

A CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING OUR HIVES FOR WINTER

THIS IS A LIST OF THINGS THAT COULD PREVENT THE COLONIES FROM SURVIVING DURING THE LATE FALL, WINTER AND EARLY SPRING

1. The colony could starve
2. The queen could die or not lay enough eggs
3. There may not be enough bees and brood in the fall (weak colony)
4. The winter bees may not be healthy and may have been poorly developed because of the mites
5. The hive may have a virus
6. The hive may have been weakened from too much moisture during the winter

BELOW IS A LIST OF THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP THE BEES MAKE IT THROUGH THE WINTER

1. KILL THE MITES

This may be the single most important thing to do. Consider doing this early, as soon as the honey supers have been removed., usually in late July. If something happens to the queen during the treatment period there will be time to replace her.

The mites spread viruses and weaken the bees immune systems

They prevent the proper development of the winter bees and shorten their lifetime.

2. STARVATION

- Check each hive for adequate stored honey
- Feed the hives 2:1 sugar syrup. Sugar is better than HFCS
- Consider adding Fumagilin to 2 gallons of syrup for each hive. This will prevent and cure Nosema.
- Insulate the hives or at least wrap them with tar paper.
- Putting insulation on top of the hive, under the outer cover, can be of a great benefit to the hive. Putting insulation on the sides and back of the hive is even better. The tar paper goes over the insulation.
- Insulating the hive permits the bees to expand their cluster and be able to access honey they could not otherwise reach. A colony can starve with honey just inches away from their cluster.

3. THE QUEEN

How old is the queen?

Older queens are more likely to die or have a reduced egg output than younger queens.

Younger queens have a higher pheromone output and a better brood pattern than old queens.

Evaluate the brood pattern and the strength of the hive. If necessary, replace the queen as soon as possible.

4. IS THE HIVE STRONG

Is the hive weak or is it strong and loaded with bees?

How many frames of brood are there?

A weak hive is a sign of a problem such as a poor queen, a heavy mite load, or a virus like Nosema.

If the hive is not strong in the fall it will not be strong in the spring either. Learn to know the symptoms of a hive with a virus or bacterial infection.

A CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING OUR HIVES FOR WINTER

5. USE A MOISTURE VENTILATION BOARD

Place it over the inner cover. This piece of equipment provides some insulation and also an upper entrance. It will reduce condensation and prevent water from dripping down on the bees. If the moisture/ventilation board is wet or very damp when you check it in the spring time the hive is not getting enough air flow and or air cannot get to the sides and ends of the board to evaporate the moisture. I use a top cover that is larger than the usual cover and the ventilation board never becomes damp.

If you are using the standard hive top cover you could try using a ventilation board that is a bit narrower and shorter than the inner cover.

6. THE BOTTOM BOARD AND TRAY

If you are using a screened bottom board be sure to insert the tray in the fall as soon as the really hot weather is over. The bees will store honey in the top deep super and the queen will lay eggs for the winter bees in the bottom deep. It is easier for the hive to keep the lower brood frames warm when the tray is in place. Once the tray is in, do not take it in and out.

7. MOUSE GUARDS and entrance reducers

Get the mouse guards in early because the mice are looking for a good winter home and they can make a mess out of the bottom combs. A mouse guard or entrance reducer should have a clearance of about 5/16th of an inch or a mouse can get through.