

NCBA Bee School Mentoring Program Guidelines

The Norfolk County Beekeepers Association organizes a mentoring program to encourage support and guidance for graduates of NCBA bee school during their first year as beekeepers. Mentors are official envoys of the Norfolk County Beekeepers Association and the NCBA Bee School. The role of a mentor is not to manage a student's hives, but to help students to better care for their own bees and hives. Here are the NCBA mentoring practice guidelines:

1. Mentors should only contact students assigned to them by NCBA bee school, to introduce themselves and offer assistance. This contact may occur during one of the later bee school session. If the introduction cannot take place during bee school class, mentors will introduce themselves and offer assistance through email, phone, or meeting.
2. The mentors and students will be respectful of each other's time; whether through emails, phone calls, or visits for hive inspections.
3. It is the student's responsibility to contact their mentor should any questions arise or should the student want their mentor to visit their hives.
4. During any visit to the student's apiary, the student and mentor should both be present. The mentor's role is to educate and assist the student when doing a hive check. The student should be doing the work while the mentor offers guidance and suggestions.
5. The mentor should never use any of their bee equipment or tools in the student's hives. This includes gloves as well. This is to help deter the spreading of diseases.
6. The mentor should never exchange or move equipment, frames or bees from their hives to the student's hives or visa versa.
7. Mentors will stress the importance of Integrated Pest Management, especially for varroa mites. As well mentors will aid in the education of identifying and treating for diseases of the bees and hives.
8. Mentors will encourage the use of good beekeeping practices regarding equipment, the health of the bees, neighbors, and the community as a whole.
9. Mentors may advise people in addition to those assigned through the bee school and students may request advise and visits from individuals other than their assigned mentor. These arrangements are informal.
10. If for any reason, the mentor/student relationship is not a good fit, either person should contact the bee school staff in order to insure that the students mentoring needs are met. We are all here to help the students become good beekeepers.

Last but not least, being a mentor and a new beekeeper are both equally rewarding experiences. This is a great opportunity for established beekeepers to hone their skills and to also pass along their knowledge and experience to the next generation of beekeepers.