

Showing Honey at Agricultural Shows

By Bruce White

Several Agricultural Shows have classes for honey, beeswax, queens and candles

While beekeepers take a lot of pride in handling honey during extracting and in recent years more beekeepers have become producer packers the majority do not enter the honey they produce in Agricultural Shows.

Entering in Agricultural Shows rewards the competitors by the keen interest shown by the public in the exhibits.

Competitors should also get much satisfaction from the prize cards and these can be used to promote the sale of honey production if you are a producer packer. at farmers markets.

This article should help beekeepers prepare honey for Agricultural Shows and give guidance to stewards or judges involved with Apiculture sections at Agricultural Shows.

Harvesting the honey

The first step that is very important is to select the combs.

Newly drawn white combs fully capped with the desired honey are selected. If all cells are fully capped the honey is at its maximum density.

The combs should be held up with a bright light behind the comb and inspected for any stored pollen, if pollen is present the comb should be rejected or the pollen cells cut out prior to removing the honey. Pollen must not be mixed with the show honey.

By using a bright light you will also be able to tell if the honey is the same floral type, if it is all the same colour, remove the honey from the combs.

The best way to remove the honey for showing is to press the honey from the cells. Uncap the combs then with a clean knife or other suitable instrument force the honey from the cells of the comb. This is the best method of minimizing air entering the liquid honey for competitions.

The other method is to extract the white combs using a small hand extractor. This will avoid the risk of overheating the honey by using no heat during extracting... The extractor should be made of food grade material stainless steel or food grade plastic.

If propolis is on the frame it should first be removed before the frame is placed into the extractor. When removing the honey from the extractor gate or pressed honey pour the honey down the edge of the settling container to minimize the air bubbles. Honey is hygroscopic and can absorb moisture from the atmosphere. If possible use a small bucket so it can be filled to the top or plastic ice cream container ensure the lid is air tight.

Allow the honey to settle for several days preferable at a temperature of 37°C. This will cause any air bubbles wax or other matter to rise to the surface and can be carefully skimmed off the surface.

After the settling

With the honey about 37°C pour it down the edge of a cone shaped nylon strainer. Nylon straining material is available from beekeeping supplies and can be sewn into a cone shaped bag with the point of the strainer almost touching the bottom of the container.

The best container for the straining process is a plastic bucket with a gate at the bottom or an ice cream container.

After straining the settled honey carefully remove the strainer.

Allow the honey to remain in the straining container for about one week.

After a week pour the honey into your show jars by opening the honey gate on the bucket or cut a hole in the bottom of the ice cream container vent the lid before pouring, then pour the honey down the inside edge of the jar to minimize air bubbles entering the honey.

All jars in an entry should be filled to the same level for uniformity with the honey just not touching the inside of the cap when the jars are level.

Selection of jars is very important, hold the jars up before filling to ensure there are no flaws from the glass molding, and cull any with imperfections. Equally important is the cleaning of the jars with a quality glass cleaning detergent.

The jars must comply with the show schedule usually 500g glass round jars.

Store the filled jars in a dark location in a closed cardboard box with cardboard bottle partition so the jars don't touch each other if stored in a dark location the honey colour is unlikely to change in the short term.

Storing liquid honey granulation can be inhibited by storing at temperatures lower than 0c

Liquefying granulated honey

This must be done with extreme care to avoid over heating the sugars and darkening the honey colour use warm air or a water bath so the honey temperature is kept below 43c

It is preferable to not use liquefy granulated honey in liquid classes.

Classes

All honey in the same entry should be of the same blend or floral type.

Judging Qualities

Based on the Sydney Royal Easter Show point score, some variation to the points may occur at other shows

Liquid Honey

Point score

	Liquid Honey
Flavour	25
Density	25
Colour	25
Aroma	10
Clearness	10
Brightness	5
Total	100

Flavour

Honey should be palatable free from "tang" off flavour fermentation and acidity. If the honey is a floral type class e.g.

Yellow Box the honey must be characteristic of that floral type honey

Density

Honey varies in density; highest points are awarded to the highest density. Density can be determined with a refractometer, rating the buoyancy of the glass rod near the honey surface or rating the rising of an air bubble by inverting the jar.

Colour

Liquid classes state the colour at the Sydney RAS classes are for light, very light, medium and dark. A Pfund honey grader can be used to grade honey by colour.

In the case of very light honey, the lighter the colour the higher the points awarded. Other classes are within the prescribed colour ranges.

Aroma

Honey with a pleasing aroma scores the highest points. Fewer points are awarded for honey with offensive aroma or no aroma, or those with fermentation, or over heated. Aroma varies according to the floral source hence honey from Clover, Stringybark and Yellow Box has their own bouquet.

Clearness

Honey must not have a dull or cloudy appearance, it should be clean and have a sparkle about it.

Brightness

Slightly warm the honey in the jars before showing to increase the brightness. This will remove minute crystals if present and give the entry more brilliance. The honey must be at room temperature for judging.

Chunk Honey

This is a jar of honey with a cut out section of capped comb placed into the liquid honey in a jar.

Point score

	Chunk Honey	
Appearance		25
Colour		25
Flavor		20
Density		20
Clearness		10
	Total	100

Prepare the honey as for liquid honey showing except you need to select a comb of honey as you would for showing a frame of capped honey.

Using a hot knife cut out a section of the comb after first pulling out the wires in the frame that held in the comb foundation.

The comb section of honey should fit into the jar through the lid opening touch the bottom of the jar and the top finishing so it doesn't just touch the lid.

The comb honey and liquid honey should be the same colour and floral type.

Cut out the section of comb and allow it to drain over a grid i.e. Wire queen excluder. Pieces of wax should drain away so your exhibit has no particles of wax present.

Preparing Granulated Honey

The general requirements are similar to liquid honey.

Of major importance is the texture of the granulation and firmness of set.

Point score

	Granulated Honey	
Evenness of grain	30	
Flavor	30	
Firmness	30	
Colour	10	
	Total	100

Evenness of grain

Classes can be fine or course grain.

In the case of fine grain the granules should be fine and almost indistinguishable to the palate and tongue with all the grains even. Floral types such as Lucerne, Clover have natural fine grains. Course grain floral types are usually Eucalypts with the grain larger than the fine grain.

Granulation

To achieve even granulation 10 to 15 per cent of the selected granulation honey called "starter" is mixed with the selected liquid honey you wish to granulate. Mix the starter thoroughly at 180C to 240c with the liquid honey until the whole mix is the same colour and consistency incorporating as little air as possible.

Leaving the mix at 140c for 12 to 36 hours. Before it sets firmly the honey should be poured slowly into the show containers pouring on the inside of the jars to prevent air bubbles occurring. Store at 140c so the mix will set in about 3 weeks.

Best results are obtained if the granulated honey is in firm condition just before showing.

Flavour

The Flavour will be determined by the floral source of the starter and liquid honey used in the mix.

Firmness

The mix should set firm but be easy to spread, the starter used will determine this characteristic select granulated starter that meets this criteria.

Colour

The colour should be off white to cream this will be determined by the starter and liquid honey used.

Creaming Honey

Fine grained starter must be used, such as fine grained granulated honey, or save

some of the previous batch of the honey you creamed.

The point score is similar to granulated honey.

The colour should be white.

The mixing of the starter into the liquid honey is done in such a way to add air to the mix by slow or high speed mixing using a mincer or stirring motorized method.

Creaming machines are available from beekeeping manufactures, dough mixing machines can be used or a motorized mincing machine.

Don't use a Mix Master or Kenwood Chef the honey is too dense and can cause the motor to over heat and it will blow up.

With a dough mixer beat the honey until it won't go any whiter, pass the honey through the mincer a commercial available cream machine until it is white as you can get it.

Preparing Comb Honey

Classes at shows include comb section and frames of honey.

The show sections and combs must have new comb that has been brood free.

Frames and section are best drawn above the brood chamber with the hive fitted with a queen excluder.

A queen excluder reduces the amount of pollen likely to be in the comb or section Ensure the frames and sections are correctly assembled and fitted with comb foundation.

Colony Selection

Closely observe the behavior of how the bees work on the comb.

Select colonies that leave an air space under the cappings, this gives the cappings a whiter colour than colonies that leave no air space.

Avoid colonies that collect and deposit a lot of propolis as this could stain the cappings

Remove sections and show combs from colonies that have been on a heavy honey flow as soon as the whole frame or section is completely capped to avoid discoloring of the cappings by bees walking over them.

Hold the frame or section with a light behind it to show up any pollen cells, cull these.

Point score

	Comb Honey or Section
Fullness	30
Colour of Cappings	30
Evenness	20
General Appearance	20
Total	100

Fullness

Highest points are awarded to combs or sections that are well drawn out.

Colour of the capping

Capping should be whitish in colour

Evenness

All cells that are capped should be even with no depression on the comb surface, capping should all be the same colour, indicating the honey in the comb is from the same floral type. Honey flow that produce light coloured honey are preferred. Some section classes may indicate the type of honey in the section e.g. light or dark.

General Appearance

The entry should be attractive it is there for important to clear the wooden component of the frame or section remove any stains and sand paper the wood so it is more attractive. Entries must be shown in a bee proof wooden displaycase with glass or Perspex sides in the case of frames. Displaycases can be purchased to hold a single frame from Beekeeping Equipment Manufactures.

For sections use Glad wrap, Cellophane, Perspex or glass sided cases over the section to make it bee proof.

Sydney Royal Easter Show

The 2010 Sydney Royal Easter Show for the first time the Apiculture Section will be known as the Sydney Royal National Honey Show cementing its status as a National Competition. Interstate beekeepers are regular exhibitors.

Prize Money has been increased.

There are classes for beekeepers with over 20 hives and under 20 hives.

Also New Commercial classes have been added for honey packers and producer packers for liquid honey colour light, Liquid honey colour medium and creamed honey fine grained.

Gold, Silver and Bronze medals will be awarded in each class where a required standard is reached.

The RAS has a commitment to excellence and is a strong industry supporter beekeepers should support the National Honey Show by exhibiting. Entries close on 3rd February. Schedules will be on line in December at www.sydneyroyal.com.au/honey or by contacting Elaine Rogers on 02 970 41449.