

G'day fellow beekeepers!

One of the most common questions from new beekeepers is - "How do I get a hive/bees?".

While you can sometimes find a beekeeper who will sell you a complete hive (boxes, bees and all), the more common approach is to buy a "nucleus" hive.

A nucleus hive is a small box that holds 4-5 frames. The frames hold drawn comb with a good spread of brood, honey and pollen .. so it's the start ("nucleus") of a new hive.

Having bought your nucleus hive home, and settled the bees down for a few days in approximately the location you want them long-term, you wait for a fine still day and then transfer the frames into a full box. You then add the remaining frames (with wax foundation or starter strips), and leave the bees to enjoy their new spacious home.

Other ways of getting a new hive going are to home a swarm, or to buy a "package" of bees. These can be cheaper, but the bees can (and often do) abscond.

So, generally new beekeepers are well advised to start with a nucleus hive.

And experienced beekeepers often create nucleus hives as part of managing their apiaries. Consequently they sometimes have "nukes" to sell in Spring.

As part of my duties on the SGB Committee for 2019/20 I have the responsibility of maintaining a list of those who have Nucleus hives for sale and those who would like to purchase a Nucleus hive.

If you have nucleus hive/s for sale or are looking for local suppliers of nucleus hive/s then please contact me (Peter 0423 244107) and I can put you on the list, or provide you with people selling nucleus colonies.

What are the clubs expectations/recommendations for those purchasing or selling nucleus hives through the club list?:

1. A fair price for a 5 frame Nucleus hive is considered by the committee to be \$200-\$300.

2. It is expected that a 5 frame nucleus hive will contain a new queen and around 5000 - 7000 bees. Three of the frames should contain brood of all stages (eggs, larvae, capped brood, usually there is pollen/honey/nectar on the brood frames as well). The two outer frames normally store honey/nectar and pollen.

3. The nucleus colony should be free of pests (e.g Wax moth, SHB) and diseases (e.g Chalk brood, EFB, AFB).

4. The seller should be able to provide evidence of recent AFB testing for spores in honey on the colony/s that the nucleus hive/s originated from. A honey spore test is in the order of \$40. (Remember AFB spores can last up to 50 years in honey and beeswax with no obvious signs of disease in the colony)

5. The seller should also be willing to allow potential buyers to inspect colonies before purchase if they wish.

6. It is recommended that the purchaser pay for the nucleus colony on receipt of the hive not in advance.

The club can only provide these recommendations but it is ultimately up to the seller and purchaser to practice due diligence and seek advice if unsure of something.

Happy Beekeeping!!
Peter Gatehouse (Vice President)

(Note: all the above applies to Langstroth Hives, since the frames are invariably Langstroth frames. If you would prefer to populate Top Bar Hives or Warre Hives, then you should talk to a member who has several of these hives to see what they suggest.)