

THE SEASONS OF THE BEEKEEPER

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THE LIST IS SHOWING THE MONTHS AND WHAT A BEEKEEPER SHOULD BE DOING. NOW IN MANY PLACES IN THE WORLD SOME SEASONS ARE LONGER, AND SOME MONTHS ARE SHORTER.

THIS IS A BASIC OUT LINE ON THE BEEKEEPING SEASONS.

JANUARY

THE BEES WILL CONSUME ABOUT 24LB (11KG) OF STORES IN JANUARY – SO CHECK THEY HAVE ENOUGH BY HEFTING HIVE (DON'T OPEN THE HIVE) AND WEIGHT OUT YOUR HIVE.

READ BOOKS, STUDY FOR EXAMS, AND STUDY YOUR LAWS

SEE ABOUT IF YOU CAN TAKE A BEE STING IF YOUR JUST STARTING OUT

BUILD HIVE PARTS

PICK OUT A LOCATION WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE OUR HIVES

GET ALL YOU DIY AND OTHER JOBS OUT OF THE WAY IN ADVANCE OF THE BEEKEEPING SEASON KICKING-OFF

FEBRUARY

THE BEES WILL CONSUME ABOUT 24LB (11KG) OF STORES IN FEBRUARY – SO CHECK THEY HAVE ENOUGH BY HEFTING HIVE (DON'T OPEN THE HIVE) AND WEIGHT OUT YOUR HIVE

UNDERTAKE VARROA COUNT AND PLAN TREATMENT AS NECESSARY

ORDER NEW BEES IF NEED OR STARTING OUT

READ AND PLAN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS, ESPECIALLY FEEDING, SWARM CONTROL AND VARROA MANAGEMENT

ORDER EQUIPMENT AND BEES (FROM REPUTABLE SUPPLIER ... OR A MATE), AS REQUIRED

MARCH

TAKE THE TIME TO ATTEND BEE COLLEGES, CLASSES, LOCAL MEETINGS, LOG IN YOUR BEES LOCATIONS, AND TEST FOR BEEKEEPING CERTS.

PREP OUT YOUR WORK LOAD FOR THE YEAR MAKING SURE YOU HAVE ALL YOUR PARTS NEED

OBSERVE HIVE ENTRANCE FOR FLYING BEES BRINGING IN POLLEN

THIS IS THE MONTH WHEN COLONIES OFTEN DIE OF STARVATION. WEIGH HIVES AND FEED BEES IF NECESSARY, GOING TO LIQUID FEED.

WHEN WEATHER WARMED UP:

PREP FOR REMOVAL OF YOUR WINTERIZATION

REMOVE MOUSE GUARDS WHEN THE WEATHER HAS WARMED UP AND THE BEES ARE NO LONGER IN A COZY CLUSTER

START NEW SEASONS HIVE RECORD CARDS CHECKING YOUR HIVES EVERY 9 TO 11 DAYS

APRIL

EASTER WEEKEND: PLANT BEE-FRIENDLY FLOWERS

VARROA MANAGEMENT: EITHER CUT OFF DRONE BROOD BELOW SHORTER FRAMES YOU ARE USING IN THE BROOD BOX OR INSERT DRONE BROOD FOUNDATION INTO THE BROOD CHAMBER NEXT TO THE OUTER FRAME OF BROOD.

CHANGE BROOD BOX AND FLOORS FOR CLEAN ONES (IF YOU HAVE SPARES THAT YOU DISINFECTED)

UNDERSTAND WHAT HEALTHY AND DISEASED COMB LOOKS LIKE: THIS IS THE TIME YOU MAY GO THROUGH THE HIVE AND LOOK FOR PESTS AND PROBLEMS

INSPECT BEES AS FOLLOWS:

INSPECT EVERY 9-11 DAYS FOR DISEASE, SWARMING INTENTIONS, STATUS OF QUEEN, BROOD PATTERN AND STORES (9 DAYS IS THE TIME IT TAKES THE BEES TO CREATE AND CAP A QUEEN CELL AND DECIDE TO SWARM). TEMPERATURE MUST BE ABOVE 45° DEGREES F.

PRACTICE GOOD APIARY HYGIENE

UNDERTAKE VARROA COUNTS (THIS SHOULD BE YOUR SECOND ROUND IF YOU NEED TO TREAT)

IF BEES SHOW INTENTION TO SWARM THEN CREATE ARTIFICIAL SWARM

SUPER-UP (WHEN BEES COVER 7 OF THE 10 FRAMES, ADD A SUPER)

REMOVE SUPERS FOR EXTRACTION AS REQUIRED – ESSENTIAL IF YOUR BEES ARE BRINGING IN TONS OF NECTAR BECAUSE OF LOCATION AND FLOW.

UNITE WEAK COLONIES WHERE NECESSARY

MAKE SURE THERE IS ENOUGH SPACE FOR THE BEES

THIS INSPECTION IS A GOOD TIME TO FIND AND MARK THE QUEEN BEFORE HIVE GETS TOO BUSY

MAY

START OF MAY – SET UP SWARM TRAPS / BAIT HIVES

INSPECT AS ABOVE > ONE MORE TIME: DO A INSPECTION OF THE HIVES. A GOOD ONE!!!

ADD SUPER, PREFERABLY ONE THAT NEEDS DRAWING OUT. THINKING: T
HEY WILL PRODUCE WAX AND THIS MIGHT REDUCE THEIR INTENTION TO SWARM
LAST VARROA TREATMENT
UNWINTER YOUR HIVES ALL THE WAY
MAKE THE LAST ROUND OF FEED IF YOU'RE COMING OUT OF DARTH

JUNE

INSPECT HIVE AND FILL OUT SHEET

INSTALL WASP & HORNET TRAPS, ANT TRAPS, AND PREDATOR CONTROLS

IF HAVE QUEEN IN HER 3RD YEAR THEN CREATE A NUC WITH HER. IT WILL NOT
REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BEES AVAILABLE IN THE QUEEN-LESS COLONY FOR THE
JULY NECTAR FLOW. HAVING A NUC MEANS THAT IF THINGS GO WRONG YOU STILL
HAVE THE OLD QUEEN IF THE OLD COLONY HAS A PROBLEM RAISING A NEW
QUEEN. ALSO – NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO REQUEEN IF NECESSARY (E.G.
AGGRESSIVE BEES).

QUEEN EXCLUDER SHOULD BE AT THE TOP ABOVE THE BROOD BOX

HONEY FLOW IS ON .

JULY

INSPECT AND RECORD

WATCH OUT FOR ROBBING

THIS IS A GOOD MONTH TO REQUEEN (WITH MATED QUEEN)

LATE JULY OR EARLY AUGUST (WHENEVER THE NECTAR FLOW STOPS):

REMOVE SUPERS, HARVEST HONEY, PUT WET SUPERS BACK ON AND THEN REMOVE A FEW DAYS LATER WHEN DRY (TAKING HONEY NOW, I.E. QUITE EARLY GIVES THE BEES TIME TO CREATE STORES FOR WINTERS AND MEANS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE TO FEED THEM FOR THE WINTER)

I PUT ANY FRAMES WITH UNCAPPED HONEY INTO ONE SUPER AND PUT THIS BELOW THE BROOD BOX. THIS GIVES THEM A BIT OF EXTRA FOOD

DO A MITE CHECK, (THIS ONE YOU WILL NEED YOUR MICROSCOPE TO SEE TRACHEAL MITES AND YOU NEED TO CHECK FOR VARROA MITES

AUGUST

INSPECT

ADD ENTRANCE NARROWER

START TO REMOVE HONEY SUPERS

REMOVE QUEEN EXCLUDER

FLIP THE BOTTOM BOARD TO THE DEEP END OF YOUR NOT USING SCREEN BOARDS. IF YOU HAVE SCREEN BOTTOMS PLACE IN BOTTOMS TO SEAL OFF COLD AIR.

SEPTEMBER

INSPECT AND LOOK FOR:

WEAK COLONIES. COLONIES NEED TO HAVE BEES OVER AT LEAST 5 FRAMES TO SURVIVE THE WINTER. WEAK COLONIES NEED TO BE EITHER (A) OVERWINTERED AND FED IN A NUCLEUS BOX OR, (B), BETTER TO UNITE WEAK WITH STRONG COLONIES, AS LONG AS THEY DON'T HAVE ANY DISEASE. I HAVE READ ONLY 50% OF NUCS SURVIVE THE WINTER

STRONG COLONIES ARE ALSO QUEEN-RIGHT AND DISEASE-FREE

FOOD STORES – THEY NEED 18KG OF STORES TO GET THEM THROUGH WINTER (15KG WITH BEE COSY). EACH STANDARD NATIONAL BROOD FRAME HOLDS 2.5KG OF HONEY (AND EACH 14×12 HOLDS NEARLY 3.75KG). HENCE YOU NEED 8 (OR 6) FRAMES OF HONEY

FEED COLONIES AS REQUIRED USING A LIQUID FEED

USE THICK SUGAR SYRUP (2:1 SUGAR:WATER)

1KG OF SUGAR WILL CREATE 1.25KG OF STORES IN THE BROOD BOX

READ FEEDING BEES FOR MORE INFORMATION

CLEAN EQUIPMENT PRIOR TO STORAGE. STORE AND PROTECT BROOD BOX, SUPERS AND COMB FROM RODENTS AND WAX MOTH.

START PREPARING BEES FOR WINTER

OCTOBER

KEEP FEEDING UNTIL SPRING BALANCE RECORDS A WEIGHT OF 18KG EACH SIDE OF THE HIVE (LESS THE ROOF) AT THE END OF OCTOBER. ALSO START PUTTING IN FONDANT CAKE FOR WINTER FEEDING TO MAKE SURE THE BEES HAVE FOOD ALL WINTER

CONFIGURATION FOR THE WINTER:

ADEQUATE VENTILATION IN ORDER TO GET THE MOISTURE OUT OF THE HIVE (BEES WILL GET WET AND COLD OTHERWISE): QUILTING BOXES!!!

IF YOU HAVE SOLID FLOORS – THEN TOP VENTILATION REQUIRED

READ MORE: HIVE VENTILATION & CONFIGURATION

A BEE COSY OR WINTER WRAPS

PUT HIVE AT SLIGHT ANGLE SO DRIPS OF CONDENSATION ON THE CROWN BOARD GO DOWN SIDE OF HIVE RATHER THAN DRIP INTO THE WINTER CLUSTER

ADD MOUSEGUARD – I HAVE READ THAT 50% OF HIVES WOULD HAVE A RESIDENT MOUSE IF IT WERE NOT FOR A MOUSE GUARD. PUT THEM ON AT THE END OF OCTOBER (WHEN BEES ARE STARTING TO CLUSTER AND NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEND THEMSELVES)

ADD CHICKEN WIRE TO PROTECT HIVES WOOD PECKERS (BEE COSY SHOULD BE ADEQUATE)

NOVEMBER

TAKE VARROA COUNTS

MAKE SURE HIVES ARE SECURE AGAINST THE WEATHER

START LOOKING FOR DROWN CALLING

MAKE SURE HIVES ARE CLOSED AND ANCHORED DOWN

BOTTLE ALL HONEY, CLEAN BEES WAX, & PACKAGE ALL BEE PRODUCTS FOR THE END OF THE YEAR

DECEMBER

DEAD BEES MIGHT START TO BLOCK THE ENTRANCE. TAKE OUT THE ENTRANCE NARROWER, SWEEP OUT THE BEES WITH THE MOUSE GUARD AND THEN REPLACE THE ENTRANCE NARROWER BUT WITH THE ENTRANCE AT THE TOP, THIS MEANS THAT THE DEAD BEES SHOULD NOT BLOCK THE ENTRANCE AS THE ENTRANCE IS NOW HIGHER

OXALIC ACID TREATMENT (READ: VARROA MANAGEMENT). IN THE UK RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT 10-25 DECEMBER IS THE OPTIMAL TIME TO APPLY OXALIC ACID. I LIKE TO DO IT ON THE WINTER SOLSTICE, THE SHORTEST DAY OF THE YEAR, WHICH OCCURS AROUND THE 22ND DECEMBER.

CHECK STACK OF STORED BROOD BOXES AND SUPERS FOR SIGNS OF RODENTS OR WAX MOTH. GET READY FOR THE NEXT YEAR.