

Ensure the weight (kg) of each package is indicated to facilitate trade. This can be taken at the point of sale.



Raw propolis, sale to a processor made into ball



Propolis powder (processed product)



Propolis tincture

Photo credit: Jona Kinyanjui

4. Storage:

Proper storage is essential to maintain the propolis' properties. It is typically stored in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. In all these steps, care is taken to ensure that the propolis maintains its integrity and beneficial properties for consumers.

Compiled by: Kasina M.J, Toroitich D., Mulwa J.M.,
Onyango I.A., Guantai M.M., Ndung'u N.N.,
Kinyanjui J.M. and Kimani C.W.

Editors: Nyabundi K.W., Mukundi K.T., Omondi, S.P.,
Maina P., Wanyama H.N., Mugata R.K.,
Otieno A.S., Nyambati, E., Mungube, E.O. and
Changwony D.

For further information, contact:
Institute Director
Apiculture and Beneficial Insects Research Institute
P.O. Box 32-30403 MARIGAT
Director. ABIRI@kalro.org

Design and layout by Emma. Nyaola

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HARVESTING AND PACKAGING HONEY BEE PROPOLIS: A GUIDE FOR BEE KEEPERS



Introduction

Bee propolis is a resin-like substance that bees collect from tree buds and sap flows. They use it to seal small gaps in the hive and to keep out intruders. Honey bee propolis has been shown to have medicinal and economic importance due to its antibacterial, antifungal and anti-inflammatory properties. The medicinal properties are mainly from the plant resin collected by the honey bees as they forage. Therefore, the demand for propolis in management of common cold and upper respiratory system is high.

General overview of harvesting and packaging process for honeybee propolis:

1. Propolis collection

(a) Use of propolis trap

Using a propolis trap. The trap has grids or screens that create narrow spaces, encouraging the bees to fill them with propolis. A mesh with holes smaller than the queen excluder can be used. After the bees have filled the traps, these can be removed and the propolis collected.

Propolis is collected continuously in small bits. Stick any new scrapping on the previous, to make a ball which should grow bigger as you harvest.



Propolis trap. This equipment is fitted just below the lid in a barred hive. Photo courtesy Jonah Kinyanjui

(b) Dirt collecting in the hive

You can scrap propolis from wood using a hive tool as it is deposited on the inner hive surface, on top bars, below the lid and between frames. In Kenya, traditional log hives yield more propolis since their inner surface is more uneven.

2. Cleaning:

Propolis needs to be cleaned and processed. This involves removing any debris such as wax, wood, or other particles that may be mixed in with the propolis.

1. **Initial Inspection:** Upon collection, inspect the propolis for any debris, such as wood particles, bee parts, or other contaminants.
2. **Dry Cleaning:** Use a soft brush or cloth to gently remove any loose particles or dirt from the propolis. This step helps to eliminate surface impurities. Be gentle to avoid damaging the propolis.
3. **Washing (if necessary):** If the propolis is particularly dirty, it can be gently washed with a mild, non-toxic detergent and cool water. This should be done carefully to prevent any loss of beneficial volatile compounds.
4. **Drying:** After cleaning, dry the propolis in air at room temperature to remove any remaining moisture. Do not dry in the sun. Avoid using excessive heat, as it may compromise the propolis' quality.
5. **Final Inspection:** Once dry, inspect the propolis again to ensure it is clean and free of any impurities.

It is important to handle propolis with care and maintain cleanliness throughout the entire process to preserve its beneficial properties.

3. Packaging:

Propolis should be packaged in containers once cleaned. It can be packaged in containers of various sizes.

The packaging must ensure that the propolis is protected from light, heat, and moisture to maintain its quality.