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Guide to Purchasing Hive Equipment

For new beekeepers purchasing hive equipment can be a confusing and sometimes overwhelming process. Below are the steps for making decisions related to purchasing your first hive.

Step 1 – Determine the width of hive bodies you want to use (10 frame or 8 frame)

The width of hive bodies is determined by the maximum number of self-spacing frames it can hold. Modern hive bodies are typically offered in two widths, 10 frame and 8 frame. 10-frame-wide hive bodies have been the norm for many decades now and the overall hive body dimensions are generally consistent between woodenware manufacturers (16-1/4" wide by 19-7/8" long). 8-frame-wide hive bodies are not as common but have been gaining in popularity the last 10 years. 8-frame-wide hive body widths are not consistent between manufacturers.

Some beekeepers prefer to use 8-frame equipment due to the weight of the boxes. It is important to realize an 8-frame deep weighs almost as much as a 10 frame medium. So if weight is a concern you should consider using 8-frame mediums for your hive.

Step 2 – Determine the depth of hive bodies you want to use (deeps or mediums).

The primary reason some beekeepers prefer to use all medium hive bodies for their hives is due to weight in handling. At this point it is useful to refer to the ***Hive Bodies Explained*** and the ***Hive Configurations*** handouts for a detailed discussion of the issues. It is important to realize that if a beekeeper plans to purchase a nucleus colony instead of a package that most nuc producers use deep hive bodies and frames.

Step 3 – Determine the type of frames and foundation you want to use in the hive

There are several options here. Refer to the ***Frames Explained*** handout for more information. Sometimes this decision is driven by the method the beekeeper anticipates using for extracting honey. For beginning beekeepers, we suggest wood frames with waxed plastic foundation or one-piece plastic frames/foundation combinations due to durability and ease of use. Wood bound frames with wired wax foundation can be fussy to assemble (no manufacturer will sell assembled frames with the wired wax installed. This is something the beekeeper must do.)

Step 4 – Determine the type of bottom board you want your hive to have

There are two options, solid or screened. Refer to the ***Equipment Explained*** handout for an explanation of the differences between these.