

April 4, 2010

EDITORIAL

## Sweet Honey on the Roof

Here's the best news we have heard in a while: keeping honeybees is now legal in New York City. The old rule was based on a misunderstanding. It lumped honeybees into a long list of wild animals that may not be kept in the city — outside a zoo — including the hippopotamus and elephant.

Honeybees will sting, if provoked. But their nature is so gentle, their honey sweet, and their moral character benign and enterprising.

The change has been a long time coming, and it is part of the groundswell in support of local agriculture. Honeybees are important pollinators for crops of all kinds, and rooftop hives are a good step toward greening the roofs of this city. There is a honey industry and a pollination industry, but bees really need more amateur beekeepers, the kind likely to be caring for city hives.

The more bees there are — and the more diverse the circumstances in which they are kept — the better for the welfare of the species, which recently has been threatened by two kinds of mites and a still poorly understood syndrome called colony collapse disorder.

City beekeepers will have to register their hives with the health department and make sure that they have ready access to water. Beekeepers are also required to be able to respond immediately to swarms, which is just normal good practice in keeping bees. As it happens, most beekeepers are also avid ambassadors from the domain of the hive. That is just what New Yorkers need in order to rest easy and accept honeybees as natural and highly beneficial neighbors.

[Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)