

Bee stings

We all know that honey bees can inflict a painful sting but the effect of that sting can vary considerably.

Experienced beekeepers, who know their bees, can make their own minds up as to what level of protection they need when handling but we owe a duty of care to those whose reaction to bee stings is not known. These could be members of the public at a taster session or new beekeepers in training. Risk assessments should always be conducted and should include the following:

- Participants required to tell of any known allergy or other condition which might indicate a problem if stung. Any treatment carried by the individual for such conditions should also be made known to the event leader/trainer.
- Participants equipped with a protective suit (or jacket & trousers), in good condition with adequate face and neck protection. Initially at least, gloves with the highest level of sting protection should be worn. (If leather gloves are used, they may be covered with nitrile or similar gloves as a bio-security measure according to the apiary policy).
- The closure of zips/Velcro fasteners must be checked by another member of the group/trainer.
- Boots or wellingtons which, in conjunction with the protective trousers, provide protection to the ankles/lower legs.
- A point in the apiary being used is designated/signed as the point beyond which no person should proceed without adequate protection.
- All individuals are advised as to the procedure if stung or if a bee enters the suit.
- The best means of contacting emergency services is made known and included on signage in the apiary. The sign should also include the geographical location and postcode of the apiary.

Chemical hazards

A range of products are used to treat bees and to control varroa. All carry some risk to the person applying them and the manufacturer's instructions (in relation to both storage, application and disposal) should ALWAYS be followed, including the use of any specified PPE

Oxalic acid vaporisation in particular carries significant risk and a suitable chemical protection mask must always be worn.

Manual Handling

Manual handling this does not just mean lifting although, inevitably, beekeeping involves an element of weight lifting!

Full supers and brood boxes can be heavy, as can other beekeeping equipment like extractors and settling tanks.

Lift only what you feel capable of.

A full super may only weigh around 15-20lbs and be reasonably easy to handle but a full brood chamber could be three times this. What is relatively easy to handle at ground level can be much more difficult at or from a height!

Get help if needed - team work is the answer to a lot of heavy or awkward apiary tasks but try to avoid walking backwards if carrying in tandem unless you have a third person watching where you walk.

If help is not available, can the task be broken down? With supers for example, you could remove a few frames at a time.

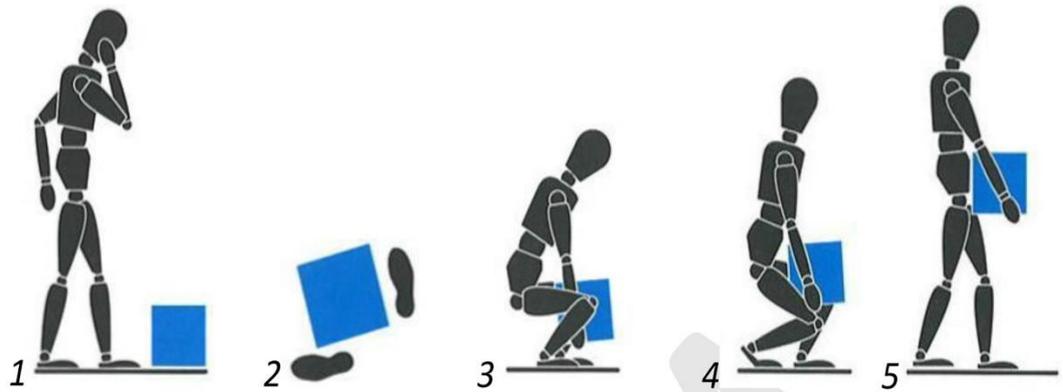
Things you might also consider - does the item to be moved have sharp edges, how far does it need to be moved, is there sufficient room round the item to enable good access and position, would specialist equipment help e.g. a hive carrier or even a wheelbarrow?

Look out for (and remove) trip or slip hazards – keeping grass cut and paths clear will reduce such risk.

Essentially, you need to risk assess the task and mitigate risks accordingly

When lifting remember:

1. Think about the task (do you need a another to help?)
2. Position yourself
3. Bend knees and keep back straight
4. Straighten up
5. Lift to waist height
6. Position first before adjusting



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