

2022 Stahlman Beekeeping E-mail Notes Issue #45a

Several new readers have been added to the mailing list this week. A friendly reminder that past issues can be read at www.ccbee.org

This has been an unusual week. Temperatures are well above average for this month. I had the chance to visit a bee yard with 20 hives this week and pull frames in each hive to check for honey stores and brood. Two hives were so weak that they were considered dead. All the rest were in good shape -- we saw marked queens and assume the other hives had queens because of large bee populations. We did not find any brood -- no eggs, no larva, and no capped brood. These were Latshaw Carnolian queens and the queens had shut down for winter -- every one of them.

I have been seeing some blogs by beekeepers wanting to find queens for hives that had no brood. Just remember queens may be present in a hive with a large bee population. I saw queens in many of the hives we inspected this week and not one of them was laying eggs. I also had a good experience with one of my former beekeeping friends. At the end of September, I pronounced her hive as one not likely to survive the winter. The brood had a shotgun pattern and several frames had bees on them. Upon inspection late this week, we popped the top cover -- I was sure our job was to put the hive equipment away for winter.

Surprise: I had no lit smoker or bee veil and realized there were bees in the hive -- lots of them. Quickly the smoker was lit, and the hive opened. We found the bottom deep full of bees, brood in all stages of development and a queen. Some honey! What a surprise for me and the beekeeper who was thinking about ordering a package of bees for next spring. What luck -- all that is required now is some sugar feeding and a whole lot of luck. The bees were yellow Italian, a race known to produce brood this late in the season. This hive was much different from the hives in the bee yard with 20 hives. It continues to use honey stores to feed the young brood and failure to continue feeding this hive could mean that it could still die out from starvation. It takes a lot of food to feed young developing bees!

I have questions: Where and how did the bee population recover so quickly. We could find no evidence of a queen cell that might have produced the new queen. Is it possible that a near-by hive swarmed or absconded and found this hive a welcome new home? If so, some near-by beekeeper most likely has an empty hive of bees.