

## Simple Bee Houses

One of the simple technologies which can benefit Kenyan and other African beekeepers is the use of simple bee houses. These houses can be very simply constructed out of mud, sticks, poles and grass. Bee houses are common in other countries in the Eastern African region and in particular Ethiopia and Eritrea where the beehives are kept in the same house as people and animals! The bees however use their own entrance round the back of the house and generally don't bring problems from stinging. I have also seen bee houses effectively used in Uganda and Zambia.



**A locally constructed bee house in Nakuru, Kenya**



The view from outside the bee house

### **ADVANTAGES OF BEE HOUSES:**

- They can be constructed out of simple locally available materials at a size to suit your pocket
- They provide shade for the hives in hot areas (but may have too much shade for cool areas)
- They provide protection for hives and bees from heavy rain - important when hives are made from mud/sticks and other local materials
- They provide protection from wind – important in exposed areas
- Because the hives are inside, expensive hive roofing material can be dispensed with (such as corrugated iron). Farmers in Kenya with hives in bee houses frequently use sacking material to cover their hives to reduce the cost of hive construction
- The hives and bees are screened away from people and livestock, reducing stinging by bees - this point is particularly important in Kenya where farm size is small and fragmenting rapidly - for example children are frequently tempted to throw stones at bee hives aggravating the bees
- Bee houses make it easy to keep bees on farms where there are few trees to shade and screen away bees from people and animals
- The bee house can be locked reducing theft which can be a major problem for beekeepers in Kenya and other countries

## **DISADVANTAGES OF BEE HOUSES:**

- There is an additional start-up cost in construction of the house
- The house can bring excessive shade in cool areas

Note: The bee house pictured in this article is at my own apiary in Nakuru, Kenya. If you would like to follow the seasonal progress of the bees pictured then please subscribe to the apiconsult e-newsletter at <http://www.apiconsult.com> where I give a regular update on the progress of the bees. This is interesting as it gives a good insight into the problems and opportunities of beekeeping in Africa.

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