

Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Conwy Beekeepers' Association

How to win prizes at the Honey Show

Showing honey is very time-consuming, but it can be fun. You must pay attention to detail and you must take it seriously to win prizes, but don't become obsessed with winning.

The local shows are great shop-windows for beekeeping.

Llanrwst and Eglwysbach shows give free entry to the Show to exhibitors.

A few prize cards, preferably First Prize, on your sales table at the Conwy Honey Fair will always boost your sales of honey.

Read the schedule very carefully. Check that you are using the most up to date schedule. Check that your honey is entered in the correct class.

Ask for help using grading glasses, to ensure your honey is placed in the correct class.

Go for the easier classes! The light and medium clear honey classes are the most popular, but the most difficult to win. If the schedule asks for two jars of honey the jars should match in every respect.

Honey must be shown in 454g squat honey jars. Check if plastic or metal lids are specified. Check that you position the label correctly on the jar. If the schedule says ½ inch from the bottom of the jar, make a plywood template to set the label correctly. Ensure your lids are clean.

Easy classes:

Shallow frame of honey suitable for extracting

Select a nice heavy comb with flat faces, fully capped, no hollow spots, no brace comb on the frame, no yellow travel staining on the cappings. Hold it up to a strong light. Check that there is no granulation and no pollen. Scrape the woodwork clean with a sharp Stanley knife blade.

Display the frame in a good quality display case with clean glass.

Cut comb

Cut the pieces of comb carefully and stand them on a grill pan mesh to drain. The judge looks for heavy matching pieces of comb, fully capped on both sides, no liquid honey in the container, no pollen, no honey on the container lid. The judge removes the comb from the box and checks that the underside is capped.

Chunk honey

Very eye-catching. You can win Best in Show with this class.

Cut the largest possible piece of comb to fit in the jar. The comb must be the full height of the jar, or it will float upwards, leaving a gap underneath. The comb should stand upright. The glass magnifies the size of the comb, and gives a great appearance. Use a light liquid honey, and use the same colour honey for the comb. No loose bits of beeswax cappings in the jar and no pollen in the comb.

Invention

Any good, useful idea can win a prize, but it must be an original idea. Include a clear description.

Display of hive products

This class is under-supported, and seldom attracts more than two entries.

Three types of honey in jars, a nice frame of honey and a good block of wax and you should win a prize.

Photograph

You don't even need to be a beekeeper to win this class!

Difficult classes:

Light honey, medium honey

Very popular classes requiring lots of patience to produce a winner. The judge uses a torch to search for bits of wax or pollen. You should do the same. Ensure that the honey is in the right class. Honey must be the correct weight, good flavour, sparkling clear, no dust on the surface of the honey and good viscosity.

Block of beeswax

You need patience and a good technique to produce prize-winning blocks. Light coloured fragrant wax wins prizes. Dark dull wax doesn't. Heather wax has the best fragrance. Check that the weight is correct.

Dark honey

Only produced occasionally. Some unscrupulous exhibitors drag out the same jars year after year.

Other classes:

Granulated honey Fine granulation, no frosting against the glass and no liquid residue on top of the honey. A strong flavoured honey will do well.

Soft set honey No frosting and a strong flavour.

Candles. Needs more support. Try making dipped candles instead of using moulds.

Heather honey. The best of all honey. The judge looks for bright amber honey and large suspended air bubbles. Heather honey must be thixotropic, ie. jelly like. No granulation allowed.

Good luck!

Compiled by Peter McFadden, updated September 2011.