

Prince William Regional Beekeepers Association (PWRBA)

2015 Nuc (Nucleus Hive) Guidelines

www.pwrbeekeepers.com PWRBeekeepers@gmail.com

What is a Nuc for sale?

A nuc is a miniature beehive colony- it includes pollen and honey, a laying queen, larvae and young bees. One benefit of nucs is that the bees and the queen have been together for a period of time, the queen is accepted by the bees and she is already laying eggs. Nucs expand rapidly and often out produce package bees. They are available regionally giving you a better chance of knowing the producer.

Most nucs are sold as 4 or 5 frames - deep or medium. When you buy a nuc, you should look for at an absolute minimum, at least 3 full frames, 2 of which should be brood and at least 1 more frame should be drawn out and contain a honey/pollen mix. Many 5 frame nucs will have one frame that is new foundation, partially drawn or empty. Most nucs will need to be transferred into full size equipment within a day or two after purchase.

- ❖ Try to think of a nuc like a potted seedling that should eventually be transplanted. Usually you do not keep bees in a nuc indefinitely unless you are stacking up nuc boxes on top of each other. Nucs are transferred into full size colony woodenware generally right after purchase, and delaying this transfer could easily result in the bees swarming or absconding.
- ❖ The queen in the nuc should be new within the last year and at a minimum should have shown evidence of laying eggs and larvae in the nuc. Ideally there will also be her capped brood.
- ❖ Spend some time talking with nuc suppliers. There is great variety in what suppliers are selling. Understand what you are purchasing far enough ahead, so you can plan effectively. Ask about:
 - 1) Frame size (DEEP or MEDIUM) clearly specify so you know what you are ordering
 - 2) Age and Type of queen (where from, hygienic traits, etc.)
 - 3) Size (# of frames)
 - 4) Cost
 - 5) Does the seller want a Frame exchange or not
 - 6) Method of transporting the nuc (container provided, bring your own box, borrow, etc.)
- ❖ 2015 Nuc prices are expected to range from \$125 to \$175.
- ❖ Virginia State law requires apiary where the nucs were made up from to be inspected within the calendar year. Note that *inspection is for disease, not the quality of the nuc.*
- ❖ Most suppliers require pick up at their location. The nuc is your responsibility after you pick up.
- ❖ **Pick Up Considerations.** Bees fly when there is light. Be prepared to pick up nuc very early or late in the day. Bees generate a lot of heat. Fill up gas before you show up. Go directly home after pick up and do not plan multiple errands with a nuc in the back seat (increasingly important in late Spring and summer). Most transport boxes can be opened to let bees fly if you cannot move them into equipment immediately. If so be sure to place box where the colony will be located.

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What makes a nuc a "local or regional" nuc vs. some other kind of nuc or split?

Consider where the bees and queen are from and if the queens are adapted well to produce in your area. Ask suppliers directly about the make up of their nucs, where the bees come from, where their queens are from, and what traits the queen has (such as hygienic behavior).

Nucs are generally made in one of these ways:

- 1) "**Spring Nucs**" - produced in the Spring by pulling frames out of existing colonies or splitting nucs (also called Splits) and usually a new Queen. Queen source can be regionally produced (usually not available until late Spring) OR from the South, CA or HI.
- 2) "**Snow Bird Nucs**" - bees are bought South for the winter; bees are split in Spring either down South or back home up "North" with a new queen usually from the South, CA, or HI.
- 3) "**Packaged Bees Nucs**"- packaged bees hived in a nuc box
- 4) "**Post Almond Pollination Nucs**" - bees are sent out to CA for almond pollination, brought back to this area and split into nucs with a new queen usually from the South, CA, or HI.
- 5) "**Overwintered Nucs**"- produced in the prior summer and overwintered in our area - meaning that the queen is 'tested"- she survived one winter. Queen source varies.
 - ❖ Over Wintered nucs usually develop very quickly and because of this, they are also more prone to swarm, especially when put in on new foundation. They do best when hived on some drawn comb.

Timing

Queen availability affects when nucs can be made and varies depending on the type of nuc.