

## URBAN BEEKEEPING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What does an Urban Beekeeping Bylaw mean for St. Albert?

An Urban Beekeeping Bylaw means that regulations are put in place to permit beekeeping within the City of St. Albert. The Bylaw regulates the responsibilities of an urban beekeeper, site specific requirements, bee licence requirements, enforcement, and offenses/penalties, for both honey beekeeping and solitary bee keeping.

### Why are bees important?

Bees are important for the survival of humans on Earth. As pollinators, they are essential to biodiversity and plant reproduction. They pollinate 30% of all the food that we eat.

### Why keep bees in an urban setting?

Studies show that honeybees are healthier and produce more honey in urban settings, where there are fewer pesticides sprayed and greater diversity of flowers. Urban beekeeping is part of a growing urban agriculture movement, and can help address growing food demands as the world's population increase.

### Are honey bee swarms dangerous?

Bees swarm when the colony has grown too big for their hive, and half of the colony leaves to find a new hive location. Bees are typically more docile when they are swarming, as they gorge on honey before leaving the hive.

Bees cluster around the queen, often on tree branches or buildings, and the scout bees search for a new hive location. This process typically takes between 12 and 24 hours. Once a new home is found, the swarm will move to this location. Do not be alarmed by a swarm, but ensure that you keep your distance and do not disturb the bees.

### What are the differences between honey bees, solitary bees, and wasps?

Honeybees

- Collect pollen and nectar and are not interested in human food and drink
- Furry bodies that are golden brown/orange with black stripes
- Live in large colonies that range from 15,000 to 70,000 bees
- Honey bees are docile and only sting if they are provoked
- Can only sting once, as they die after attacking

- Live in hives made of white or yellow wax with hexagonal cells
- Produce honey

### Solitary Bees

- Collect pollen and nectar and are not interested in human food and drink
- There is a large variety of solitary bee species, which differ greatly in appearance.
- Do not live in colonies, but rather, nest individually in cracks and holes, or underground burrows
- Solitary bees rarely sting and only attack when they are provoked
- Only female solitary bees can sting

### Bumblebees

- When born, they are jet black and become more yellow as they mature.

### Wasps / Yellowjackets / Hornets

- Often omnivores, eating both plants and other animals
- Attracted to sugary drinks
- Can be either solitary or social (live in medium colonies of up to 15,000 wasps)
- Shiny, smooth skin that is striped bright yellow and black (some hornets can be striped white and black)
- Make grey, papery nests
- Aggressive and can sting multiple times

## Where do bees like to nest?

There are several places that you may find a bee nest:

- In bird houses because the lice left by birds in previous years deters birds from returning
- Old insulation, such as old clothing or outdoor storage
- In the ground
- Under hot tubs, deck, or patio

## **I am not a beekeeper, but my neighbour is. What are some safe ways in dealing with bees in my surrounding?**

If you have a bee nest under a deck/patio or around a swimming pool, it is recommended that you put a canvas or plastic sheet overtop, and keep the swimming pool covered. Bees drink water which may explain why they are more near water bodies.

The bee population is less during late fall and the queen bees are hibernating elsewhere during the winter. Therefore, outdoor renovations are also recommended during the late fall if there are bees in your surroundings.

The most important thing to note is that bees will not be bothersome if you do not bother them.

## **What happens if I remove a bee nest?**

If you remove a bee nest, it is not possible to catch all of them. The remaining bees will very likely be in sting-mode with those around them for at least a week.