



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

THE RETURN OF URBAN BEEKEEPING

For much of the twentieth century, apiculture was imagined as a rural craft, practised in orchards, meadows, and farms where flowering plants appeared to stretch to the horizon. In recent years, however, honeybees have returned in an unexpected setting: dense cities. Hives now sit on rooftops, balconies, and community gardens, driven by enthusiasm for local food, curiosity about pollination, and anxiety about wider insect declines. Yet the urban revival is more than a fashionable hobby. It is also a practical response to environmental change: as landscapes, pesticides, and land use patterns shift, both bees and beekeepers adapt by finding new niches in the built environment.

At first glance, the city seems inhospitable. Asphalt and concrete intensify heat, traffic adds particulate pollution, and glass-heavy architecture can appear to crowd out vegetation. But urban ecologists note that cities often contain high biodiversity at small scales. A single neighbourhood may include park plantings, roadside trees, private gardens, allotments, balcony pots, and flowering weeds in overlooked corners. Instead of one large field, bees may encounter many micro-habitats, each offering nectar and pollen. The result can be a longer and more continuous flowering season than many people expect, because ornamental species are selected precisely to provide colour across spring, summer, and autumn.

This continuity matters when urban environments are compared with modern countryside conditions. In some regions, rural land has shifted toward monoculture: large tracts planted with a single crop that blooms briefly and then disappears, followed by long “forage gaps.” When flowering crops are absent, bees must rely on hedgerows, field margins, or distant patches of wild flora that may have been reduced by land intensification. Cities can therefore outperform rural areas not because they contain more vegetation overall, but because they contain greater variety packed into short flight ranges. Studies in several European cities have found that hives can draw nectar from dozens of plant species within a few hundred metres, suggesting that diversity and timing often matter more than sheer area.

Regulatory change has also influenced where bees can be kept. For decades, many municipalities treated beehives as a nuisance, alongside urban pests, because of fears about stings, swarming, and neighbour complaints. In recent years, that stance has softened in many places as training has expanded and clearer rules have reduced uncertainty. Local authorities commonly require hive registration, minimum distances



from walkways, and barriers or flight paths that encourage bees to rise above head height quickly. Some councils also insist that keepers provide a nearby water source, which reduces the chance of bees congregating at taps, fountains, or swimming pools when colonies need water for cooling and brood rearing.

Training and better guidance can make a noticeable difference to how urban beekeeping plays out socially. Courses for beginners typically cover protective equipment, seasonal inspections, swarm prevention, and how to recognise aggressive behaviour. They also emphasise responsible practices such as replacing old queens, keeping records, and learning when to seek help from more experienced keepers. These measures do not eliminate risk, but they reduce conflict by making colonies easier to manage and by giving neighbours predictable procedures for raising concerns. In this sense, the city hive becomes less a private experiment and more a small, regulated piece of shared urban ecology.

However, urban beekeeping is not automatically a conservation win. A common misunderstanding is that adding more honeybee hives always helps pollinators. Honeybees are only one pollinating insect among many, and in some contexts they compete with wild bees—bumblebees and solitary species—for nectar and pollen. If hive density becomes too high, especially in areas with limited flowers, honeybees can dominate available resources while native pollinators lose out. This is why some ecologists argue that the most beneficial action for many city residents is not installing a hive, but improving habitat by planting pollinator-friendly flowers and reducing unnecessary pesticide use, thereby increasing forage for a wider range of species.

Disease adds another layer of complexity. Keeping many colonies close together can facilitate the spread of pathogens, parasites, and viruses, particularly if inexperienced keepers fail to monitor health, quarantine new equipment, or replace contaminated comb. Problems such as parasitic mites can move between colonies via drifting bees or robbing behaviour, and stress from poor nutrition can increase vulnerability. In that way, a well-intentioned boom in urban hives can inadvertently intensify the problems it aims to solve, unless beekeeping standards rise alongside hive numbers.

Finally, the city also challenges popular assumptions about “purity.” Urban honey is sometimes marketed as cleaner or more “natural” than honey from agricultural land, based on the idea that farms use more pesticides. The reality is mixed. Urban bees may avoid certain crop chemicals, but they can encounter heavy metals from traffic, residues from construction materials, and pollutants that settle onto leaves and soil. Laboratory analyses generally find that honey rarely exceeds food safety limits, but the absence of frequent exceedances does not mean the environment is contaminant-free. Wax, in



particular, can accumulate fat-soluble substances over time, and because wax is reused inside the hive, responsible beekeepers replace old comb periodically and avoid siting hives near obvious industrial sources.

The long-term value of urban beekeeping therefore depends on balancing enthusiasm with ecological limits and good governance. Properly managed hives can support education, reconnect people with seasonal cycles, and encourage wider habitat improvements. Yet success will not be measured simply by how many jars are sold or how many rooftops host colonies. It will be measured by whether cities become richer habitats for diverse pollinators—and whether beekeeping practices remain aligned with that broader ecological goal.

Questions 1–5

Select the correct answer.

1 The writer suggests that urban beekeeping is more than a trend because it

- A** responds to environmental change in a practical way
- B** produces higher honey yields than rural beekeeping
- C** has removed public concern about insect stings
- D** is mainly driven by commercial demand for wax

2 What point is made about the availability of food for bees in cities?

- A** It is limited to parks and large public gardens.
- B** It is reduced by the lack of farmland.
- C** It can be supplied by many small sources over a long period.
- D** It depends on a single dominant crop each season.

3 Why might some rural areas provide less reliable forage for bees than cities?

- A** Rural flowers are affected more by traffic pollution.
- B** Flowering crops may be present only for short periods.
- C** Regulations prevent hives being placed near fields.
- D** Rural bees visit fewer species because distances are greater.

4 According to the passage, one purpose of requiring a water source near hives is to

- A** increase the amount of honey produced
- B** prevent bees from developing disease
- C** encourage bees to stay on rooftops
- D** reduce the chance of bees gathering at household water points



5 What does the passage say about claims that city honey is “cleaner”?

- A** They overlook other urban sources of contamination.
- B** They are supported by evidence from wax samples.
- C** They are true because cities use fewer chemicals than farms.
- D** They are unreliable because contaminants cannot be detected.

Questions 6–9

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

- 6** Urban ecologists are surprised to find that cities can support honeybees.
- 7** Training and clearer guidelines have helped reduce conflict between urban beekeepers and neighbours.
- 8** High hive density can harm native pollinators in areas where flowers are limited.
- 9** Laboratory tests show that city honey frequently breaks official food safety standards.

Questions 10–13

Complete the sentences below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

- 10** Some municipalities once regarded beehives as a
- 11** Parasites and viruses can spread more readily when colonies are kept together.
- 12** Certain substances can build up in hive and remain there as it is reused.
- 13** The success of urban beekeeping should ultimately be judged by whether cities provide richer habitats for diverse

Answer Key

- 1. A
- 2. C
- 3. B
- 4. D
- 5. A



6. NOT GIVEN

7. TRUE

8. TRUE

9. FALSE

10. nuisance

11. close

12. wax

13. pollinators