



STAHLMAN

BEEKEEPING NOTES

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Getting Ready for Next Year

Winter is not that far away. As each day comes and goes, we are one day closer to cold weather.

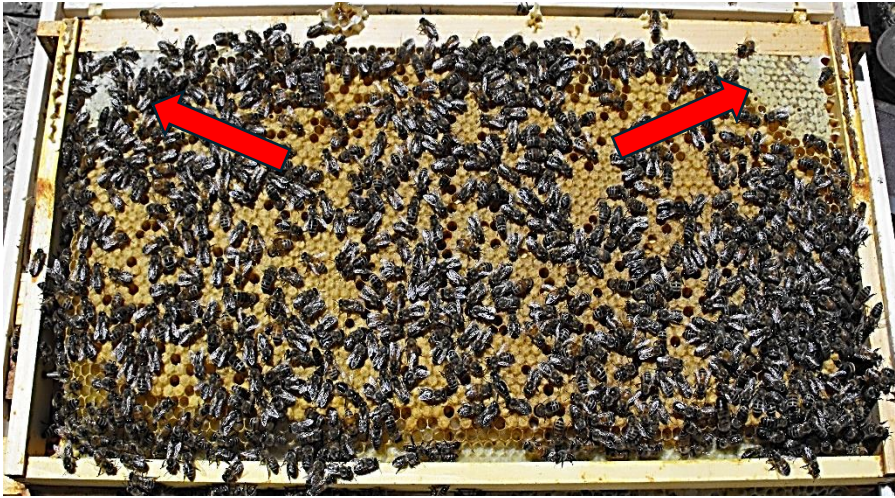
Fall Management beginning now:

- **See that every colony has a good queen going into winter** and requeen now if necessary. I notice that several beekeepers are offering queens for sale locally. They will not be available later unless you get lucky and find some. One other thought on queens – queens raised late in the summer season may not be well mated due to the lack of drones. I am sure you have noticed fewer drones in your hives at this time of the year.
- **Unite weak hives.** I always believe in the old saying, “Take your losses in the fall and make your increases in the spring.
- **Prepare for winter.** Remove queen excluder, reduce entrances, and see that equipment is bee tight. Robbing can be an issue.
- **Do as much spring work as you can.** Clean up equipment, paint while weather permits.
- **Have you checked your mite populations?** Many hives crash (sudden loss of population) during this period of the bee year. If you waited for the crash, it will be too late to save the bees. Best time to treat is right after honey is harvested.

I inspected my bees this week and found them hungry. Honey flows vary each year and this year has been typical for my area of Raleigh. We get a good early honey flow and then it tapers off to hot weather and little for the bees to forage. Those of you keeping bees in rural areas may have forage possibilities. Goldenrod and aster grow wild along road sides and in vacant fields. They will supply the bees with opportunities to gather enough nectar and pollen to supply a hive with all its needs for winter.

That is not the case here. I have started feeding my bees. The signs that indicate the bees need feeding:

- **The pictures below indicate a hive does not need to be fed.** The bees in this hive have honey stores.



This is a frame with capped brood. Notice capped honey in the upper corners of frames.

The bee population in the hive is strong and bees are not uncapping brood cells.

There should be frames of capped or uncapped honey in the frames near the side walls of the hive.



This frame shows the bees have filled a previous brood frame with honey. This is good for the bees winter food. No feeding should be required to over winter the bees in a hive with frames like this.



On the other side of the coin, some hives require feeding just to survive now and they need more feeding to provide food for the winter season.

If you find a hive with little or no surplus food when you do an inspection, food is required immediately. Note the lack of stored food in the upper corners of this frame. Queens lay fewer eggs in conditions like this and in some

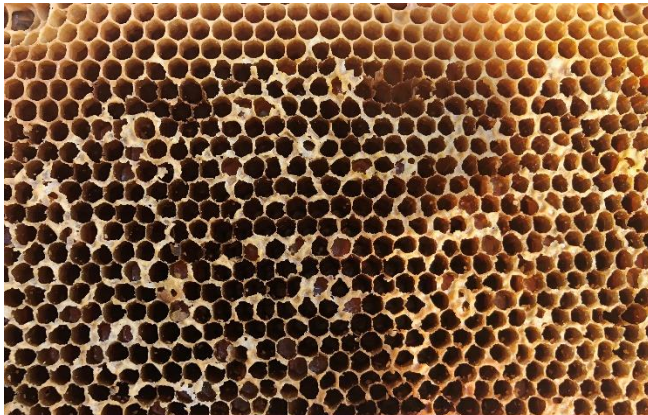
cases bees will begin to cannibalize young larva.

The major reasons for feeding bees now are:

- The area is over populated with bees. Too many bee hives located in a 2 to 3 mile area with limited forage opportunities.
- The area is unable to support bees because it lacks nectar and pollen fall blooming plants.
- The beekeeper took honey from the hive which the bees needed for survival.

The first two conditions above would describe beekeeping conditions in North Raleigh where I live.

Robbing



This is what a robbed frame now without honey looks like. Note the ragged edges to the cells that held honey.

The first sign of trouble is robbing.

Hungry bees go looking for food. When they find a colony that has food (either food being supplied to it or one with honey stores they can not defend) it will be attacked. The bees strip all honey out of cells and leave comb looking like this.

Feeding is a solution but it goes with the risk of other hungry bees going after a hive being fed. Thus, if you are to feed a weak hive, you must understand that it is going to be a target for hungry bees.

How do you know robbing has begun? You may see a hive being attacked. One can place a small dish filled with sugar syrup out away from the hives in the apiary. It will not take long for the bees to find the dish. If they ignore it, robbing will not be an issue but if they do find it, the activity around the dish will indicate quickly that the bees are hungry.

- **Things that one should do to prevent robbing**
 - **Don't be sloppy. Containers used to supply the sugar syrup to hives should not be left out for bees to rob.**
 - **Don't spill sugar syrup in the apiary area.**
 - **Don't consider open feeding. This not only will draw bees from other areas to your feeding location, but it will also increase the possibility of introducing mites and diseases to your apiary.**
 - **Put robbing screens on hives – all hives. Even stronger hives can become targets. Placing robbing screens on hives should be done just as soon as any evidence of robbing is observed.**
 - **All hives should have entrance reducers. Note that many entrance reducers have two entrance sizes.**

- **If a hive is being robbed, the hive should be moved to a new location and a robbing screen placed on it. Robbing does not stop once started. Covering a hive with a sheet is not a long term solution.**
- **If one is removing honey from hives, it is a good idea to cover and protect supers of honey from being robbed. Many beekeepers will have special honey boards to place under just harvested honey supers. Inner covers could be used to catch dripping honey from supers as well as top covers to prevent bees from getting into supers. Once started, robbing can be a real headache.**

I am including a power point presentation **#31 on Feeding Methods**. I published it with my 101, 201, & 301 cd which is now out of print. If you have any question about feeding, just email me. I will get back to you.



The powerpoint presentation is an attached file.

by Dana Stahlman