

2022 Stahlman Beekeeping E-mail Notes Issue #14a

Well the weather is throwing some of you a challenge. I see snow back in Ohio on the ground. West Virginia is cold. And package bees are arriving and have already arrived.

Things are much better in Raleigh. Swarming season is in full swing. I am heading to the bee yard shortly to feed bees and hopefully make up two splits.

I have a few spare queens that need a home and bees. Vertical splits made several weeks ago have queens and as of Thursday had not yet started laying eggs.

I am not writing about the problems beekeeper may have with package bees. One in particular is the failure of the bees to accept a queen or go queenless for one reason or another. Hope the pictures share what I have seen over the past. I remember an incident 20 years or more ago when White Star Farms contacted me to do an inspection of 200 newly installed hives. The owner was concerned about the new hives. He did not share with me the reason for the request, but I knew him as a experienced commercial beekeeper.

The problem: About 1/2 of the new hives had poor queens. They were either not laying or were laying worker hives. Two weeks had passed before I was contacted. Package bee that make up a new hive are all adult bees. They need to be replaced with new young bees from the eggs the queen lays. Thus, two weeks and no brood to replace 50% of his hives had him concerned about the Package Producer that sold him the packages. No only did the package bee producer provide him with new queens, the guy gave him a few new packages to compensate him for his delayed use of the packages. New beekeepers are at the mercy of who ever they buy packages from if such a queen failure should affect them.

The usual response from a seller of package bees is: The queen was alive in the cage when you picked her up. Evidently indicating the problem is the beekeepers problem not theirs. I hope this article helps identify a problem before it results in the failure to start a hive successfully.

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