

BEGINNING BEEKEEPER CASE STUDY



Adam Barreras

Omaha, Nebraska

This is a real-life example of a start-up beekeeper. Read this case study for tips and advice. To learn more about our work with beginning farmers and beekeepers, visit cfra.org/farmers.



Started beekeeping in 2019 to add diversity to his family farm operation, Barreras Family Farm.



He has five hives near a pond on his family's property. The area is fairly open, complete with flowers, a nearby orchard, and a windbreak.



Sells his honey at various farmers markets.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORSHIP

“ The supplier we originally purchased our bees from, Fat Head Honey, gave me very good advice.

They told me to find a beekeeper who has successfully raised bees through three Nebraska winters. Ask them to mentor you for three to four years. Do exactly what the mentor tells you for two full years. After your second year, feel free to slowly start experimenting with new hive setups and different tools.

I offered my mentor weekly physical labor in return for his 55+ years of knowledge and advice. ”



Adam with his mentor.



LOCATION IS KEY

“ It is very important for the beekeeper to know where to situate the hives. They need to be out of wind and in the sunlight, because shade gets too cold. Hives are ideally placed near a water source and around flowers. Bees will travel to find food but the closer the pollen is, the less they have to work, and the faster they can make honey.



I am actively tracking data to try to nail down specifics so I can inform others who are wondering about hive conditions in correlation to honey production. ”

HIVE STYLE AND EQUIPMENT

“ I use a Langstroth hive style. I wear jeans, boots, a long-sleeved shirt, a hat with netting to protect my face, and long gloves that go up to my shoulders. ”



ADVICE FOR NEW BEEKEEPERS

Join a bee club and set yourself up for success. This is a good place to find beekeepers with a lot of knowledge and experience.

Find a mentor. Be honest and transparent about your lack of experience, and let them know you're willing to learn and put in the effort. Being humble builds a good mentor relationship.

Beekeeping is a slow process. You need strong, healthy hives. You may not get honey the first couple of years. It varies greatly, and patience is needed.

CENTER INVOLVEMENT

Adam was a guest speaker for the Center for Rural Affairs' beekeeping class series, which featured marketing, U.S. Department of Agriculture funding options, and budgeting for beekeeping.

FAVORITE PART OF BEEKEEPING

“ I enjoy checking my brood box. Taking apart the hive and watching the bees work is definitely a favorite aspect. ”

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