

The Bee Keepers Year

December, January & February

What to Do ...

Monitor hive entrances for build up of dead bees and blockage. Wedge up the back of the hive to ensure the floor slopes gently forwards. Repair Woodpecker and other damage to stop wind / weather getting in. Ensure the roof is secure; bricks, blocks and/or a strap will do the job. Gently heft (lift) the hive to check food weight, if light put block of Candy over the feedhole, a shallow eke may be needed. Record your observations for each Hive in a book each time you visit; more reliable than memory!

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- Record Book.
- Ply, foam, Drawing pins etc.
- Straps, Bricks, wedge.
- Candy in tubs or blocks, Shallow Eke to allow candy block over Crown Board.
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March

What to Do

During early March continue to monitor the Hive entrance for damage by weather or attack, Animal or Human! Pay close attention to weight of the hive if weather is warming up the colony should be growing quickly and food consumption will increase considerably, replace Candy block if consumed. Later on consider giving a weak Syrup feed (weather dependent).

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- As above Later in the month possibly a liquid feeder and syrup.
- Record Book.

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April

What to Do

The colony should be growing very quickly now so food supply will need to be maintained if the hive is light. Feed if required with half strength Syrup. On a warm day remove the Eke, Entrance Block and Mouse Guard if fitted. Change the Floor for a clean one prepared during winter. Later remove the Feeder and put on a Queen Excluder and a Super(s) if required to give space for the growing numbers. Insert Varroa treatment for 42 Days only (2 Brood Cycles). Remove before Honey flows into the Supers. Be vigilant Swarming can begin in late April! Consider one or more 'Bait hives' in the Apiary to catch Swarms.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- Feeder and Syrup.
- Varroa Treatment.
- Clean sound floor with no gaps for Wax Moth to occupy, preferably 'flamed'.
- Varroa Treatment Queen Excluder and Super/s.
- Sterilise your extractor for use / consider upgrade.
- Bag for rubbish removal.
- Bait Hive and Swarm Lure.
- Record Book.

May

What to Do

Begin thorough and regular inspections of the Brood Comb. Work old comb to the outside so that it can be removed and replaced. Old comb harbours disease and should be replaced systematically as good practice. Aim to change 35% per annum. If necessary remove outside frames clogged with food. These can be given back in the autumn after storing in the freezer. Ensure enough food and Pollen remains in the brood Chamber. Place new frames and foundation either side of the brood nest to allow the Queen to increase her nest size. Congestion can cause swarming. Additional Supers may now be required. Remove Varroa treatment before honey flow into supers. Consider one or more 'Bait hives' in the Apiary to catch Swarms.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- New Frames and Foundation. Spare Brood Chamber/s for carrying Frames in and out of Apiary.
- Spare Supers ready to use or to exchange for extraction.
- Bait Hives & Swarm Lures.
- Bag for rubbish removal.
- Record Book.

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June

What to Do

Continue to examine (and if possible exchange) Brood Frames for any signs of disease or swarming. The brood should be able to occupy most of the Brood Chamber this month. Swarming will continue through June so you will have to continue to be vigilant. You may be able to take off some frames of capped Honey or even complete Supers, ensure you have empty Frames or Supers to replace those taken.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools. Record Book.
- New Brood Frames and Foundation.
- Spare Supers with Frames and Foundation.
- Bee Escapes for clearing Supers. Bee Brush.

July & August

What to Do

Swarming should be over by early July allowing the Colony and you to concentrate on collecting Nectar. The Honey for harvesting and the Queen Excluder should be taken off in early August allowing the bees to collect what little remains for themselves and Varroa strips to be put in for 42 days (2 Brood Cycles) Early August insert Entrance block to reduce entrances so the diminishing colony can defend against Wasps.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- Record Book.
- Spare Supers with Frames and Foundation.
- Bee Escapes for clearing Supers.
- Bee Brush.
- Varroa Strips.
- Entrance Blocks.

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September What to Do

It is time now to feed the colony for the winter replacing the Honey taken. This is done by adding 1 Kg bag of Granulated Sugar to a pint of water and heating until all the sugar is in solution, add Fumidil B for Nosema. The colony will need at least 15Kg (more for the bigger hives) of this Syrup to make it through the cold months ahead. Feeding needs to be completed before the end of the month allowing the colony to process off the excess water. Remove Varroa strips after 42 days. Fit a mouse guard to the entrance.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- Record Book.
- Feeder and Syrup with Fumadil B. Feeders.
- Large Eke for bucket type feeders.

October, November December What to Do

With all the required syrup now in the brood chamber all should be well for winter. Fit a mouse guard to the entrance if not done already. Strap and or weigh down the roof against winter wind. Monitor the now small entrance regularly for the build up of dead bees. Bees are dying all the time and just a few can block the entrance leaving the others unable to get out for water or toileting. Unchecked a few dead bees can lead to the loss of the whole colony. Keep a regular check for Woodpecker damage or rain getting in. Be aware that deer or other animals could knock the hive over rubbing against to satisfy an itch. Feeding should not be required yet but keep an emergency block of Candy with you just in case, Most of the colonies that die out are due to starvation. Most important remember bees are Livestock and we have a duty to look after them as best we can.

Essential Equipment

- Protective Clothing, Smoker, Hive Tools.
- Record Book.
- Blocks or bricks.
- Straps.
- Mouse guards.
- Ply, foam, Drawing pins etc. Straps, Bricks, wedge.
- Candy in tubs or blocks.
- Books Videos and magazines.

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Free Moments What to Do

Read as many Bee books, Magazines and watch as many Video's as you can get your hands on. The more you learn the easier and more rewarding Beekeeping becomes. It is a privilege to keep Bees; enjoy every minute!

Essential Equipment

- Reference Books
- Beekeeping Video guides

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