

# THE HINDU

**Dammer bees in lightweight paper boxes provide more honey**

December 18, 2013



Farmers are a rich source of indigenous knowledge and practice. However, their knowledge and expertise has often been undervalued, creating a rift between informal innovations and formal research and development systems.

When many honey bee rearers were happy rearing the bees in the usual conventional wooden boxes Mr. P. Balan from Adoor taluk, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, preferred to think differently.

He thought of using paper sheets instead of wooden frames for constructing the bee boxes and reared the bees in them.

## **Areas found**

Dammer bees called Kosu theni (mosquito bees in Tamil) are stingless bees nesting among boulders, old walls, dead trees, and tree cavities.

“The honey has a good market demand. It is about 20 times costlier than the ones produced by other bees. Usually dammer bees are reared in mud pots. While collecting the honey the mud pots get broken. “The coolness of the mud pot also attracts ants and other insects that feed on the honey and force the bees to fly elsewhere,” says Dr. C.P.Robert, Programme Coordinator, Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD)-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pathanamthitta.

The improved dammer bee box by Mr. Balan is made of light wooden material. Instead of wooden frames inside conventional boxes, thick paper rims are placed 1.5 cm below from the top and 1.5 cm above from the bottom portion making it light weight and for also camouflaging the bees from predators.

## **Shape**

The paper rim on the top portion has two halves, which can be opened like a window without any gap. On this paper rim, a rectangle thick paper sheet is placed on which the upper lid is placed.

A movable wooden door of 1.5 cm thickness slides on a groove towards one side of the box. Through this portion the extraction of honey and bee colony from the box can be done. The box is placed on a wooden frame which is attached to a strong iron pipe stand, fitted with a plastic funnel which acts as antwell and prevents entry of ants and insects into the box.

### **Detachable**

The box and stand can be detached and rotated so that it can be placed in any desired direction. The top lid of the box is provided with detachable roofing for regular monitoring of the colony.

“By this improved dammer bee box, two major problems, namely, incomplete honey extraction and improper colonisation can be minimised to a great extent. About 700 gm of honey can be extracted from a box in a year whereas only 400 gm of honey extraction is possible through other rearing methods,” says Dr. Sindhu Sadanandan, Principal Investigator of this project.

### **Cost**

The complete set, including the box and bee colony is priced at Rs.1,500. Bee colony without the box can also be supplied and is priced at Rs. 500. The life span of the box is 10 years. First extraction can be done in 12 months.

Present rate of honey per kg is Rs 1,500. From one colony four different colonies can be established from the second year.

In consecutive years the expenditure is almost negligible. Only family labour is required for rearing.

“Unlike contemporary wooden box rearing techniques the rearing process is easy, gender friendly, and eco-safe. Through this box regular monitoring of the colonies is possible.” says Dr Robert.

### **Income**

Since last two years the innovator has been able to generate an income of Rs. 40,000 a year from this innovation. About 17 people have adopted this innovation so far.

For more information contact

Mr. P. Balan, Athira, Kaithakkal

Anayadi PO

Adoor

mobile: 9495836006 and

Dr. Robert

CARD-Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Pathanamthitta District

Kolabhagam P.O.

Tiruvalla (Via),Pathanamthitta

Kerala

web: [www.kvkcard.org](http://www.kvkcard.org)

Phone:0469-2662094 and 2661821(extn-11/12).