



# South Tipperary Beekeepers' Association

*Fact Sheet no. 3*

## Choosing a Hive

If you intend to keep bees you will have to decide at some stage what hive type you intend to use. Most beekeepers have their own preference. It is important that before you choose a hive type you should get advice from several beekeepers in your area. It is always better to have the same hive type as your neighbor just in case you need to exchange some equipment.

At least choose a hive type that is in use in Ireland. It is important that the hive type is a standard type used in this country. There is no point in choosing a hive that you cannot get equipment for with relative ease such as frames and foundation.

The two most popular hives in Ireland are the Commercial and National hive. Both are used by the small and large beekeeper. Each hive has its advantages and disadvantages. Both have almost the same external dimension so there is a certain amount of interchangeability between the hives. The advantages and disadvantages are outlined below

Advantages of the commercial hive are:

1. Ease of construction.
2. Brood box large enough to accommodate a good laying queen.
3. Interchangeable with certain part of National hive.

Disadvantages

1. Brood boxes are heavy when full.
2. Brood frame can be a strain on the back when examining.
3. Short lugs can be awkward to handle by some beginners.

Advantages of National Hive

1. Lighter and easier to move.
2. Frames with long lugs are easier to handle.
3. Suitable for lady beekeepers.
4. Interchangeable with certain parts of Commercial Hive.

Disadvantages of National Hive

1. More complex to construct.
2. Brood box too small for prolific queen.
3. Supers are very small.
4. Super frames not suitable for our comb.

Some beekeepers when using a National brood box also give the bees a national super for the queen to lay in. This is known as “brood and a half”. It is possible to use commercial supers on National hives, however they can be very heavy when full.

The Smith hive is also popular in certain parts of Ireland. It has the same frame size as the National except it has short lugs. Construction is relatively simple.

It is better to avoid all other hive types such as the Dadant and Langstroth. These hives are not popular in Ireland and if you ever want to dispose of your equipment you will have difficulty because it will not be standard equipment. Getting a loan of an extractor will not be possible as the frame size will not suit most of those in use in Ireland.

The old type hives such as CDB or WBC do make a very good garden feature but are best avoided by the beginners. Wait until you are more experienced and then if you are sure you like such a hive why not give one a try.

Whatever you decide to do remember to get advice and help from senior beekeepers and then make up your mind.

SOUTH TIP