BTHENET
Bee Stronger Together

Kit for Beekeepers

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

Colony Inspection

Evaluate the food stores

It is crucial for the survival of a colony that there is enough food stored at all times. If not, nursing bees will stop producing gelee royal to feed the queen, which will in turn will stop producing eggs. A colony which went through a period of starvation once might never recover.

To ensure that the colony has enough food to survive without flowers to collect nectar and pollen from due to bad weather (too wet, too dry or too cold) always leave enough honey for the colony when harvesting honey during the season.

step 1

Always think ahead!
Figure out when you need to check the food storage of your bees. There are many points to consider: the weather, the time of the year, which flowers are available, the size of your colonies and your previous actions.

step 2

Springtime:
Often underestimated, but a particularly critical time for your bees, as food resources are still limited during those first observation flights. The workers are getting active, the queen starts laying eggs, the whole colony needs more energy again and might use up its remaining storage during colder periods in spring.

step 3

During the whole year:
Pay attention to the weather forecast! Keep the effects of long rainy periods, droughts and other critical periods in mind. Your colony will need some storage if the worker bees cannot fly out or if there are not enough food resources in nature.

step 4

At the end of the year:
Larger amounts need to be fed to fill up the winter storages:

- After the honey-yielding (make sure to always leave some honey to avoid periods of starvation).
- In autumn/before winter (preferably after the *Varroa* treatment).

step 5

Easy method to get a rough estimate of the available food resources:
Slightly lift the upper of your bee boxes (if you have two). If it is easy to lift, your bees need food. Sometimes the honey isn't stored evenly or in the lower box, so you can double check by lifting from two sides and the lower box.

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step 6

To be more thorough, check the combs:

- It is alarming if there is only a little or no honey stored in the combs at the rim.
- During springtime, it is crucial that you can still see capped honey while looking down on the combs.

If this is not the case, your bees might get close to finishing their winter storage (~ 8 kg = ruffly 2–3 combs completely filled with honey, should still be there).

step 7

What, How much, and When to feed:

- spring: idealy this should not be necessary (thereby called "emergency feeding"), but if so one or to honey combs, alternatively a bit of sugardough (1–2,5 kg) should cover a brief critical period.
- spring/summer: nucleus colonies or swarms should get fed 2–5 kg of liquid food to give them a good start.

step 8

Late summer/autumn – filling up the winter storage:
Depending on size of the colony, your bees should have 20–30 kg to get through the winter.
Feed accordingly: usually 15–20 kg, depending on how much honey you yielded and how much they could store. Start early (little by little is better than too much at a time) and keep in mind that the bees will stop taking in liquid food if it is too cold.

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