

Beekeeping Insights #46 email notes

Bee season is winding down rapidly. We had a frost in Raleigh on Thursday and some pretty cold temperatures. I met with two of the beekeepers that I mentored and asked them a number of questions about this past bee season. They are looking forward to their first winter season and the message came across pretty clear to me is that we are entering a new phase of beekeeping for them. They have questions -- many of them regarding how to feed bees, how to prepare bees for winter, mites and a good feeling that they have done everything right but still question if they have done everything "right" and what more can they do!

One thing I have worked on since August is winter survival. We started feeding early (it was mentioned that they have some capped honey frames currently in a deep freezer). We talked about when one can open a hive for winter inspection (when bees are flying - have broken cluster), one more mite treatment using oxalic acid (when little brood is in the hive), and what insulation to use with hives -- top entrances, wind breaks, and on and on. We have decided to plan for equipment purchases for next year, raise some queens and what we can do about small hive beetles. (We are looking for better small hive beetle traps). We discussed reading some books over winter -- going to fall state bee meetings, etc.

For me, it is vacation time. Time to travel without worrying about my bees. I will drive out to my bee yard in Franklin County several times a month. More to check that the hives are okay -- no top covered blown off (that sort of thing).

But the bee notes will continue to be published over the winter season -- still many topics to cover. If you have any suggestion, I am open to suggestions.

Dana