

Bee Note 302: Winter Preparation (No Freeze Bees)



May 28, 2007

Winter preparation is the start of the bee season. The exact date is August 15th for the Fraser Valley. Your attention to fall management directly relates to spring build up and ensuing a good honey crop the following year. By mid-September there is little to no honey coming into the colony. The bees respond by reducing egg laying and removing drones and drone brood.

Harvest your honey now, if you have not already done so and knock your bees down to one box by shaking them onto the ground in front of the colony. Large populated hives will have a bee beard on the outside. This is normal. Older bees will move outside the colony and will eventually die off naturally.

August 15 (no later)

Harvest your honey and leave it in the kitchen (It will drive your spouse crazy, but it is necessary)

Start your 21 day Formic Acid treatment on all colonies, no matter how healthy they appear.

Attend to the honey left in the kitchen before divorce papers are served.

August 15 to September 15

Clean bottom board

Centre brood nest

Check every cell on every frame for AFB & EFB

If you find queen swarm cells – pinch them off

If you find queen supercedure cells – leave them to develop

Check for sufficient winter stores - 40 pounds honey (5 frames) and 2-3 frames of pollen

You should have a young queen (not more than 2 years old)

Prevent robbing – entrance reducers (if hot out, wait until the end of September)

Weather proof colony (wind and rain are the killers, not the cold)

Provide top ventilation

Put a mouse guard over the entrance reducer (#2 mesh)

Freeze unused comb for 3 days to kill wax moth

Supplemental Feed

Feed 2:1 syrup (67.5% sugar, 32.5% water)

Feed as much as six gallons. Stop when the colony slows down consumption.

Feed pollen substitute (stop feeding when 2-3 frames are packed with pollen)

Varroa Mites

September 5 (21 days after the start of the Formic Acid Treatment) – Conduct natural mite drop test

See Bee Note 206 – Formic Acid

December 1 - Apply an Oxalic Acid Treatment. See Bee Note 207 – Oxalic Acid

Honeybee Centre (HBC) notes are written for beekeepers in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley of British Columbia, Canada. Although these notes apply to virtually all beekeepers in North America, different climates and government regulations may require slightly different honeybee management practices.