

Sustainable Beekeeping: Equipping Newbies with Tools for Success

Amanda Bennett¹, Gregory Meyer², Trevor Corboy³, Gigi Neal⁴, J.T. Benitez, Marina Miquilini

¹Assistant Professor and Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Miami County, bennett.709@osu.edu

²Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Warren County, meyer.213@osu.edu

³Assistant Professor and Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Clermont County, neal.331@osu.edu

⁴Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Brown County, corboy.3@osu.edu

BACKGROUND

Media attention to the decline in bee numbers, combined with a renewed interest in sustainable agriculture and local foods has led to a spike in people desiring information about beekeeping.

Extension is uniquely posed to provide this education with timely scientific research and non-biased information.

Although it is hard to capture, many sources agree the average age of a beekeeper in the U.S. is close to 50 years of age. There is a need to get more young people involved in the pursuit. For that reason, the target audience for the Southwest Ohio Beekeeper School is beekeepers with less than five years of experience, which includes people that have never kept bees.

Participants by Type of Beekeeping Enterprise

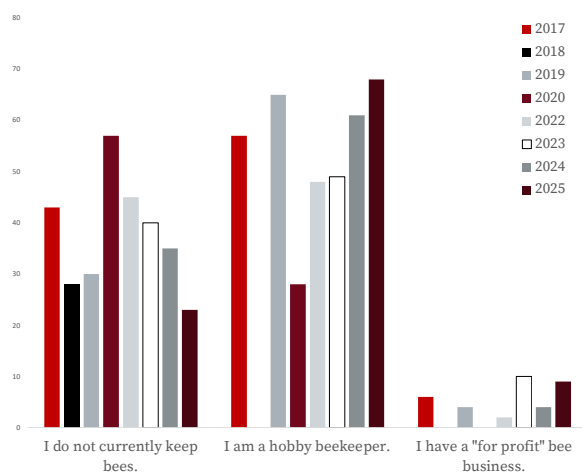


Image 1. Speaker and participants at session. Credit: Gregory Meyer

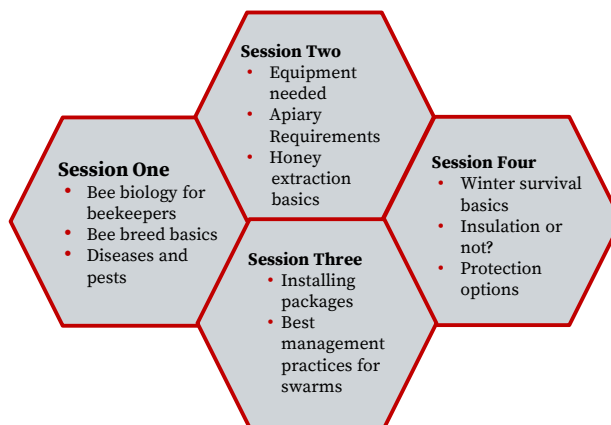


Image 2. Twelve vendors set up displays and sell products during the school. Credit: Gregory Meyer

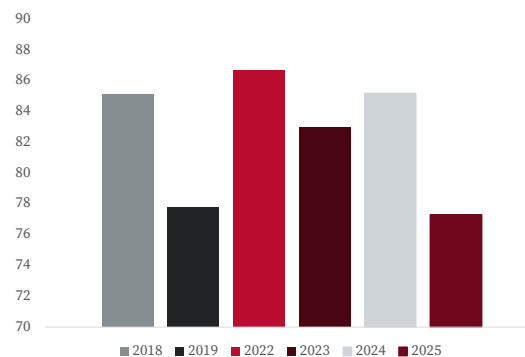
EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Individuals that attend the school that have never kept bees are encouraged to participate in the "Getting Started" series of classes. The objective of this series is to provide new beekeepers with the essential information they need to have so their bees survive their first winter.

The Getting Started Series is comprised of four sessions



Participants who responded they were more likely to start keeping bees after attending the school



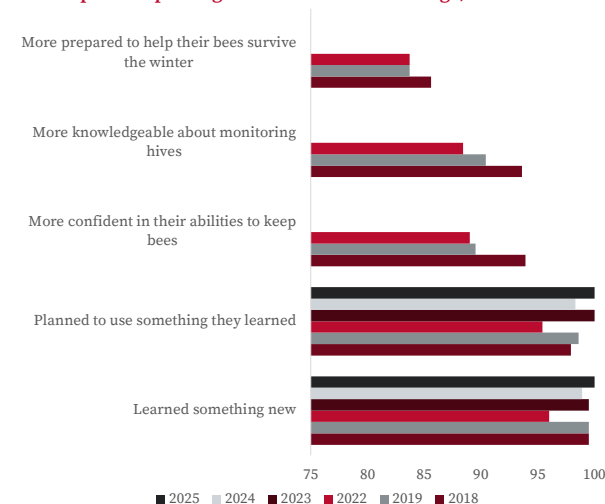
DATA NOTES:

Data from some years was unavailable due to the need for alternate presentation methods due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IMPACT

Each year the school has between 150 and 350 registrants from three states: Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. Participants are asked to evaluate the school using an instrument provided to them in the morning of the event. Response rates ranged from 49 to 63% each year. The participants were asked to rate the increase in knowledge or confidence in their abilities after attending the school. The results of the survey for the past several years are shown in the chart below.

Participants reporting an increase in knowledge/confidence



FUTURE PLANS

Due to an increase in cost, the 2026 Southwest Ohio Beekeepers School was reimagined into a smaller, more succinct event. The Getting Started series was still offered and had over 75 attendees. Although evaluation data has not been aggregated, overwhelmingly positive qualitative feedback confirms the series is still meeting the needs of new and beginning beekeepers. Plans for 2027 are underway.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The school is planned by a committee of members from the following: Butler, Hamilton, Brown, and Clermont County Beekeepers Associations, OSU Extension, Master Beekeeper Instructors, and Indiana Beekeepers.

