

History of Standards of Perfection for Honey Judging in Canada

By Larry Lindahl

A standard is an authorized and accepted measure of quality covering the various classes of exhibition honey.

Exhibition standards are compiled by the elected representatives of the trade and issued as a guide and directive to exhibitors and judges so that both may know what is considered a perfect exhibit. Without standards, exhibitors would have one idea of what constitutes a good exhibit but the judge might have an entirely different point of view.

To be a standard, it must be set by an authorized, reputable and knowledgeable body and accepted and endorsed by the industry or affected parties.

The Canadian Honey Council is such a body in the honey industry. It is composed of elected representatives (directors) from the provincial organizations across Canada, each province sending a delegate from the producers and one from the packers, with the exception of the Maritimes, who elect one producer and one packer to represent the combined provinces of the Maritimes.

The British Columbia Honey Producers Association is another such body and, in fact, they set up a recognized standard for liquid honey long before the Canadian Honey Council was formed.

In 1924 Mr. J. J. Mahoney suggested a scorecard by which liquid honey could be judged. It set up a standard of 25 points for Colour, 25 points for Brightness, 35 points for Density, and 15 points for Flavour. This was used generally in the British Columbia Fairs, being endorsed by the BC Department of agriculture, and the BCHPA.

It continued to be used in British Columbia until after 1950, although the Canadian Honey Council had proposed and published an expanded schedule of points in 1948, which was again expanded in 1950. A revision was made in 1956, and again in 1957, which is the schedule we are working under today.

In 1948 when the Canadian Honey Council set up their first Liquid Honey Schedule, standards were also set up for Granulated Honey, Section Comb Honey, Honey Displays and Beeswax, with revisions being made to the schedules of Granulated and Comb Honey in 1949, 1956 and 1957. A standard covering Commercial Displays was published in 1956.

At the annual meeting of the Canadian Honey Council in 1972, standards were accepted for Frames of Honey, Chunk Honey, and Cut Comb Honey.

Over the years, changes in exhibition standard, and competitions have made it necessary to revise or compile new standards of perfection as required. In the interest of uniformity, it is best to have such changes or additions prepared for discussion, agreement, and final acceptance by the British Columbia Honey Producers Association, the Canadian Honey Producers Association, and the Fair or Exhibition Board in question.

Submitted by Larry Lindahl as requested by Gerry McKee
August 3, 2015

Honey, Wax and Hive Contests

- Labels or any distinctive design that could identify the exhibitor will not be allowed on the entries until judging is complete. Each exhibitor may only enter one item per Class Category.
- Jar size must be 1 lb. or 500 g jars, without labels or distinctive markings. All three must be identical.
- Beeswax – there must be either 2×500 gram blocks or 2×1 pound blocks. Beeswax will be judged by cleanliness, colour, level, consistency of samples, marks and cracks.

General Rules for the Honey Competition

- An exhibitor may not enter more than one exhibit in any one class. The exhibitor must colour grade their entry prior to registration, or major points will be deducted.
- All entries of honey must be the product of the exhibitors own apiary from the current year and prepared by the exhibitor.
- Entries should be from the same honey batch, and all three jars and each entry must colour match.
- The standard for colour will be based on the Canada Honey Classifier. Honey, with a moisture of more than 18.6% will be disqualified.
- Ribbons (and some prizes) will be awarded for first, second, and third in each category.
- Please consider donating a jar of your award-winning honey to the silent auction!
- All exhibitors are encouraged to contribute one jar of the exhibit for the People's Choice Award at the banquet.

General Rules for the Mead Competition

- Entries should consist of one clear/plain bottle (approximately 26 oz.) of either non-carbonated, dry mead, non-carbonated, sweet mead, or mead with fruits for each category.
- Entries must consist of mead, made by the exhibitor using honey from their own APIARY's. Each bottle must have a plain label either with "Dry Mead", "Sweet Mead", or

“Melomel” (mead with fruit) for the appropriate category. We will provide the labels that each exhibitor must attach to their entries.

- When registering your entry, you must indicate grape tapes or fruit, type and type of Honey by dominant flower nectar on your entry form (not on the bottle).

Liquid Honey Class Hints and Tips:

- Appearance and uniformity of containers: Judges will consider serious flaws on glass, rusty or scratched tops, also stickiness on tops and on glass. All containers and tops should be of identical size, shape, and colour.
- Uniform Levels of Fill: The air space should not be visible when the cap is in place and the jar is standing upright. The measurement from the honey surface to the top of the jar should be the same in all jars.
- Colour: If the colour of an exhibit is not consistent, it will lose points. If a honey is entered in the wrong colour class, it will receive no points or can be disqualified
- Freedom from Crystals: liquid honey, that has started to granulate (form sugar crystals) has an unattractive appearance. Honey will maintain its liquid condition. If it is heated to 160F (70C) in a hot water bath until all signs of granulation have disappeared, and then cooled rapidly. Take care not to darken the honey by overheating. Place sealer rings or wood under the honey jars so that they will not be in direct contact with the heat.
- Freedom from Foreign Material: With proper straining and clean containers, there should be very few specks in the honey. Any specks that can be seen should be removed by means of a soda straw. Hold your index finger over the top of the straw as it is lowered into the honey. When the lower end is directly over the speck, remove your finger, and some of the honey and the speck will rise into the straw. Close your finger over the top again and lower the straw over another speck. One straw will remove several specks if you start with a speck nearest the top at work downwards towards those at the bottom of the jar. Hold your finger over the straw as you remove it from the honey.
- Freedom from Air Bubbles, either in Suspension or as Froth: Air bubbles in honey are not as serious as foreign material, but detract from its appearance. Try to avoid their creation by careful handling of the honey. Warming the honey will help bring bubbles to the surface as a foam. Remove foam or froth with a teaspoon.
- Uniformity of Honey: Honey in all jars should have the same density, flavour, colour, and appearance.
- Brightness: Bubbles, granulation, and dingy glass, give an exhibit a dull appearance. Bubbles and granulation have been dealt with elsewhere. Jars may be given a sparkle by dipping in a hot water and vinegar solution and drying them on a lint free towel for polishing with a glass polish. They should be wrapped in paper napkins after polishing. Do not use newspaper or aluminum foil. Honey sometimes looks dull and loses points, because it contains colloidal material over which the beekeeper has no control.

- **Flavour and aroma:** Since people differ in their senses of taste and smell, emphasis should be placed on flavour and aroma. Points are lost if the honey has a disagreeable or foreign flavour.
- **Density:** (17% or less) Entries are marked down 1 point for each one-tenth of 1 per cent moisture in excess of 17 percent. A refractometer is required to determine such degrees of moisture. Moisture content of 18.6% or higher will be disqualified.

Comb Honey Class (Sections and Cut Comb)

- **Quality and Uniformity of Comb Sections;** here the judge is, considering the wooden or plastic frame around the comb. Quality refers to the whiteness, polish, dovetailing, square-ness, and lack of imperfections in the frames. Uniformity requires that all frames be of one type:
 - 4" x 5" (10.16 cm x 12.7 cm), 4 1/4 " x 4 1/4 " (10.8 cm x 10.8cm) without beeswax, or
 - 4" (10.16 cm) Ross Round
- **Cleanliness of Frame Sections:** this refers to the removal of all propolis, burr comb, and foreign material from the wooden sections. Use a knife blade and sandpaper. Care must be taken not to damage the cappings. A narrow, pointed blade is required for removing propolis from the inner corners. Be careful that the propolis and wood scrapings do not enter open cells. If scrapings do enter open cells they should be carefully removed with a toothpick.
- **Completeness of Fill Appropriate to the Sections Used:** Passage-holes from one side of the comb to the other are difficult to avoid. Ideally, the entire frame should be filled with comb. The judge also considers the thickness of the comb. Shallow comb or empty spaces are scored down. Excessively thick combs due to the use of improperly matched equipment or misplaced fences would also be scored down.
- **Completeness of Capping:** Judges will score down combs with uncapped cells of honey. Leave the comb sections long enough to have the cappings completed but not long enough for them to become darkened.
- **Cleanliness and Appearance of Cappings:** The cells and the cappings that cover them are naturally white, but become darkened as the bees add pollen and propolis to the wax. As the wax becomes darker, it becomes stronger and more useful to the bees. Dark combs are less attractive, and the longer the comb remains with the bees, the darker it will become. Comb honey must be removed from the hive as soon as the bees have filled and capped the comb sections. Dark combs lose points. White combs gain points. Cleanliness refers to the absence of propolis, wood scrapings, or dirt on the surface of the comb or in open cells. Capping should not be sticky with honey.
- **Appearance:** Refers to the whiteness and smoothness of the cappings. Mechanical damage to the comb in handling is scored down. There is a wide variation in the appearance of comb sections produced by different colonies. The manner in which the cell is capped varies. Some colonies produce a capping that touches the honey in the

cell. These cappings have a dull, greasy appearance. Preference is given to comb surfaces that are smooth, even, and snowy white in color.

- **Quality and Flavour:** The granulation of comb honey, lowers its quality, as does the presence of pollen, or bee parts in the comb, or the use of heavy foundation. Any fermentation would disqualify an exhibit. No points would be lost for flavour, unless there was a disagreeable taste to the honey.
- **Uniformity of Combs:** As indicated under “Appearance of Capping”, combs produced by different colonies vary a good deal as to colour, completeness of fill, and appearance of cappings. There is a real advantage and getting the comb exhibit sections from one colony if possible.

Frame of Honey Class

- Exhibits that call for a frame of honey, or combs of honey removed from the hive. This is one of the easiest exhibits to prepare. The BC Honey Producers Association has approximately 10 stands for display of honey frames available. Choose a comb completely filled and capped. The cappings should have an even surface and be white. Brood rearing darkens combs, and the best comb for exhibition is one that has been constructed, filled and capped during a strong flow of light coloured honey. Take care not to damage the comb once it is removed from the colony. Let it hang free in a wooden box such as an apple box, with cleats to prevent it from moving once it is in place. Scrape the wooden frame, free of propolis, and then wrap the comb in cellophane or saran wrap to protect it from flies.
- **Suitability of Wooden Frame:** The frame should be properly nailed with all corners at right angles and opposite sides parallel. There should be at least two horizontal and supporting wires. Frame should be free of knots and splits that would weaken the frame.
- **Cleanliness of Wooden Frame:** The frame should be clean, white wood, scraped free of debris.
- **Completeness of Fill:** The comb should completely fill the frame, and all cells should be filled with honey.
- **Completeness of Capping:** All cells of honey should be completely capped if possible. All cells of honey should be completely capped if possible.
- **Cleanliness and Appearance of Cappings:** Cappings should be white without excessive travel stain and without mechanical damage, dust, or dirt. Cappings should present level, even surface over the entire comb.
- **Quality and Flavour:** Comb should be free of any brood or pollen. There should not be any noticeable difference in the honey in different parts of the comb. There should be no undesirable flavour to the honey. Honey in comb should be liquid, not granulated.

Beeswax Class

- **Colour:** The ideal colour for beeswax is described as a straw-coloured, primrose, or canary yellow. This colour should be clear, not cloudy.
- **Cleanliness:** Beeswax should be free from honey, propolis, bee parts, or other impurities. If any specs are apparent on the bottom of the cake, they should be scraped away and wax cake re-melted. No film of a mould release agent should be detectable. Avoid wrapping the wax in materials that will leave lint on the surface.
- **Uniformity of Appearance:** Cakes should be the same size, shape, and colour. Select 16-20 lb (6.75-9kg) of white raw wax cappings and process the entire lot at one time if possible. In this manner, you should avoid the variations in colour, size of cake and cleanliness that may occur if each cake is processed at a different time. The surface can be polished with a nylon stocking to remove bloom, and bring out the shine.
- **Freedom from Cracking:** Beeswax shrinks in cooling. If cooled too quickly, it will often show cracks in the upper surface. By covering the mold with a board and allowing it to cool at room temperature, cracking should be avoided. Handle the cakes carefully to avoid bruising and cracking.

Transporting

- Exhibits must often be transported up to hundreds of miles. If care is not taken in packing, the exhibit may become damaged and present a very poor appearance on the show table.
- Honey Classes with Comb: Each comb section should be neatly wrapped in cellophane. The combs should then be placed in a cardboard or wooden box to protect from damage.
- Liquid or Granulated Exhibits: The tops of the jars should be screwed on tight, and each jar wrapped or separated by the jar box filler, and each jar placed in its own compartment. “Fragile” and “Glass” stickers should be placed on the top and side of the carton. Care should be taken not to lean or tip the jars to avoid getting honey on the lids, or fresh clean lids can be brought and placed on the jars once they have arrived at the show.
- Bees Wax: Each cake of beeswax should be separated from the next. Care should be taken that none of the surfaces become marked.

APPENDIX 1 – LIQUID HONEY

LIQUID HONEY	Maximum Points
Appearance & uniformity of containers	5
Colour	5
Brightness	10
Flavour & aroma	10
Uniform level of fill	5
Uniformity of honey	5

Density	15
Freedom from crystals	15
Freedom from foreign material	15
Freedom from froth and air bubbles	15
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 2 – CHUNK HONEY

CHUNK HONEY	Maximum Points
Appearance & uniformity of containers	5
Flavour & aroma	10
Uniform comb and level of fill	5
Quality and neatness of comb	20
Quality of liquid honey	20
Freedom from foreign material	20
Freedom from froth and air bubbles	10
Freedom from crystals & capping materials	10
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 3 – GRANULATED HONEY

GRANULATED HONEY	Maximum Points
Appearance & uniformity of containers	5
Uniform level of fill Colour	5
Colour	5
Flavour & aroma	10
Freedom from foreign material	15
Freedom from froth and air bubbles	15
Uniformity of honey including texture	10
Firmness of set	15
Texture of granulation (smooth and fine)	20
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 4 – COMB HONEY

COMB HONEY	Maximum Points
Quality & uniformity of wooden/plastic sections	5
Cleanliness of wooden/plastic sections	20
Completeness of fill appropriate to section used	20
Completeness of capping	10
Cleanliness and appearance of cappings	20

Quality and flavour	10
Uniformity of combs	15
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 5 – FRAMES OF HONEY

FRAMES OF HONEY	Maximum Points
Cleanliness of frame	10
Completeness of fill (irrespective of capping)	25
Completeness of capping	25
Appearance of capping	20
Freedom from pollen	10
Uniformity of honey	10
TOTAL	100

*Note: A deep frame is scored higher than medium or shallow frames of equal quality

APPENDIX 6 – OBSERVATION HIVE

COMB HONEY	Maximum Points
Appearance and suitability of hive	15
Bees, quantity and caste (Queen, drones*, workers)	10
Brood in all stages	20
Brood pattern	20
Pollen and honey	15
Queen, marked and appearance	10
Workers, appearance and quality	10
TOTAL	100

*Note: Fair time is usually late for drones. This may require close timing between preparation and judging time

APPENDIX 7 – BEESWAX

BEESWAX	Maximum Points
Colour	30
Cleanliness (Free from honey and impurities)	35
Uniformity of appearance	20
Freedom from cracking and shrinkage	15
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 8 – DISTRICT DISPLAY (150 lb)

DISTRICT DISPLAY	Maximum Points
Honey varieties in standard containers; 5 pts each for white, golden, amber, dark, granulated and chunk	20
Honey quality and density	50
Attractiveness of display	30
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 9 – DISPLAY (50 lb)

DISTRICT DISPLAY	Maximum Points
Honey varieties in standard containers; 5 pts each for white, golden, amber, dark, granulated and chunk	20
Honey quality and density	50
Attractiveness of display	30
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 10 – ATTRACTIVE DISPLAY (75 lb of HONEY AND WAX)

DISTRICT DISPLAY	Maximum Points
Varieties of honey and wax shapes	20
Honey quality and density	30
Wax quality	20
Attractiveness of display	30
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 11 – JUNIOR BEEKEEPERS (30 lb)

DISTRICT DISPLAY	Maximum Points
Varieties of honey and wax shapes	20
Honey quality and density	30
Wax quality	20
Attractiveness of display	30
TOTAL	100

APPENDIX 12 – REFRACTOMETER READINGS AND POINT SCORING

Moisture (%)	Points (0-15)
>18.7	0.0
18.6	9.0
18.5	9.5
18.4	10.0
18.3	10.5
18.2	11.0
18.1	11.5
18.0	12.0
17.9	12.5
17.8	13.0
17.6-17.7	13.5
17.4-17.5	14.0
17.2-17.3	14.5
16.0-17.1	15.0
15.5-15.9	14.5
15.0-15.4	14.0
14.5-14.9	13.5
14.0-14.4	13.0
13.5-13.9	12.5
13.0-13.4	12.0
12.5-12.9	11.5
<12.4	0.0

APPENDIX 13 – COLORIMETRIC CHEMICAL ANALYTICAL METHODS

The Colour Grading of Honey

Introduction

The colour grading of clear honey for marketing and exhibition purposes is well established, and among the scales used are the Lovibond Series 52 brown brewing glasses and the German Pfund scale, in which the figures quoted refer to distances in millimeters along a wedge of brown glass. To enable users of the Lovibond Comparator to compare results, a conversion table is appended.

The Standard Lovibond Comparator disc 295175

This disc has been made up using the Lovibond Series 52 Brown scale and calibrated in terms of Pfund Equivalent values 8,17,34, 48, 83, and 114 and is used in conjunction with a 10mm cell.

Technique

Clear Honey by minimal warming if necessary, and stand to clear bubbles as far as possible. Pour the sample very carefully into the cell to avoid entrapping air, and tap the cell with the finger to encourage any bubbles to rise. Open the comparator and place the cell in the right-hand compartment of the comparator. With the disc in position, close the comparator and hold it facing a good source of daylight or a corrected artificial source such as the Lovibond White Light Cabinet.

Find the nearest match by revolving the disc. The relationship between the disc and the International Scale is shown below:

Honey Grading per Pfund Colorimeter		Lovibond Honey Disc #295175	
International Scale	Pfund	US Pfund Equivalents	Canadian
Water White	0-8 mm	8	8
Extra White	9-17 mm	17	13
White	18-34 mm	34	30
Extra light Amber	35-48 mm	48	50
Light Amber	49-83 mm	83	85
Amber	84-114	114	114
Dark Amber	114 and below		

Canadian Scale	
White	8-30
Golden	31-50
Amber	51-85
Dark	86+