



**Atlantic Tech Transfer Team**  
for Apiculture



## WHAT IS A NUCLEUS COLONY: INFORMATION FOR NEW BEEKEEPERS!

### BUYING A NUC

A 'nuc', or a nucleus colony is merely a small, starter colony of honey bees. It is usually housed in a 3 to 5 frame box for easy management and transport. This is a collection of frames containing bees, brood, honey, and open comb space, along with a laying queen. A nuc will develop to full-sized colony population and strength during the beekeeping season. Conventionally, once the nuc is obtained, the frames and bees will be transferred to a standard ten frame hive by the purchasing beekeeper. Buying from a local, reputable beekeeper is always preferable and supports the Atlantic beekeeping industry.

### NUC CONTENTS

A standard nuc should contain the following:

#### Honey bees:

- 3-5 frames worth of adult bees
- A laying queen
- At least 2 frames of brood

#### Food stores:

- 1 frame of honey
- Some stored pollen

### Equipment:

- Frames in nuc (included in purchase)
- Nuc box (may have to return to seller)



Figure 1 Nuc box options from left to right: a wooden nuc box, a plastic nuc box, and a cardboard nuc box (photo: countryfields.com)

Additionally, the nuc should contain empty drawn comb to allow ready space for the queen to lay. A five frame nuc may contain one frame of foundation to provide the colony space to work and grow.

### AVAILABILITY

Nucs are typically available from May to July in Atlantic Canada. Availability with some suppliers may be after blueberry pollination has concluded, meaning a later start in building up the new colony for the season. Good producers will have a first-come first-served style list to to receive a nuc. Get your name on the list as early as possible!

### Funders and Contributors:

Bleuets NB Blueberries  
New Brunswick Beekeepers Association Inc.

Nova Scotia Beekeepers' Association  
Wild Blueberry Producers' Association of Nova Scotia

PrinceEdwardIslandWildBlueberryGrowersAssociation  
PEI Beekeepers' Association



### NUMBER OF FRAMES

One factor which impacts how a nuc will build-up to full colony size is the original quantity of bees and brood. Therefore, a larger nuc will potentially grow faster and provide a stronger colony at the end of the season. So, expect a strong five frame nuc to develop more quickly than a three framer. Also note, a 5-frame nuc may be more expensive. A minimum of two frames of brood, with three frames well covered in bees should be expected.

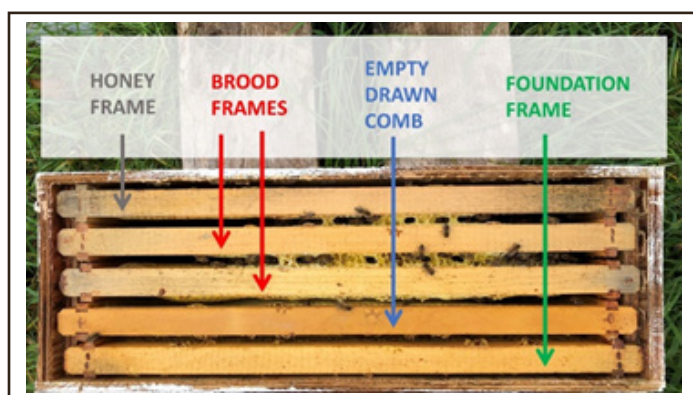


Figure 2 A typical five frame nuc showing frame content.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SUPPLIER

- Are you a registered beekeeper?
- Are you a member in good standing of your provincial beekeeping association?
- Do you have a current health report from the provincial inspector (Inspection Report)?
- How many (brood/honey/drawn comb/foundation) frames do you provide?
- When are your nucs available?
- Price including deposit on nuc box?
- What are the details of collection / delivery?
- Treatment details for pests and diseases?
- Age of queen? Is she marked?

### ALL NEW BEEKEEPERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

1. Participate in a credible beekeeping course and/or workshops,
2. Seek a mentor through your provincial beekeepers' associations, and
3. Become a member of your provincial association

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