Extension Helps Promote Beekeeping as an Alternative Farm Enterprise

**INTRODUCTION**
Honeybees provide pollination services to more than 90 million acres of commercial crops grown in the US. The USDA recently reported that general colony loss levels in 2009 were 29% and increased to 34% in 2010. Furthermore, honey bees can provide pollination services, improve crop yield and increase farm income when utilized as an alternative enterprise on small farms.

**OBJECTIVES**
1) Recruit and educate new beekeepers in order to increase current bee populations and diversify farm income and 2) develop an educational forum and support network for new, veteran and potential beekeepers.

**METHODS**
The agent organized and facilitated six beginning beekeeper short courses to help prospective beekeepers get their start in beekeeping. Secondly, the agent assembled a group of local stakeholders to provide technical expertise and leadership to the planning and establishment of a monthly educational forum.

**Sources of Beekeeping Information**
Honey Bee Research and Extension Lab
For a complete list of beekeeping publications and videos visit www.UFHoneybee.com

Florida Master Beekeeper Program
This is a beekeeper training and certification program that offers four levels of training and advancement. Visit www.UFHoneybee.com for more information.

Your County Extension Agent
May be a good starting point to find out about local beekeeping associations and activities. Visit www.solutionsforyourlife.com to find your local extension agent.

Florida Bee College
This is the largest and most comprehensive beekeeping event in Florida. It is scheduled for March 9-10, 2012 in St Augustine, Florida.

FL Department of Agriculture — Bureau of Plant and Apiary Inspection. For a list of registered beekeepers in your county and other supplemental info visit: http://tinyurl.com/42m7j2p

**RESULTS**
Ninety-one percent of attendees (n=208) indicated they had the knowledge needed to successfully start their own bee colony. A follow-up survey revealed that 42% of participants made practice changes in their operations or started a new beekeeping operation.

State records reveal that 39 attendees registered their colonies with the state. This represents 91 new bee colonies that harvested over 800 lbs of honey in Duval County during 2010.

Additionally, the Jacksonville Beekeepers Association was formed and has grown to one of the largest associations in the state with over 160 members. The monthly meetings were attended by 776 individuals in 2010. These individuals have volunteered over 450 hours educating people about the importance of honeybees at public events. This group also helped establish and manage two educational hives at Extension’s Urban Gardening facility.

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