

Polk County Beekeeper's Association Meeting
August 18, 2016
Meeting Notes

Seventeen folks attended our meeting this time. Mr. Phil Holbert was our guest speaker and after a great potluck, he discussed preparing your hives for winter, and fielded questions from the group about our observations and concerns. It is nice to see such a good group of like minds gathering in fellowship. We all share **the excitement of “keeping bees”**. **I’ll try to hit the highlights of what we went over**, but to be truthful, I was listening more than I was writing. It is so much better in person. Mr. Holbert is fantastic of course, but each of us bring our own stories to the table and we work out as a group, an immense amount of knowledge you just **can’t convey on paper**.

Feeding your bees.

Feeding methods vary, but a tried and true method is to use gallon sized double zip lock bags. Put a half gallon of 1:1 mixture by volume of sugar water in a bag, and lay it on top of the brood box frames. Make a spacer or use a frameless super to give plenty of room for the bees to get on top of the bag. Cut a few 2 inch slits in the top of the bag and the bees will feed on it easily. Do not prop up your telescoping top for ventilation while feeding, as this will allow other hives to rob. Try to feed all your hives at the same time to prevent robbing. Feed one and a half gallons (1 ½) per hive, 1/2 gallon per feeding..

It is time treat your bees for varroa mites. There are more than one types and ways to treat, Mr. Holbert recommends ApiGuard. **I’ve treated mine this way, and** it is very simple. Treat now or you will be getting too late. Around the 3rd week of September, you can feed again and your bees that hatch out will be winter bees your queen is laying now, and should be fairly mite free, helping them survive the winter. Remove your honey supers before treating to avoid contamination of your honey.

Honey Bee Healthy

Here is an online description: This feeding stimulant contains 100% pure essential oils and is used in spring and winter to stimulate the immune system. Prevents mold and fungus in sugar syrups, calms bees when used as a spray, allows direct queen release when sprayed on bees, builds colonies when fed during dearth of nectar and more. Just add a teaspoon of this concentrate to sugar syrup feedings. Contains spearmint and lemongrass oil. 16 oz. bottles of concentrate will make 24 gallons of feeding solution.

A word of caution, feed all of your bees the mixture at the same time, or you will encourage robbing. Using an entrance reducer is recommended. After feeding, you can prop the top back up to increase ventilation. Ventilate even in the winter, bees only heat the area where they are gathered in the middle. Protecting your hives from being exposed to a cold north wind is important.

Spring Feeding.

Start feeding in January, February and March to induce the Queen to start laying, but you better have a plan. When the bees hatch out, they will need plenty of room to expand or you will induce swarming, so have all of your equipment ready. Feed ½ of a gallon per hive per month.

Small hive beetles.

Just about all hives in our area will have them. Weak hives will have more beetles. The bees keep them in check in strong hives. The beetles lay eggs in the hive, the larva hatch out, make their way out to the ground and emerge as beetles. You can treat the ground around your hive with diatomaceous earth. One attendee said that swimming pool filters use it, it is larger and more coarse and will stand up to weather better than the food grade. You can get it at plant stores, Lowes and Walmart. One user used Twister Pads, cut into strips and laid on top of the brood frames to trap the beetles. Mr. Holbert says they get tangled up in the fibers and die. **I'm all for that. I'm going to try this, the simple things often are the**

best. Another method discussed was to take ribbed plastic like yard sale signs, cut a strip of it, put boric acid in it, then seal the ends with Crisco. The beetles eat the Crisco and try to hide from the bees in the tunnels and the acid kills them. I need **a source for boric acid and I'll try this one too.**

Queen excluders.

Some folks don't use them, but I do and Mr. Holbert recommends it.

If you don't use one;

when you inspect your honey super, you have to be extra cautious not to shake off or injure your Queen.

The Queen will go up into the honey supers and lay eggs, and when the brood hatches out, the wax will be darkened, and successive hatchings will blacken it. Parts of the cocoon of the larva will remain in the cell, making for a mess when you extract your honey and especially if you reclaim the wax.

Pollen.

There isn't a need to feed pollen in the fall of the year, the bees will have good sources for pollen, but not nectar. Feed dry pollen in the early spring, you can make a pollen feeder from a one gallon plastic bucket and hang it near your hives. Using pollen cakes could possibly lead to an infestation of small hive beetles, since the adults have a place to hide from the bees and to lay eggs, and the larva hatches out in the cake.

Dark comb.

If you have dark comb in your brood boxes and want to replace it, start in the spring and remove the outside comb that probably will be empty of both brood and honey by then. Next time you have the chance, you can move the newer in towards the middle. In the course of a few years, your boxes will have fresh comb in them.

Rendering wax.

First of all, BE CAREFUL around open flames. If you can, use a hotplate in the garage or elsewhere, for the potential to make a mess is pretty good. (Experience teaches well). Hot wax is extremely flammable. With that being said, this is how I melt mine down. I keep the cappings separate from any comb I may have damaged or is too dark. Put your wax into a pot of water and bring to a gentle boil. **Make sure this is a pot you don't want to use for anything else again.** Have another pot ready that is large enough to hold the contents of the first pot. I bought a set of nesting stainless steel pots at Walmart. Get a piece of screen wire that is large enough to go over the top of the pots and a pack of cheesecloth. Pour the hot liquid from one pot into the second pot, with the screen wire and cheesecloth **over the second pot's opening.** Let mixture cool slowly, for hours in necessary, until a layer of wax has formed. Take the wax out, and scrape the underside of all accumulated trash. Pour the dirty water out and repeat the process until you are left with a block of nice clean wax. The comb wax will be darker than the cap wax. You can make candles, lip balm, many different things from the wax. There are companies that will buy it from you, check Brushy Mountain Bee Farm for one. **If you don't want your wax, another beekeeper will, so don't throw it away!**

Nuclear boxes, or Nucs.

If you intend to order a nuc, do so around early February 2017.

Honey supers

I have ten frames in my brood boxes, a deep brood and a medium brood. I use medium supers with 9 frames for a couple of reasons.

- **The super is lighter to pick up when I'm ready to harvest.** Remember, if you start stacking them, eventually you will have to reach up to take them off.
- Nine frames encourages the bees to build the wax out beyond the wood of the frame, which allows you to cut the caps off easily, less honey wasted, less mess.

- I can take supers off to maximize what the bees are foraging for, i.e. sourwood. When a particular bloom is occurring, you can manage it better if you are willing to take a frame off and put an empty off.

There are metal adapters that you tack in your 10-frame box that converts it to 9-frames. Very easy to install.