

ASSAL HONEY



Little bee ? on lucerne flower

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Honey bee on Opuntia flower

Two varieties of bee are responsible for honey production in the UAE. The bee which has become very popular for new apiary farms is *Apis mellifera*, the common honey bee. It is very widely distributed round the world as the main bee farmed for honey production by apiarists. Its culture is familiar to many people and has been controlled by man for such a long time that it could be considered to be domesticated. Neolithic rock paintings in Spain show a man collecting wild honey. The oldest written reference dates to 5,500 BC in Egypt and by 2,600 BC apiculture was well established. Stylised images of honey bees, bee hives and honeycomb are familiar due to their frequent use in children's books and advertising. The back of a breakfast cereal packet was emblazoned with forty eight bees and the usefull information that one pound of honey represents 50,000 bee kilometres of flying!

The second bee is *Apis florea*, the Asiatic honey bee. This bee is much smaller than the honey bee and normally lives an unrestrained life. It constructs its brood and honey store combs on small branches in trees. They a like flat discs, generally irregular in shape and consist of just two layers of comb cells. They are rarely more than 25 centimetres diameter. The honey store section is at the top, wrapped around the supporting branch. The lower section of the comb is the brood comb. In this section the eggs are laid and larvae develop. At the very bottom there may be queen cells which will produce new queen bees. Immediately above the queen cells a section of the comb has drone cells which develop ready for the flight of new queens to start new colonies. Traditional management consisted of harvesting the honeycomb by gripping the brood comb section between two sticks so that it was held