

**Prince William Regional Beekeepers Association (PWRBA) Nuc Program**  
**PWRBA Nuc (Nucleus Hive) Guidelines 2019**

**What is a Nuc for sale?**

- ❖ Nucs are a miniature bee hive/colony including pollen, honey, a laying queen, larvae, brood & 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 installed on foundation. 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 should be transferred into full size colony woodenware generally right after purchase. Delaying this transfer can 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. We do not recommend nucs with caged queens that have not been accepted by the colony. *(Note some nuc producers cage the queen for transport which is different than an unaccepted caged queen).*
- ❖ Talk 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
  - 3) Size (# of frames)
  - 4) Cost
  - 5) Frame exchange? *(this is becoming less common)*
  - 6) Pick Up time & Transport (i.e., temporary box provided, bring your own box, etc.)
- ❖ 2019 Nuc prices are expected to range from \$165 to \$195
- ❖ ***Virginia State law requires apiary where the nucs were made up from to be inspected within the calendar year. Inspection is for disease, not the quality of the nuc.***

*continued*

**Prince William Regional Beekeepers Association (PWRBA) Nuc Program**  
**PWRBA Nuc (Nucleus Hive) Guidelines 2019**

**Nuc Pick Up Considerations**

- ❖ Most nuc producers require pick up at their location.
- ❖ The nuc is your responsibility after you pick up.
- ❖ Bees fly when there is light. Be prepared to pick up nuc very early or late in the day; other pick up times will result in losing large number of foraging bees.
- ❖ Bees generate a lot of heat inside the nuc box. 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. Do not transport nucs long distances in a trunk!
- ❖ Most nuc transport boxes can be opened to let bees fly if you cannot move them into equipment immediately. If you do this, be sure to place box exactly where you plan the colony will be located- such as on top of the colony lid.

**Different Types of Nucs**

We encourage you to consider where the bees and queen are from. Ask suppliers about their nucs, where the bees come from, and where their queens are from etc.

- 1) **Local Spring Nucs** – produced in the Spring by pulling frames out of existing colonies or by splitting overwintered nucs and installing a new Spring Queen.

***Beekeeper's local bees** with a new local/regionally reared queens (note that in the mid Atlantic locally produced queens are not usually available until mid to late May)*

***Beekeeper's local bees** made with a purchased queen usually from the South (GA/FL/MS), or CA, TX or HI.*

- 2) **Snow Bird Nucs** - bees are wintered in the South for the winter; bees are split in Spring either in the South or back home up “North” and made with a new queen usually from the South, CA, or HI.

- 3) **Southern Nucs**- Nucs made from bees in the South and brought up “North” for sale

- 4) **Post Pollination Spring Nucs** - bees are sent out for pollination (usually to CA for almond pollination but could be apples locally), brought back to this area and split into nucs with a new Spring queen usually from the South (GA/FL/MS), or CA, TX or HI.

- 5) **Packaged Bees Nucs**- packaged bees hived in a nuc box

- 6) **Over-Wintered Nucs**- produced in the prior summer and overwintered in our area – the queen is “tested” in that she survived winter. Queen source varies. Over-Wintered nucs usually develop very quickly and because of this they are also much more prone to swarm, especially when installed on new foundation. They do best when hived on some drawn comb.

**Summary - What should I ask the nuc producer? (See prior page for more detail)**

1. What size nucs- deep or med?
2. How many frames?
3. Age and Type of queen?
4. Nuc transportation (cardboard nuc box, buyer's box, producer's box, etc.)
5. Pick-up times and location; Approximate time frame expected to be read
6. Cost