

Stahlman beekeeping notes

for 2021

Issue # 45 Buying Used Equipment -- Fall is not the time to buy honey bees!

Fall is not the time to buy honey bees! I did a casual search of bees for sale this past week. One local beekeeper is selling out due to health reasons with everything going for \$6,000.00. I think it included 5 or 6 hives of bees and a lot of used equipment plus an extractor.

There is no shortage of individuals wanting to sell hives of bees this fall. I often wonder why a beekeeper would pay spring prices for bees sold now! Some of the equipment being sold is almost new – NOT NEW – at replacement prices. Some have bees alive! But there is a lot of junk for sale as well.

I am always interested in how the previous owner operated the hives and bees. It is a fair question to ask if the bees (if alive) have been inspected! The equipment without bees can still carry disease! Fair warning to anyone buying equipment or live hives of bees [You may be buying someone else's problems.]

It is far better for a person wanting to start beekeeping to first take a class about beekeeping and the equipment required. Starting with new equipment is a safe bet that one is not stuck with another beekeepers problems! No matter what one hears, there is no shortage of honey bees.

Let me share a few of the listings I found on my local bee blogs:



This ad was for two Warre Frame bee hives. It doesn't mention anything about frames in the hives but I would assume the hives are complete with bottom stands, boxes and top covers.

They look well taken care of! If bought as new, the equipment most likely would cost twice of what it is being sold for! A new Warre hive complete is selling on the internet for \$399.30 with additional boxes for \$124.00.

Note the seller is asking \$250.00 each.

The issues I have with this ad:

Buying a hive that has already housed a colony of honey bees can present issues. The one great advantage of buying used comb is the frames have drawn foundation that bees can use immediately for brood rearing or honey storage.

The greater concern I have is disease and the condition of the comb in the frames. Generally, the darker the comb -- the greater exposure it has for chemical contamination from the environment and disease. Storage of equipment also exposes the comb to wax moth.

This hive is unique: It has a following of beekeepers who like the beekeeping methods incorporated into the management of this hive. Hive parts are not interchangeable with Langstroth hive equipment.

Warre hives are meant to be managed by the box rather than by the comb. Warre hives are meant to be expanded with the nading practice, by adding empty boxes to the bottom of the hive. The bees will generally build from the top down, and as their bottom most box becomes 80% full, an empty box can be added underneath.

Those promoting this hive design often think of it as a more natural way to keep bees. Often citing that extractors are not needed -- the comb harvested from a top bar frame is cut from the frame and crushed to remove the honey --the wax is a by-product.

Thus, the bees must rebuild the harvested comb each year. The brood comb is reused from year to year. Inspection of the hive is more complicated than the Langstroth style of hive. However, as natural as the nest is in a bee hive, bee hives do require some work. Although literature indicate minimal care is required, it is not management free.

I found this hive for sale 10/26/21. It is a hive of bees with two feeder jars, two deep brood chambers, a wire summer screen, and a top cover for \$450.00.



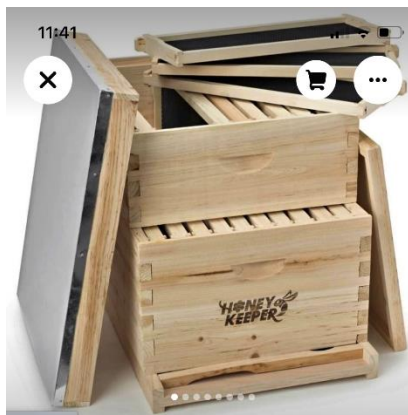
It appears to have a fair population of bees. It looks like the hive was started earlier this year. I have a question!

Is this the time of year to buy a full hive of bees for \$450.00?

This may seem attractive to a potential buyer getting into beekeeping. But now is not the time to start beekeeping!

Honey Bees

\$450 · In Stock



Beehive 20 Frame Complete Box Kit (10 Deep-10 Medium) Langstroth Beekeeping

\$175 · In Stock

It is likely that the bees in this hive may not survive the winter season. Winter losses are high. If the bees in this hive die, the cost to buy a new package of bees will add another \$140.00 approximately to the price next year to re-populate the hive with bees.

Equipment can be purchased for a start next bee season at less cost without the risk of having to buy more bees. This is a starter kit. New equipment provides no worry about previous bees that may have diseases.

Always compare equipment cost with bees against what the same thing can be purchased next spring.

This year I found a complete 10 frame Langstroth Hive Kit with a medium super for \$175.00. Prices for equipment and bees may go up a bit this spring but one will have a chance to grow into learning all about how bees develop and become

productive hives. Buying a live hive of bees now could result in bewilderment and disappointment if the bees die!

Here is another offer:

This is a hive for sale right now with the asking price of \$100.00.

The bees died earlier this year.

I don't doubt that the beekeeper selling this hive has spent that more than \$100.00 on getting this hive started plus the bees put into it.



I then took a look at another picture in the same ad. What do you think?

This picture really tells the story of what happened to this hive and why the beekeeper may be selling it.





This hive is in a deplorable condition. Plan to spend some time cleaning up hives, frames, bottom boards, inner covers and top covers when you buy used equipment. I have bought used equipment – I check for things like wax moth damage as seen above with the idea that I would repaint the equipment and melt down wax in frames. But this equipment is going to require a lot of clean up before it can be used again. The equipment will forever show divits where wax moth larva chewed the wood for cocoons. The only thing I can say is the frames look as if they were new to start the bee season. But the hive bodies and frames will forever have scars from the wax moth that caused all this damage. Many beekeeper would burn equipment like this! This hive is still over priced at \$100.00.

Another example of someone selling nuc's right now!

Can you believe someone is selling a 3 frame nuc here in October. From the pictures and description given in the ad, I can only conclude the seller has no concern for the success of the person to keep bees thru the winter. The owner only wants to cash in on some old equipment and bees that will most likely die during the winter season.



Bees sold on old frames with comb looking like this is no bargain. Old comb has a good chance of carrying disease. Also, if the comb looks like this – The seller is getting rid of old comb.

Note that most nucs sold are 5 frame nucs. This is a three frame nuc with a feeder!

I see no brood and few bees in this nuc. Why would someone sell a nuc like this? Yes, the price is \$100.00 but one is just throwing money away on the frames and bees. Does the nuc even have a queen if brood is not present? The nuc box is probably worth \$25.00.



When considering buying used equipment, one must understand that some wear and tear has and will always be present in older equipment.

There are many web sites where beekeepers can check for honey bee equipment.

- Facebook has Marketplace with a search option. I just type in honey bee equipment and up comes a number of items. (This is my first choice)
- Groups on Facebook also offer local opportunities to buy -- The ones I use:
 - Beekeepers of Wake County
 - North Carolina Beekeepers
 - Commercial Pollinators and Honey Producers
 - N C Bee Supplies for Sale and Swap Shop
 - Commercial Beekeepers Trucks and Equipment for sale or Trade

Other things to consider:

- Are you aware of laws concerning the sale of bees within your state? Check with your Department of Agriculture to determine buying used equipment.
- It is best to take a knowledgeable beekeeper with you if you are going to visit a seller of equipment if you have any doubt or lack of experience in buying used equipment.
- Understand that you can reject any offer. I tell myself that if I don't see what I want, I can walk away from the deal.
- Bee equipment is a buyer's market. In any supply and demand situation, the buyer has other opportunities to buy almost the same thing being offered. So many new beekeepers are giving up after a year or two. Death takes a number of older beekeepers each year. Most of this equipment ends up for sale.

Other Hives and bee equipment for sale: Each of these gave me something to consider sharing with you.

This ad offers a variety of equipment with each item priced for sale. Many ads offer a price for the entire lot of equipment for sale.

If one can pick from the stack of supers – I assume the super price is \$10.00 with frames – that is a good buy with some **if's**.



8 frame Hive top feeders—MannLake \$10ea

8 frame medium supers, some cedar some pine (30 available) \$10ea

Medium frames—MannLake yellow plastic foundation, drawn comb!

... See More



\$10 · CHARLOTTE, NC

Beekeeping Gear For Sale

MESSAGE

The picture above show [most of the boxes are homemade]. A few are manufactured hives with dove-tail corners. The frames I can see look fairly new. That is a plus! The problem for me is I use all 10 frame equipment.

If I were visiting this seller, this is what I would do!

- Examine the comb and frames to determine age and condition. From my perspective the frames are worth far more than \$10.00 per box. I would even buy the box with the rotten chunk in the box located left middle.
- If each box holds 8 frames and the comb is still fairly yellow – not black – I would not have any trouble buying anything that fit my standard – no brood frames.

I would not be able to use the 8 frame boxes. But frames can be put into 10 frame boxes that I own. I might find some good 8 frame boxes that could be given or sold to friends.



This is another photo taken from an ad. It is a 10 frame box with drawn deep comb frames. The owner is selling boxes with 10 frames like this for \$20.00 each.

The frames shown here are from a super used for honey extraction. The wooden frames are darkened with age but the comb show little sign of being brood frames.

I think the price is reasonable! But the frames in this hive will have a shortened period of use available to the new buyer. I would most likely negotiate a better price if buying supers in a lot. The price the owner will accept is usually lower when selling more boxes.



Finally, here is another seller offering bee equipment.

This offering is for 10 frame equipment including a large number of boxes that would provide everything one might need to keep 30 hives of bees. The equipment shown in pictures is painted and cleaned up. Frames and foundation are included in the deal.

The interior of the building which is used to store the equipment helps me determine that the seller is someone who cares about the looks of his equipment. That adds value to any equipment sold! He is asking \$5,000.00.

The big issue here is; if you have the money to buy this outfit, do you have a place to store it?

There is not a day that goes by which new offerings are not made on the sites I have listed above. The commercial sites present a problem – they are located in far-away states. A listing without the chance to visit and check out the equipment presents a real problem as far as I am concerned.

"I would never buy a used car without first hearing the engine run or take a test drive. Yet, I am not a car mechanic, I would expect a mechanic go over the car before I gave up any money for the car!"

I would never buy a hive of bees without being able to inspect the hives first. As a former bee inspector, I think I know what to check for when I lift the top cover and pull a few frames in a hive for sale. I would hope that any person without experience would at least ask a more experienced beekeeper to go with them to make a purchase of bee equipment.

Equipment may be something one could buy! There is plenty of time to repair and clean up any equipment bought now before the bee season begins in the spring.