



Selling Honey

Complying with the Law

This leaflet has been produced to help small scale beekeepers who wish to sell their honey. It highlights and explains relevant honey and health and safety regulations.

It makes practical suggestions to enable the beekeeper to comply with the law.

If you have any doubts or concerns don't hesitate to contact your local Trading Standards department who are always willing to help.

The regulations specify:-

- The water content of the honey must be not more than 20%. The higher the water content the more likely the honey is to ferment. A refractometer may be used to indicate the water content of honey.
- The percentages of invert sugars and sucrose must be consistent with that expected from the floral source. No problem here if you use your own honey.
- The honey shall not have been heated in such a way as to significantly destroy enzymes and drive off the volatile aromatic compounds which give each type of honey its unique quality.
If honey is warmed for extraction and bottling it is advisable to keep the temperature below 35°C and to cool quickly. For pasteurisation a temperature of 63°C is needed for 30 minutes followed by rapid cooling. Honey is best preserved by storing at a constantly cool temperature, preferably 12°C or lower.
- The honey should be free from mould, insects, insect debris, brood and any other organic or inorganic substance foreign to the composition of honey.
Take care to minimise the introduction of foreign materials into the extraction room. The honey must be filtered to remove any foreign materials. The recommended mesh size is 0.2 mm which will ensure that some pollen remains. The extraction room and all equipment should be washed thoroughly before and after extraction.
- Containers should be made of materials which under normal and foreseeable conditions of use do not transfer their constituents to the honey in quantities which could endanger human health or bring about a deterioration in its aroma, taste, texture or colour.

Equipment made of food grade stainless steel, food grade plastic and glass meet these criteria.

Labelling

The label should indicate (see reverse for details) –

1. The description of the product.
2. The name and address of the producer (within the EU).
3. The country of origin.
4. A 'Best before' date.
5. A lot mark. This could be the "Best before" date see 4.
6. The weight.

1. Description of product

This must be one of the following reserved descriptions:

- Honey.
- Comb honey.
- Chunk honey.
- Baker's honey intended for cooking only.
- The word 'honey' with any other true description e.g. Honeydew honey, Pressed honey, Blossom honey.
- The word 'honey' with a regional, topographical or territorial reference.

If there is any reference to a particular plant or blossom (this includes both pictures and words), the honey must have come wholly or mainly from that blossom or plant - i.e. the honey must be characterised by that blossom or plant. If reference is made to a geographical origin the honey must come wholly from that place.

2. Name and address of producer, importer, packer etc.

Sufficient information is needed in order to trace the producer by an address within the EU.

3. Country of origin

Honey must be labelled with the country/ies in which the honey was harvested. This may be a member state of the EU. In our case it could be 'Product of the UK' or 'Product of England' but must be IN ADDITION to the address.

4. Best before date

Honey will keep in good condition for many years if it is kept in an airtight container at a constantly low temperature but an appropriate durability or 'Best before' date must be given. Two years from the date of bottling is reasonable. If this specifies day month and year, a lot number is not required.

5. Lot Number

A lot means a batch of sales units of food produced, manufactured or packaged under similar conditions. It enables problems to be traced. The lot number is preceded by the letter "L" to distinguish it from other indicators. The number may be a short code comprising letters and/or numbers identifying the appropriate batch. It is prudent to have small lot sizes.

The beekeeper is required to keep a record of each batch with its provenance and destination and retain this for the shelf life plus 6 months.

For direct sales like farmers markets or sales at the door lot numbers and 'Best before' dates are not needed.

6. The weight

Honey can be sold in any weight including the traditional UK ones. Imperial units can be added after the metric ones but must not be in larger type and there must be no other print between them.

The abbreviation for gram is "g" and for kilogram is "kg". An "s" must not be added. There must be one type space between the numerical value and the unit or its abbreviation.

6. Height of metric figures varies with weight. Metric figures must precede Imperial figures if used.

1. Descriptor must not mislead and should conform to reserved descriptions.

1. Illustration must not mislead.

1. The Honey must come entirely from identified source.

2. The Name and Address of producer, packer or seller.

3. It is mandatory to include the Country of Origin.

4. Suggest 2 years. If day/month/year quoted, the Lot No: is not required.

5. The L precedes the Lot Number (ie the Batch Identification Code).

454 g (1lb)

HONEY
from Gardenshire

Beekeepers: Mr & Mrs F Glucose
6 Apis Mellifera Avenue
Newtown Flowerbunch
Gardenshire GS2 3AM

Best Before end: Lot No:

Produce of the UK

Printing of labels

Printing must be clearly legible and permanent. Labels should be fixed to the side of the container. The lettering must be 3 mm high for weights between 50 and 200 g, 4 mm high for weights between 200 g and 1 kg and 6 mm high for greater weights. Only the weight declarations have to be the specified size.

The criterion for the size of all the other statutory information is that it must be easy to understand, clearly legible, indelible, not interrupted by other written or pictorial matter and in a conspicuous place such as to be easily visible. The information given on the label must be true in every respect and in no way misleading.

It is suggested that computer generated labels have the height of the lettering checked before printing a batch.

Food hygiene

Registration of premises does not apply to the direct supply by the producer of small quantities of primary products to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer.

However, the BBKA does recommend that beekeepers who offer honey for sale familiarise themselves with the basic hazards and practices in food handling.

The Royal Society for Public Health www.rsph.org provides information on this subject and courses run by some local authorities lead to the RSPH Certificate in food hygiene awareness.

Changes in legislation and regulations can affect the accuracy of this leaflet. The latest issue and further information can be found on the BBKA web-site www.bbka.org.uk

Further guidance on the Honey Regulations 2005 can be obtained from the Food Standards Agency.

General points:

This leaflet is one of a series intended to help beekeepers and non-beekeepers. If you believe the contents of this leaflet are relevant to you, please seek further advice from an experienced beekeeper or your tutor.

Information is updated regularly – please check with the BBKA web site at: www.bbka.org.uk – for the latest information.

This leaflet supersedes: (B10 2009 4th edition).

Note: The same information is published in our printed leaflet L010 available from the BBKA.

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