnormal (bees not flying, lethargic, disoriented, crawling, twitching)							
sufficient honey and pollen reserves until next inspection? y/n							
honey production: # frames of honey stores, hive weight, kg of honey							
honey production trend up. down, steady							
pollen production: # frames of pollen stores, kg of pollen							
describe frame additions, removal and exchange							
required beekeeper action e. g., treatments, feed							
Initials							

Bee: disease log (monitoring and treatment)

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required through season
 - beekeepers need to follow their provincial apiarist recommendations, and drug manufacturer instructions
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - bee management
 - it is a tool to help assess bee management methods (e.g., reducing disease prevalence)
 - financial management
 - it is a tool to help predict how much medication will be needed in upcoming year (i.e., up-front cost of operating)
 - bee biosecurity
 - it is part of overall management to reduce disease loads and spread through bee yards
 - it helps ensure correct protocol followed
 - food safety
 - it is part of overall management to reduce potential contaminants in honey
 - it helps ensure correct protocol followed
 - it provides a tool for tracing potential contaminants in honey
 - a tool for managing bee yards to help reduce likelihood of honey contaminants
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 18, 26-30, 35-49 and 108-117
 - CBISQT: pages 34-46 and 49
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 1.0 (page 130) and form 3.0 (pages 136-140), and CBISQT forms 4.0.4 (page 128) and 4.0.5 (page 129)

 - BMP: pages 10-32
4. General comments:
 - size of the operation and beekeeper's preference will determine whether individual hive records or over-all bee yard records are maintained
 - information should be kept updated
 - this log is intended to drug treatments which are not feed related
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a few blank paper copies of this template (or their equivalent) in their bee truck/vehicle
 - new beekeepers should:
 1. mentor with well-established commercial or hobby beekeepers to learn about, and have guidance for, disease monitoring and treatment
 2. join local bee club meetings and provincial associations to learn about diseases and how to monitor and treat them
 3. attend bee club and association meetings
 4. closely follow their provincial apiarist's recommended/required treatment options

Bee yard: maintenance log

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - bee management
 - help schedule and organize bee yard tasks
 - communication
 - it can be a communication tool for beekeepers and staff
 - the log can be used either to assign tasks to staff, or for staff to make note of what needs to be done in the bee yard
 - how it is used will depend on individual beekeeper needs and organizational style
 - bee biosecurity
 - helps ensure correct protocol followed
 - removal of equipment which might be contaminated with disease
 - a tool for managing bee yards to reduce disease
 - food safety
 - a tool for managing bee yards to help reduce likelihood of honey contaminants
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 76-81 and 122
 - CBISQT: pages 11-14
 - this template is not an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard or CBISQT forms
4. General comments:
 - this tool may be especially beneficial when used together with a map of the bee yard to illustrate areas of particular concern (e.g., specific hives, tree branches which need to be removed) to staff
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a few blank paper copies of this template (or their equivalent) in their bee truck/vehicle
 - beekeepers may find a separate log for each bee yard makes more sense for their needs and organizational style

Bee yard: map

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
 - will need to be updated whenever there is a change in the bee yard
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - bee management
 - helps organize bee yard tasks (e.g., where to place colonies which are moved into the yard)
 - communication
 - it's a tool to help communication with inspectors (e.g., provincial apiarists, bee inspectors, crop insurance, extension staff)
 - it can be a communication tool between beekeepers and their staff
 - the map can be used either to assign tasks to staff, or for staff to make note of what needs to be done in the bee yard
 - bee biosecurity
 - a tool to help reduce disease in bee yards
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 31-34
 - CBISQT: none
 - this template is not an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard or CBISQT forms
4. General comments:
 - this record can be an effective tool when used together with bee yard maintenance log and bee yard colony log
 - the format of bee yard maps (e.g., digital or hand drawn) depends on beekeeper preference and record keeping style
 - beekeepers should keep in mind that they need to be comfortable with whatever format is used because updated will be needed if/when changes are made to the bee yard
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a few blank paper copies of this template (or their equivalent) in their bee truck/vehicle

Bee yard: map

form reference #:

bee yard number / location

date (d/m/y)

[Put map here to show hive placement and numbers]

Bee yard: off-hive disturbance record

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - bee management
 - to assess costs of disturbance (e.g., equipment damage, bee losses)
 - this record may help explain unexpectedly poor honey yields or colony conditions
 - communication
 - having an account of disturbance for future reference if it is needed
 - a record of events and actions following a disturbance may be required for compensation
 - it may help with communication between landowner, applicators and beekeepers
 - bee biosecurity
 - it's a record of stressors which may increase bee susceptibility to disease
 - food safety
 - it's a tool to help trace potential contaminants in honey
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 76-81 and 122
 - CBISQT: pages 11-14
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 6.0 (page 144), and CBISQT forms 1.0.1 (page 119) and 1.0.2 (page 120)
4. General comments:
 - all beekeepers will occasionally experience damage from off-hive pests (e.g., skunk, bear, ants, vandals) in their bee yards
 - keeping records (i.e., date, pest, and damage) helps with explain poor honey yield, potential honey contaminations or poor colony conditions
 - beekeepers may find it handy to keep a few blank paper copies of this template (or their equivalent) in their bee truck/vehicle
 - there are new programs in place (check with your provincial apiarist) to help facilitate communication between aerial applicators and beekeepers

Bee yard: off-hive disturbance record
form reference #:
bee yard # / location:
disturbance (e.g., extreme weather, fire, vandalism, pesticide. bear, skunk, racoon, cattle):
name of staff who first noticed effect of disturbance in bee yard:
date (d/m/y) of disturbance / when disturbance noticed:
pest (e.g., bear, skunk, racoon) disturbance (if applicable): control product(s) / devices (if applicable) products/ devices used: effectiveness:
crop pesticide disturbance (provide known information) (if applicable): applicator name / company date (d/m/y) and time of spraying weather conditions at time of spraying + / - 2 days target pest pesticide which was sprayed distance between bee yard and sprayed field cross reference form #(s) (e.g., honey or bee testing) comments (e.g., bee behaviour)
reported damage (if applicable): contact name and information date (d/m/y) and time of report date of inspection (d/m/y) (if applicable) outcome of inspection (if applicable)
damaged equipment (e.g., # of broken hives, frames) and queens:
estimated cost of damage (if applicable):
documentation (e.g., photos, witnesses) and location of files (if applicable):
follow-up to damage (e.g., electric fence installed, move yard, compensation):

Honey: removing full honey supers for extraction

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - will keep track of yard honey production
 - record can be linked to other records (e.g., hive assessment) to help make management decisions
 - will help to schedule bee yard work for employees
 - bee biosecurity
 - it is part of overall management to improve bee biosecurity
 - food safety
 - provides a tool for tracing potential contaminants in honey
 - part of overall management to reduce potential contaminants in honey
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 32-34
 - CBISQT: pages 47-52, 60-63, 68 and 102
 - this template is an adaptation of CBISQT from 5.0.1 (page 130)

 - BMP: page 53
4. General comments:
 - novice beekeepers who produce honey for their household use should record how much honey each hive produces in order to better understand their bees, and the effect of their management and environmental conditions on honey production

Inventory: feed/ medication - inventory and disposal record

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required
2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - it is a tool for predicting upcoming expenditures
 - it helps with accountability for supply ordering
 - bee biosecurity
 - it is part of overall management to improve bee biosecurity
 - food safety
 - provides a tool for tracing potential contaminants in honey
 - part of overall management to reduce potential contaminants in honey
3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 50-55
 - CBISQT: pages 18-22, 30 and 34-46
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 8.0 (page 150), and CBISQT form 4.0.1 (page 123)
4. General comments:
 - read and follow manufacturer's instructions for storage and disposal requirements of medications
 - check local regulations for disposal of medications
 - follow provincial apiarist's recommendation regarding all aspects of feed and medication

Inventory: supply inventory and disposal
(excluding feed, medications, hive equipment and bees)

1. Frequency of use:
 - as required

2. Reasons for recording this information include:
 - business management
 - it is a tool for predicting upcoming expenditures
 - it helps with accountability for supply ordering
 - bee biosecurity
 - it is part of overall management to improve bee biosecurity
 - food safety
 - provides a tool for tracing potential contaminants in honey
 - part of overall management to reduce potential contaminants in honey

3. References to the Bee Biosecurity Standard and CBISQT:
 - Bee Biosecurity Standard: pages 51-53 and 101
 - CBISQT: pages 17-33 and 75-76)
 - this template is an adaptation of Bee Biosecurity Standard form 8.0 (page 150), and CBISQT forms 2.0.1 (page 122), 2.0.2 (page 123) and 3.0.1 (page 124)

4. General comments:
 - this template excludes information from feed and medications: form reference #: (_____)*,
hive equipment form reference #: (_____)*, and bees: form reference #: (_____)*

* beekeepers should enter the form reference numbers they use in their operations for easy cross-reference

