



Seacoast Beekeepers Association

January 2010 Newsletter

President: Amy Robinson 642-3526 Vice President: Amy Antonucci 664-2796
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Next Meeting: Jan.21, Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

Lee Grange Hall, Lee N.H.

Potluck Supper & Election of Officers!

Editor's Notes:

Our President, Amy Robinson, told me she really didn't have a lot to say for this month's 'notes'... other than: bring a dish that you can share for the potluck , remember to bring a plate and utensils, have fun getting caught up or acquainted with members... and, oh yes! Please remember that yearly club membership dues are \$12.00... and it's that time of year!

There'll be no raffle for the January meeting, but items in February would be greatly appreciated. Ben and Bev's Spring Fever Farm bee supplies table won't be at this month's meeting either, as Ben and Bev are in Florida for the annual beekeeping federation conference.

Here's an article written by one of our members~ Margaret Agnew.

Enjoy!

NHBA Fall Meeting 10.10.09

Kirsten Traynor's morning presentation: The German Hive Rotation System

The quick version:

Take a strong hive through the winter and through the early honey crop.

Make a young colony using a shook swarm from this mother colony, with a new queen and new frames, but do not plan for honey.

Continue the mother colony over the summer for a further honey crop.

In the fall, rejoin the strong young colony with the "cleansed" remains of the mother colony.

The German beekeepers that Kirsten studied use the same sized frames for both the brood nest and the honey supers and they include oxalic acid in their varroa treatment program, but both these aspects could be modified by New England beekeepers.

In detail:

In spring a drone frame (no foundation) is placed on the outside edge of the brood nest. This provides a breeding ground for the varroa who overwintered in the broodless hive and helps to reduce swarming, as the drones require plenty of food. Honey supers are put on quite early and by late May/early June there will be as much as two full supers of rapeseed (canola) honey. A queen excluder is used above the brood frames with an old brood frame included in the honey super to entice the bees to cross the excluder.

On a single visit to a hive, the beekeeper:

1. Shakes the bees on the honey supers into a swarm box through a moistened funnel (first smoking the hive from below to drive more bees upwards from the brood boxes)
2. Collects the full supers for extraction
3. Cuts the wax and brood out of the drone frame – these cells contain most of the varroa in the hive and the early drones are weak and not suitable for breeding – and replaces the empty frame. The beekeeper observes the pattern of drone comb built - looking for a nice U-shape bottom, several V- shapes show that the hive is ready to swarm)

4. Checks frames for queen cells and cuts them out (or removes frame to use the cells for a new queen)

That night the beekeeper places the swarm boxes, containing 3 to 3 ½ pounds of bees, in a cool room and treats the bees for varroa mites (using oxalic acid, lactic acid or powdered sugar.)

The young colony.

The next day, the beekeeper takes the swarm boxes to a different location, 2 to 3 miles from the first, and installs a hive body above each swarm box. The hive body contains a single frame of honey on one end, and all other frames are foundation. He introduces a young mated queen and feeds 1:1 sugar syrup at a fairly slow rate of 1 gallon per week – to stimulate the queen and get the bees drawing comb without blocking up the hive with honey.

When it is time to add a second hive body, the beekeeper uses 2 frames from the first box, an empty frame as a drone frame, and a frame of drawn comb from a honey super. He does not add supers to collect honey from this young colony.

Note that the beekeeper can move this young colony back to the old location if he prefers any time a few weeks after it is created – it is not necessary to have 2 year round apiary sites.

The mother colony.

The beekeeper re-supers this colony for further honey collection over the rest of the summer. The queen, who went through last winter, is still raising bees, but there is no tendency for the hive to swarm. By fall the colony and queen are tired.

Recombining the mother colony bees with the young colony begins in late August or early September in Germany. The beekeeper makes towers of brood filled frames and swarm boxes of loose bees as follows:

At the first mother colony, the beekeeper collects the honey supers for extraction, and cages the queen. Then he places the brood frames, with all the bees, and the caged queen, into a hive body.

At each subsequent mother colony, the beekeeper collects the honey supers for extraction and cages the queen and pinches her (occasionally the queen may be so productive that he wants to use her for another season). He brushes all the bees into a swarm box and places the brood frames, with no bees attached, into a hive body which he adds to the hive body containing the brood frames and bees and caged queen from the first hive, forming a brood tower of brood frames.

If a beekeeper had 4 hives, he would create a single brood tower from caged queen and the brood and the bees from the first hive and the brood from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th hives. The bees from the first hive would take care of all the brood from the 4 hives. The bees from the other hives would be held as artificial swarms. Depending on the number of colonies, the beekeeper might create several brood towers.

The beekeeper places the swarm boxes overnight in a cool room and treats the bees with oxalic acid for varroa mites. He then combines the cleansed bees with the young colonies, by placing them in an empty box above a newspaper divider. He makes sure the added bees are well-fed first, and also the young colonies.

In the tower of brood, the queen is caged so no new brood is being laid and the bees from the first hive are tending the emerging brood. However there are plenty of varroa in the old frames. Once all brood has emerged, the beekeeper collects the bees as a shook swarm, which he places in a cool room and treats the bees with oxalic acid for varroa mites and uses the cleansed bees to beef up any weaker colony. The old frames are discarded, having been used for two seasons and one winter.

Advantages of the German hive rotation system:

Minimal varroa over winter – remember both the shook swarm used to start the young colony and the bees added later are all treated first.

However the queen is never treated.

Strong stress free bees from the young colony, which is not responsible for a honey crop form the basis of the wintering population.

The young queen is supported by the healthy workers of the young colony to bring the hive into the spring.

The artificial swarm produces new disease free comb for a sanitized hive. Comb is fully replaced within 2 years.

Spring varroa breeding is interrupted by the removal of the early drone comb.

Disadvantages:

Those associated with making splits for whatever reason: the requirement for another location for the young colony, and the use of more woodenware.

The significant disruption to the bees twice in a season – first to the mother colony in making the shook swarms, then in dissolving the mother colony in the fall. The young colony is left relatively undisturbed.

Did you know??

Colonies that store more pollen have more bees in the spring. Young bees must have protein in the form of pollen to develop properly. Pollens contain from 2.5 % to 60% protein, depending on the plant source.

And more on that... In November, we received an interesting piece of mail from Ben Chadwick, our NH bee inspector. It was entitled "Fall Feeding of Protein Patties." Here are some excerpts:

"The jury is still out, but reports from commercial beekeepers in Southern Alberta (Canada) seem to indicate that overwintering success may be greatly improved and that the colony condition the next Spring may be much better.

An abstract from the Journal of Economic Entomology, authored by PENG-Y-S{a}; MARSTON-J-M; KAFTANOGLU-O at Entomology Dept. Univ. California, Davis California, states:

"...a feeding experiment was conducted to evaluate the effect of feeding time and feeding treatments on the *A. mellifera* (honeybee) population..." colonies produced significantly more bees from fall feeding than from spring feeding or

continuous feeding from fall to spring. Colonies fed with protein supplement containing 21% protein from Torula yeast and/or syrup also produced significantly more bees than unfed colonies... Feeding sugar syrup in spring was less profitable than feeding protein supplement in fall.”

*** The date of this publication was 1984!

Remember, this is the time of year to finish (or start) building those new hives, read some bee books or at least back-log of ABJ and Bee Culture we know you've spent all year accumulating!

Need Supplies, or help, for you or your bees?

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