

2022 Stahlman Beekeeping E-mail Notes Issue #13a

I am already overwhelmed by my bees. I marked all new queens. It is easy at this time of the year to find queens because in many cases the population of bees in hives is lower than it will be later in the season. One current task with all beekeepers is how are my bees doing? What should I be doing?

Swarming season is on us! Making splits is possible if you have drones and you may want to let the bees raise a queen of your own. 2022 queens are now available for starting nucs. The color this year is yellow!

If you really have a strong hive and want to (need to find) the queen, I suggest this is a good time to use your queen excluder. Place the queen excluder between brood chambers to split the hive -- one part of the hive will not have a queen. The part with a queen will have eggs. Wait four days and look for eggs. If none are available in one section then the queen will be in the section with eggs. This is just simple biology -- the development of a honey bee begins with the egg stage. This is a three day period. If no queen is in a box isolated from the rest of the hive, four days later there will be no eggs. The larval stage and capped brood will exist but no eggs.

Queens are hard to find if a lot of smoke is used to calm the bees -- she starts running within the hive. Normally she will be found on frames with newly laid eggs. Rarely on capped honey frames. Older queens are easier to find than new queens. Queens released by the bees from packages generally are a bit flighty and it is best to wait until they start laying before marking them.

We are in for another cold spell here tonight -- freezing temperatures. I am checking my bees on a 9 day schedule -- looking for signs of swarming. Queen cell cups are found in most established hives. Those that contain an egg are producing future virgin queens 12 to 15 days from now. If you see larvae -- the time is reduced by the size of the larvae but a guess is the hive will swarm within a 9 to 10 day period of sooner. If you see capped queen cells the time is down to a week or less.

I was asked how soon does a virgin queen take to start laying eggs. According to my queen bible -- Queen Rearing and Bee Breeding by Laidlaw and Page, if a queen is not laying by the 17th day after emerging from her cell she can be considered a failure -- "but weather should be taken into consideration Mating delayed by weather for two weeks may not prevent the queen from mating on the first favorable flying day." There are many interesting things a beekeeper might do -- one is to raise a new virgin queen. It is not hard and I will share how easy it is in future articles. No expensive queen mating nucs. No grafting! The most important consideration is -- the availability of drones to mate with virgin queens.