A HEALTHY START FOR YOUR HIVE

Choosing a good apiary site is an important first step for new beekeepers.

Choose a site that supports the colony

- Flowering plants and trees: Choose a site near flowering plants and trees. Nectar supports honey production; pollen helps nourish developing bees.
- Clean water: Provide a shallow water source with stones or floating material so bees can land safely.
- Morning sunlight and afternoon shade: Some afternoon shade is particularly useful in Jamaica's hot conditions.
- Protection from strong winds and flooding: Keep hives stable, dry and elevated.
- Distance from people and animals: Avoid busy walkways, neighbouring homes, livestock areas and public spaces.
- Low pesticide exposure: Chemicals used on nearby crops can kill bees. Consider what may be sprayed in the surrounding area.

FIVE SIGNS OF COLONY HEALTH

These signs can help you assess brood, food stores and the condition of the colony.

Five things to learn to identify

- The queen: Look for evidence that she is laying eggs; you do not need to find her on every inspection.
- Eggs and young larvae: These indicate recent egg-laying and brood development.
- Worker bees: Look for a healthy population and normal activity at the entrance.
- Food stores: Check that the colony has adequate honey and pollen.
- Pests and disease: Watch for unusual brood patterns, damaged combs, abnormal smells or other warning signs.

Inspect with care

- Inspect regularly, but avoid opening the hive unnecessarily.
- Learn the correct inspection technique from an experienced beekeeper and follow a locally appropriate schedule.

> Important: Do not guess at pest treatments or use random chemicals in your hive. Contact an apiculture officer if you suspect a disease or infestation.

Build your skills and assess progress

- Learn to assess the queen's performance, brood, food stores and colony temperament. Keep a written record after every inspection.
- Review colony growth, food availability and pest management with your mentor. Expand only if your colonies are healthy and you can manage them properly.

