

# IMPACT



Bannock County, PO Box 4228, Pocatello, Idaho 83205-4228; 208-236-7311; Fax: 208-236-7316

## Small Farm Beekeeping Workshop

### *The Situation*

Small farming operations are increasingly becoming the primary clients for Agricultural Extension Educators. As profit margins shrink for these small farm businesses, they are looking for alternative ways to increase the production of salable products. Many of these farmers are currently using the small acreages they have to their full capacity for vegetable and fruit production. Therefore, just adding another crop to increase profits is not feasible. Water for crops is also less available; and therefore, new lands are less apt to be brought into production in order to increase an operations productivity.

An alternative to adding another crop is to utilize existing crops for the creations of additional products. Beekeeping fits that description to the letter. Many small farms will be able to easily add beekeeping to their existing operations without buying more land to put into production. Beekeeping, however, is somewhat of a lost art. In order for small farms to take advantage of Beekeeping they must first be trained in the basics of this enterprise. Education will be the key to small farm success.

Small farmers are also beginning to value bees as pollinators. In recent years the population of native bees has dwindled. Through educational programs offered by UI extension educators farmers will learn how to rely on domestic bees for pollination.

### *Our Response*

Extension Educators from Bannock and Caribou Counties developed and presented a three hour hands on workshop covering the main aspects of beekeeping, product development, and marketing. Thirty-five farmers attended the workshop held in Pocatello and eighteen attended the workshop held in Soda Springs.

These farmers learned how to set up a beekeeping enterprise, and the use of specific beekeeping tools. They also learned hive management, disease control, and honey extraction techniques. The lectures covered how to increase profits from the sale of honey, wax, and pollen products. The most popular session taught the procedures for making soaps, lotions, and lip balms from honey and bees wax. Marketing techniques and selling bee products in farmers markets rounded out this session. The last session emphasized the benefits of pollination by bees on small farms.

All lesson plans, learning materials, class notes, and power point presentations were formatted and placed on the county web site. Students are using the web site to review the material in order to modify the management of their beekeeping enterprises. In addition clients with questions concerning bees are referred to the site by office staff. This has greatly increased our ability to quickly and effectively answer beekeepers questions.

## Program Outcomes

All students who attended the workshops took a test to evaluate their knowledge (on a scale of 1 to 10) of specific beekeeping skills before and after the educational program. There was a significant difference between before and after the workshop. The average increase in knowledge was 49%. (See figure 1.)

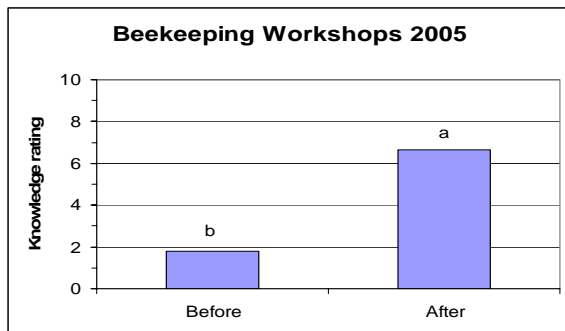
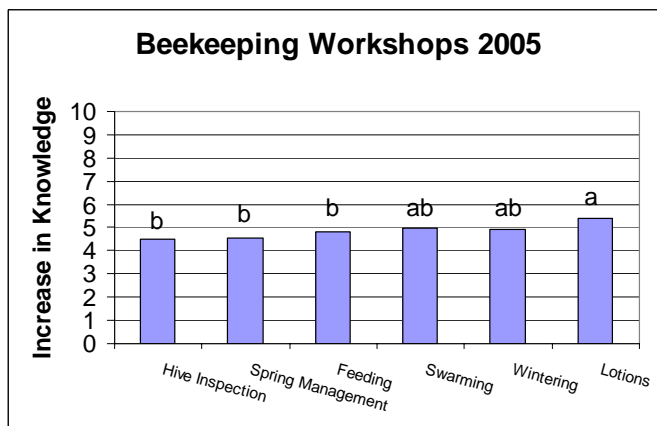


Fig. 1.

Students expressed the most enthusiasm for the sections of the workshop dealing with lotion and soap making. As a result the students increase their knowledge in this area more than in any other area. (See Fig. 2.) Swarming and wintering sections also had high increases in student knowledge. All areas increased student knowledge greater than 40.5%.



A follow up survey was administered to workshop participants seven months after the program. This was done in order to measure program outcomes specifically tied to the different sections of the workshop. All of the respondents stated that due to the beekeeping workshop they are better prepared to winter their hives. They also unanimously responded

that they are managing hive nutrition more effectively following the workshop. Ninety percent of the students stated that they are better beekeepers because of the workshop. Ninety percent of the students responded that they have improved the spring management of their hives. Also, ninety percent said they are now dealing more effectively with swarming issues. Sixty percent of the students stated that they are using hive inspection techniques learned in class. Thirty percent of the respondents have begun to raise bees or have added more hives to their beekeeping enterprise. The survey included three questions related to the production of value added bee products. Twenty percent of the respondents stated they have begun to make and sell lip balms, soaps, lotions and other bee products as a result of the workshop.

## For More Information

Reed Findlay, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Bannock County  
 PO Box 4228  
 Pocatello, Idaho 83205-4228  
 208-236-7310  
 Fax: 208-236-7316  
 Email: [rfindlay@uidaho.edu](mailto:rfindlay@uidaho.edu)

Steve Harrison, Extension Educator  
 University of Idaho Extension—Caribou County  
 53 East 1<sup>st</sup> South  
 Soda Springs, Idaho 83276-1480  
 208-547-3205  
 Fax: 208-547-4696  
 Email: [sharrison@uidaho.edu](mailto:sharrison@uidaho.edu)

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