

## Beginning Beekeeping Classes - Spring, 2016




As always I'll be teaching a beginner's class in April; classes will meet once a week (see bee & class forms attached) and, if you're not dozing, it should provide you with the necessary info to keep bees here in Fairbanks. There will be as much hands-on as the weather permits (that's why it's in April instead of January), equipment, spring management, floral resources throughout the summer, bee biology, top-bar hives; honey harvesting and selling your honey will be covered. The five classes will also include a site visit.

Contrary to what Mr. Natural sez there is more to beekeeping than watching Youtube. The all-Alaskan expression, "We don't care how they do it on the outside" is an appropriate mantra for beekeeping on the Last Frontier. Pick up a book on general "how-to" beekeeping and read phrases like, "in February, when the maples are blooming.....", enough said.

Alaska demands special techniques, sometimes specialized equipment (think insulation here) and an ability to listen to the bees. Books are great, videos can be of value but nothing beats hands-on observation and experience. All that said the best book germane to beekeeping in Alaska's Interior (until mine is published - any year now) is "Beekeeping in Western Canada" published by Alberta Agriculture- it's available at Gulliver's Books on the corner of College Rd. and University (\$25).

As I mentioned there will be 5 classes ( $\approx$  2 hours each), a hands-on hiving demonstration showing how to dump the bees from the package into the hive and, a site visit (for a total of about 15 hours instruction); phone advice is free (only about bees; see your minister, priest, rabbi, therapist or best friend to deal with life). Three easy steps to register:

- 1) **Choose a class**- it's best if you stick with the day you choose as I can only fit 13 people in my space (classes are held at my home- you get a map upon



Yaar! I read all about  
beekeeping on the Internet;  
why do I need the class?

registration). Classes are held Wednesday or on Sunday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:30 PM. I'll entertain the thought of a Monday evening class if there is lots of interest.

- 2) **Send in payment** (\$150/person); husband/wife can alternate or you can send your best friend as proxy if you can't make a class (then blame them for not paying attention if things go wrong). If you both want to come it's \$150 each (remember seating constraints). Well behaved kids are welcome if they can sit on the floor or lap. **NO SMOKING PLEASE!**
- 3) **Show up for class**- classes start on time, park on Donna (perpendicular to the road- there may be a dozen+ cars) and come down the hill, wear sensible shoes - it's Alaska and may be icy! My format changes every year (hopefully improving) at some point you may want to bring a USB thumb drive (virus free) and download a bunch of background material.



Still confused? See the Frequently Asked Questions below or email me at [akbeeman2000@yahoo.com](mailto:akbeeman2000@yahoo.com) .

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### What size package should I get?

If this is your first year and you are starting with new equipment (i.e. no wax comb) or with a top-bar hive I'd recommend a four-pound package. For those of you starting "early" (the first 2 shipments) and you already have drawn equipment with some honey and pollen stores you can get by with a three-pound package. For those of you starting a top-bar hive "later" (the last three shipments) a three-pound package may get by but it is weather dependent- if we have a "cool" spring they will build populations slower. A four-pound package with 2Q is intended for those BK who have some experience, are willing to pay attention to the bee's needs (food and warmth) and want to get an early start on building populations.

#### Should I get Russian - Carniolan (RC) or Italian (Ital) bees?

The RC bees originally come from the Russian Far-East (Primoreye region) while the Italians are from the land-of-pasta, both of them have their champions (and detractors); if you'd like to read a four-page



blurb

put out by North Carolina University on the difference between the two (but **not** under AK conditions) send me an email and I'll forward the PDF to you. My personal preference leans toward the RC bees- especially if you are thinking about overwintering your bees; after all, who do you think would do better in the Fairbanks winter- pasta-eating Riviera babes or hearty borscht-eating Russian girls? Please note - the type (RC or Ital) of bee you order will be the type of **Queen** not necessarily the bees in the package; they are shaken from several different hives down in California, also note that the queens will have been mated with numerous drones so you may have a mix of RC and Italian progeny.

**My buddy has offered me some used equipment they used a few years back; is it OK to use?**

There are several considerations to think about when using "used equipment". First is the potential of brood diseases (especially American Foulbrood - AFB) which can linger in used equipment for decades regardless of being stored in the barn where it gets to minus 50°F for weeks; it **will NOT** affect the spores of these bacteria. Secondly, there is the condition of the frames, boxes and comb/foundation - have the mice had an all-winter party in the equipment? Has the wax comb separated from the foundation? Don't wait until the night before the bees arrive to inspect the equipment - feel free to have me take a look at it for possible disease indications and make an assessment of the *bee-worthiness* of the equipment.

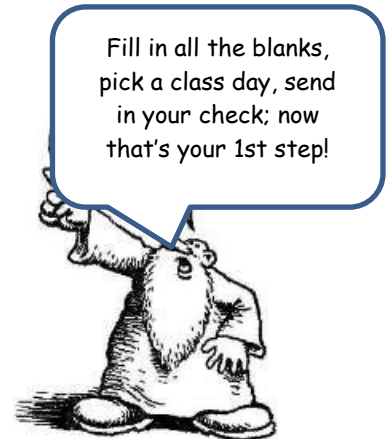
# BEGINNING BEEKEEPING CLASS REGISTRATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Reliable phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Circle your preferred class day



## Bee classes 2016

| Wednesday Class<br>6:30-8:30 PM | Sunday Class<br>3:30-5:30 PM |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| April 6                         | April 3                      |
| April 13                        | April 10                     |
| April 20                        | April 17                     |
| April 27                        | April 24                     |
| May 4                           | May 1                        |

**Remember only 13 persons in each class- first ones paying get the seats**

Make a check out to - **Toklat Apiaries for \$150/person and bring to 1153 Donna Dr. Fairbanks, 99712.** You're on the list when I receive payment, if you'd like to pay in cash or gold (sorry, no first-borns) give me a call and you can bring to first class. If you're ordering bees too please take the time to write 2 checks makes my paperwork easier.

If you can't make a class you can send a proxy (but have them say something to me). If you know somebody who has bees or wants bees; team up - you learn more by looking in more hives.

I'll be home to begin opening mail about March 30 (coming north on the ferry) and I'm not sure the young lady picking up my mail will sort by arrival date so no need to rush to the mailbox unless you're sending me a Valentine's Day card.

Email is always open-

[akbeeman2000@yahoo.com](mailto:akbeeman2000@yahoo.com)