

## Getting into Beekeeping: Counting the Costs

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Perhaps the most common question we receive during our beekeeping course is, "How much will it cost to get started in beekeeping?" That's an excellent question, and one that I'll try to answer here. It is difficult to state precisely how much one will spend getting started. There are many variables such as preferred quality of materials, whether materials are bought individually or as part of a package, the amount of materials, kind of bees, size of materials, shipping distance, supplier, and so forth. Nonetheless, here is an initial answer to that question using information from the 1999 product catalog of Dadant & Sons, Inc.

Experienced beekeepers urge novices to start with two bee colonies. The reasons for this will become obvious after the first year of beekeeping but, in the mean time, suffice it to say that one colony of bees can be used to support the other should something happen to one of the two colonies. For instance, if one colony becomes hopelessly queenless, eggs and larvae from the second colony may be introduced into the first, allowing it to raise a new queen. Another reason is that it is more cost effective to operate two colonies than one.

The basic materials required to set up and work one beehive are listed below. The first column represents costs for the first year of beekeeping. The second column indicates costs for the second year. During the first year only sufficient materials are purchased to create and work a double brood chamber hive. Additional materials will be needed the second year as the bees fill their brood chambers to capacity with honey and brood, and begin putting excess honey into supers. Bees generally won't produce surplus honey the first year; hence, the expenses for setting up a beehive can be spread out over two years.

The materials in the list below reflect my preferences for materials based upon several years of experience. Note that I do not always buy the least expensive materials. Savings can otherwise be realized.

### One Beehive -- First Year

#### Beehive:

Unassembled Complete Hive (B52101)	\$48.50
Hive Body with Frames (B51101)	\$27.75
Duragilt Foundation (F39610) X 2	\$19.00

#### Package Bees:

Depending on type and source (3 lb.)	~\$35.00
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#### Protective Devices:

Ventilated Sun Helmet (M01087)	\$12.95
Folding Veil (V01093)	\$12.95
Polyester-Cotton Coveralls (M0106X)	\$33.50
Ventilated Leather Gloves (M0113X)	\$20.50
Boot Bands (M01060)	\$ 2.99

#### Tools:

Hive tool (M00757)	\$ 4.65
7" Smoker (M00927)	\$29.25
Frame Grip (M00754)	\$ 8.95
Division Board Feeder (M00859)	\$ 3.29
Bee Brush (M00751)	\$ 2.85

#### Medication:

Fumadil-B (M00171)	\$10.75
Terramycin (M00174)	\$ 4.40
Apistan (M001261)	\$21.95

### One Beehive -- Second Year

Wooden Queen Excluder (B41101)	\$10.50
6-5/8" Super w/ Frames (B31101) X 4	\$73.80
Duragilt Foundation (F39910) X 4	\$27.00

Queen	\$10.00
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Extractor?	
Uncapping Knife?	
Uncapping Tub?	

The costs for setting up one beehive come to approximately \$300 for basic materials during the first year. Taxes and shipping may need to be added to these costs. Setting up a second beehive the first year will increase this cost to approximately \$430. Costs for one hive during the second year most certainly will include about \$120 for four supers with foundation and one replacement queen, or \$240 for two hives. Hence the two-year costs for one hive will be about \$420 for one hive, and \$670 for two hives. Second year costs can increase significantly if the beekeeper chooses to purchase an extractor, an uncapping tub, and an uncapping knife.

Once this initial investment is made, a well-maintained beehive can last for 30 years or more. There will be annual costs for queens, foundation, and medication, but at a relatively small expense. The above expense for a single beehive averaged over 7 years would amount to only \$60 per year. A typical, properly maintained Illinois bee colony will produce some 75 pounds of honey per year after the first year. Sales of honey can pay for the purchase price of the hives, bees, tools, and supplies. Avoid buying used materials without expert advice!