

FALL PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER:

What follows is the short version of each of the topics. I will expand on them as separate topics, and post them to the web site, in time. But for now, this is what I find myself repeating a lot in the shop as visitors come in with questions. Email me at sunnybee@skynetbb.com if you have questions, in case I need to add more information to the expansions.

1. FEEDING THEM UP:

In the fall, you may, or may not, need to feed your bees 2:1 syrup. Ideally, we want the colony to have moved down in their hive, and to have backfilled over the tops of themselves along the way. There are some likely scenarios that will help you decide:

- a. The colony is strong, has stored lots of honey, and is continuing to bring in enough nectar from outside sources to feed themselves without consuming their stores. In this scenario, you *wouldn't need to feed*, but watch out...conditions can change quickly, including cooler temperatures that prohibit the bees from flying. In which case, they'll start consuming their stores.
- b. You haven't been feeding and now find that your hive has been bringing in enough to feed themselves, but has nothing stored for winter. In this scenario, you *need to feed*.
- c. You've been feeding and the bees seem happy, but they aren't adding to their stores. In this scenario, you *should keep feeding*, as you don't want them consuming their stores.

Keep in mind that the feeding of syrup is a temperature driven process. Once the daytime temperatures get into the mid-low 50's, they bees may stop taking syrup. Additionally, the lower the temperatures drop, the higher the probability that all you are doing is adding moisture to you bee hive.

So, the earlier you start "feeding them up", the more flexibility you will have to stop the process.

2. HEALTHY BEES:

Raising healthy winter bees means getting the colony as healthy as it can be *before* the winter bees are being produced.

- a. Mite Treatments: If you have not provided your colony with a mite treatment, then get a plan in place and get one done. Mites, in addition to weakening a colony through feeding off the bees, can pass viruses through that feeding process. Google your options and pick a medication that makes sense to you. If you need help, ask another beekeeper (email your mentor, email me, ask someone from your beekeeping club), about the pros and cons of your choice.
- b. Intestinal Health: After your mite treatment, I recommend a probiotic.

3. **WINTER FOOD SUPPLY:**

Regardless of how much honey you leave in the colony, I still advocate for an “emergency” supply of sugar at the top of the hive. There are several options, including but not limited to: sugar alone (Mountain Camp method), sugar bricks, fondant, candy boards.

I find it is easier to place the dry feed at the point where you are closing up your hive for the last time before winter. Since we don’t always know when that will be, decide what you want to use and get it ready now, so you have it then.

Additionally, you will want to have a pollen substitute ready for when the bees decide to start rearing brood again. Most of the time, this will mean a pollen/brood patty of some sort. You can make them yourself (recipes abound on line), or you can purchase them pre-made. They store very well in the freezer.

4. **VENTILATION:**

After you close your hive for winter, you will check on them periodically to make sure that condensation is not building up in the hive and making the bees wet. Have a list of options available to make small changes to both your bottom (entrance) and the top (lids) that will allow moist air to escape.