BTHE BNET Bee Stronger Together

Kit for Beekeepers

GOOD BEEKEEPING PRACTICES | Colony Set-up and Management/Maintenance

Colony Inspection

Optimise inspection time/number of visits (e.g., to minimise stress; planning)

To avoid stressing the bees unnecessarily while inspecting the colony status or making other management practices, always plan the work and number of visits. Can more than one aspect of the management be done at the same time, to avoid disturbing the colonies again soon?

step 1

Visits should follow the biological cycle of the bees. Spring visits are more frequent to prevent swarming.

When there is movement on the flight board with bees continuously entering and exiting the hive whilst carrying pollen on their legs, this indicates that the queen and brood should be present.

Check the colony's odour: a pleasant fragrance indicates health and wellbeing, whilst an acrid or acidic odour signals poor health.

step 2

A thorough observation of the *antivarroa* floor may allow us to open the hive less frequently and thus reduce the stress of the bees.

The *antivarroa* floor shows debris that reveals what is happening inside the hive. This debris provides multiple sources of information:

- **Light-coloured debris:** honey uncapping indicates proper bee nutrition.
- **Light debris on the sides:** the colony is depleting its stores.
- **Dark-coloured debris:** cell capping indicates brood emergence.
- **Dark and dense debris (centre area):** indicates excellent colony health.
- **New wax flakes:** presence of wax-making bees that are building new combs.
- **Coarse wax fragments:** indicates robbing by bees from other colonies.
- **Pollen pellets:** shows store import and brood presence. Hard white granules indicate pollen mycosis.
- **Brown-yellowish drops:** sign of diarrhoea (colony disease).
- **Dead bees:** possible poisoning from phytopharmaceuticals.
- **Bees walking on grass:** indicates a strong *Varroa* mite attack.
- **Small moths:** wax moth presence usually indicates a weak colony.

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step 3

Specialised equipment could help reduce the number and length of visits to the hive:

- **Remote scales and sensors:** allow you to monitor weight, nectar collection and colony status without opening the hives.
- **Management applications:** help you record field data, photos and notes, which reduces analysis time.
- **Quality tools:** An efficient hive tool and smoker will speed up your inspections.

If you do not have access to technology, experience will help you determine population levels and food stores. You should monitor individual colony weights over time to understand their condition.

An empty hive typically weighs between **10–15 kg**. Light hives will need feeding or uniting with other colonies, whilst heavy hives indicate good stores and a strong population.

Always mind your posture when lifting hives, as this could pose an injury risk.

step 4

Keeping good records will help you optimise your apiary visits by planning the right operations during each inspection.

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