

What's the BUZZ

Q+A with Fairmont Empress Beekeeper Theo Fredrich

What is the importance of bees? Why must we take care of them so they can take care of us?

Pollination is the most important aspect of beekeeping as it directly affects the amount of food we produce. If bees didn't exist for farm pollination it would result in less food being produced. Bees also help to maintain ecosystem balance and biodiversity in nature by pollination.

How many bee colonies does the Empress have in total at the hotel and at the farm?

There are four bee colonies in the Centennial Gardens at the Empress, and an additional 36 Empress hive colonies at our farm in Cedar, BC.

How many honeybees live in the Empress Centennial Garden? How many Empress bees live at your farm?

In peak season, each of the four hives in the Empress Hotel's Centennial Garden will have 100,000 honeybees! In the 36 Empress hives that we care for at Fredrich's Honey Farm, there are approximately an additional 3.6 Million honeybees in peak season.

How many bees can live in each beehive/colony?

Up to around 100,000 bees including worker bees, drones and the Queen bee live in each hive.

From all of the Empress hives, how much honey is produced each year?

Every year, Empress honeybees produce more than 4,000 pounds of honey from the 40 colonies.

What is pollination and why is pollination important?

Pollination is the transfer of pollen grains from the male anther of a plant to the female stigma. This leads to the production of fruits and seeds that will create more plants. Many insects act as pollinators (bumblebees, moths, butterflies, hummingbirds) moving pollen between plants. Honeybees are very hairy and the pollen grains (dust) cling to the tiny hairs on their bodies. They visit the plants to get food (nectar) and in this way, they transfer the pollen. The plants are then fertilized and fruit & seeds can then develop



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BEEKEEPER THEO. HOW DID YOU BECOME A BEEKEEPER?

Fredrich's Honey Farm is a family business and I grew up around bees. My father, Theo Sr. is a Master Beekeeper. I also took the Bee Masters Course at UBC and have been a full time beekeeper for 12 years.

IS IT DANGEROUS WORKING WITH BEES?

It is not dangerous working with bees, unless you have or develop an allergy to bee stings like my wife Taylor did. They are docile and will share their space, as long as you respect the bees and their environment.

WHY DO YOU USE A SMOKER?

The smoker calms the bees down so that the beekeeper can work in the hives and extract the honey. The smoke is not harmful to the bees or the environment. It does not contain any harmful chemicals.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BEES IN THE WINTER?

When honey season is over, and their work is done, honeybees go into hibernation. They cluster together in balls within the hive to keep warm.

DOES EACH HIVE HAVE A QUEEN?

Yes, each hive has one Queen Bee. She lays all the eggs, sometimes thousands each day.

WHAT HAPPENS AT FREDRICH'S HONEY FARM?

The farm was started by my dad and uncle (Theo Sr. & Erwin) in 1966. My dad had been a beekeeper in Germany before he and his family left Europe to live in Canada after WW2. My wife and I took over the farm in 2009. In essence, not a lot has changed in the actual beekeeping operation over the years. In spring, we help the bees to build up their numbers and then move the hives out into the local farms (cranberry, blueberry, apple and other fruit trees like quince) for springtime pollination. Then we move the bees up into our local mountains so the bees can forage on fireweed, shalal blossom and other mountain wildflowers. We harvest honey and pollen. Then each fall we bring the bees back down into their overwintering yards and get them ready for winter – making sure each colony looks healthy and is ready to rest until spring. As beekeepers, we work with companies like Fairmont Empress who have bee colonies and produce honey products for the hotel.

