

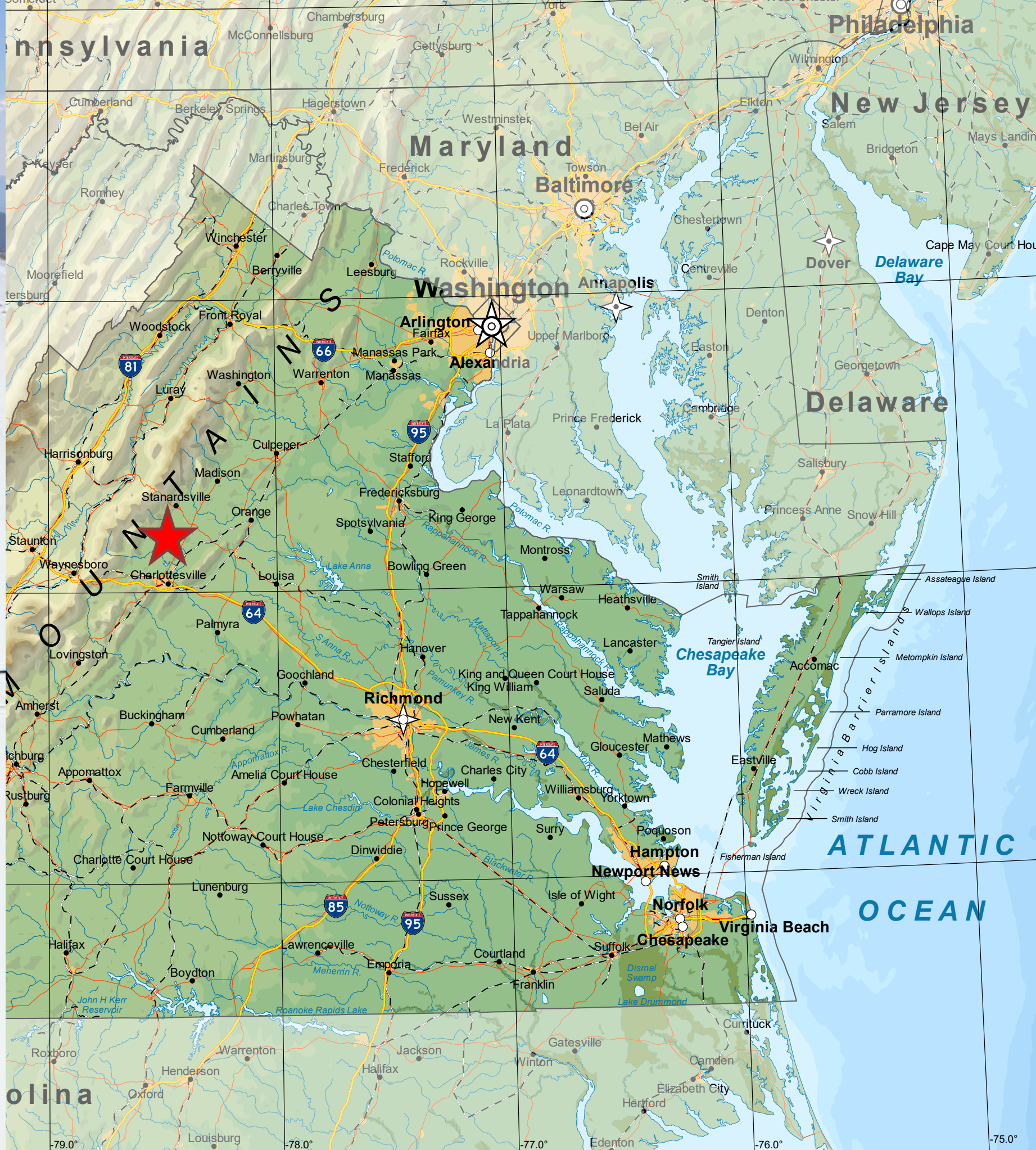
NECTAR MANAGEMENT

Excluders, Swarms and the Curse of the Honey Dome

Presentation PDF

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EARLYSVILLE, VA

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BEE FAMILY



HIVE GOALS

The Beekeeper Wants



- Healthy bees
- Honey-more hording
- Splits –smaller than swarm



The Bees Want



- Health
- Survival of the colony – Hording
- Reproduction – Big Swarm

Lets Work Together

Large Populations Make More Honey



Management Goals

1. Reduce Swarm Stimulus
2. Peak population early in the nectar flow

If they don't Swarm

The Honey Dome



If the bees have everything they need and their cavity is full they will backfill the brood nest and swarm.

BACKFILLING THE BROODNEST



Checkerboarding



- Breaks up the honey dome
- Drawn comb only!
- Alternate honey and empty comb
- IF there is brood make sure it is always kept in twos

Late Winter

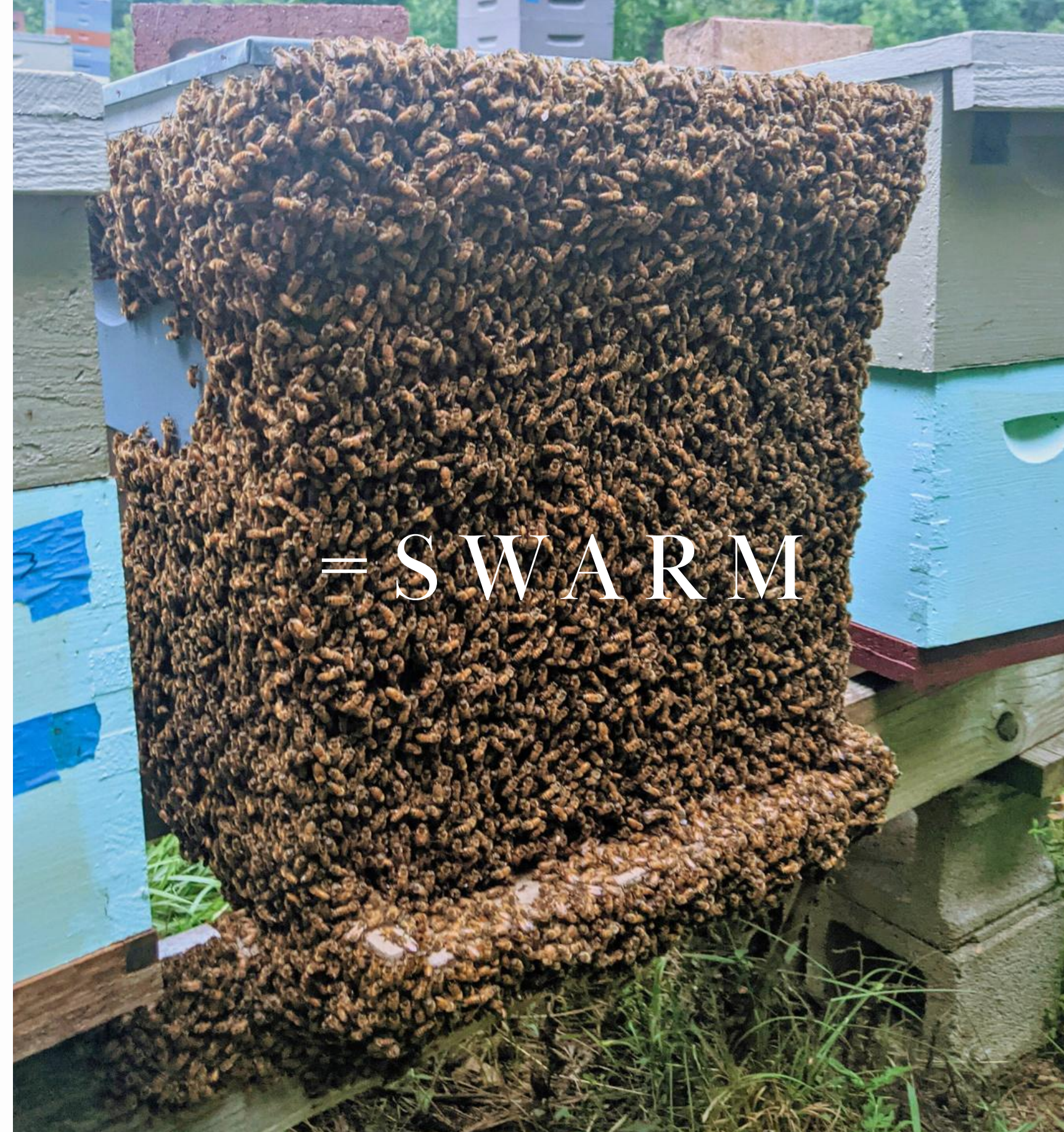
Equalize and Split

Be careful not to stress the bees



During Early Spring Buildup

Overcrowded + Incoming Food



Super up!



Start Just Before Flow

Brood Nest and Honey Management



Unlimited Brood Nest

Pros

- Endless room for the queen and resources
- Easiest to set up – just add more boxes
- Potential for less swarming???

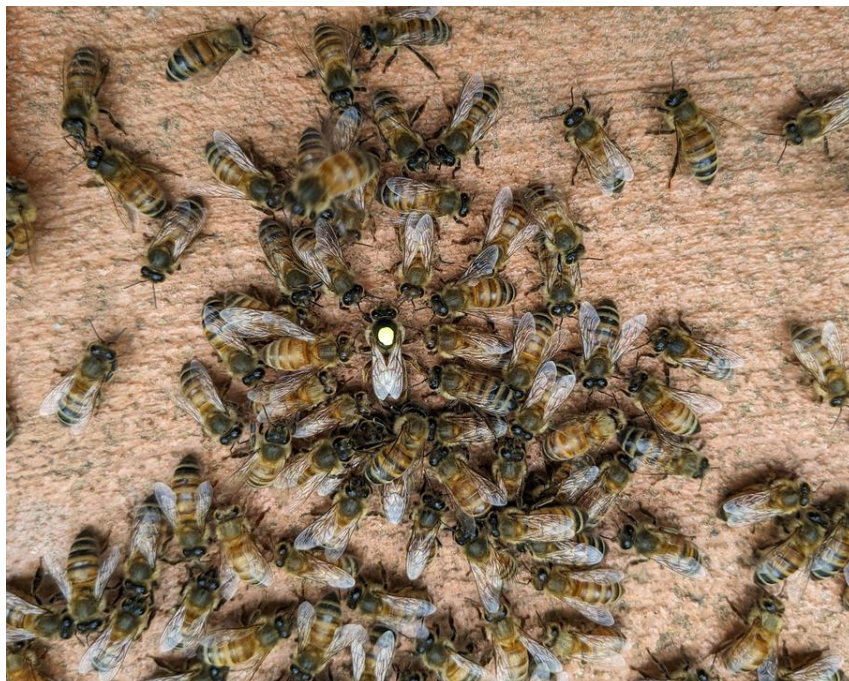
Challenges I Faced

- Can be very difficult to find the queen
- Inspecting for swarm cells takes longer
- Brood in the honey supers can delay harvest
- Pollen in honey supers
- Brood comb in honey supers. Wax moths!
- Queens can be lost when harvesting honey
- Reduced honey production



Queen Excluder to the Rescue!

- Easier to find the queen
- No brood in honey supers
- Honey comb stays clean for storage
- Easier to inspect for swarm cells
- Faster honey harvesting
- No more lost queens at harvest



BUT THE BEES WOULD IGNORE THE SUPERS

The Honey Dome Challenge

Queen excluders can discourage bee movement

Bees want to reproduce - not make honey for us.

If the bees have everything they need below the excluder they may not have the motivation to go through it. They will backfill the brood nest and swarm.



Typical Brood Nest Configurations With Excluders

Double Deep

Pros

- Plenty of room for the queen & resources
- Can reverse in spring for swarm control
- Can store enough honey for summer & winter
- Little pollen in supers

Cons

- HEAVY!
- Hard to find queen
- Swarms
- Queen excluder challenges
- Swarms



Typical Brood Nest Configurations With Excluders

Three Mediums

Pros

- OK stores for winter
- Room for the queen & some resources
- Lighter boxes
- Can move honey frames above excluder
- Little pollen in supers

Cons

- Hardest to find queen
- Lift mediums to inspect brood
- Most expensive
- **Queen excluder challenges**
- **Swarms**



Typical Brood Nest Configurations With Excluders

Single Deep

Pros

- Lightest
- Easiest to inspect and find queen
- Just enough room for brood
- No increased swarming
- Bees will go through queen excluders!

Cons

- Must feed for dearth & winter
- Pollen in supers
- Swarm checking is more difficult
- Will swarm quickly if not enough supers
- Delicate balance with resources



Typical Brood Nest Configurations With Excluders

Deep with Medium on Top

Pros

- Lighter than double deep
- Moderate stores for dearth times
- Room for the queen & some resources
- Can move honey frames above excluder
- Little pollen in supers

Cons

- Difficult to find queen
- Lift medium to inspect brood
- Can't reverse in spring



Excluder Bait

Work by the Frame



- Bait bees above excluder with frames of brood, honey or nectar
- Hard with different sized equipment
- Honey Contamination

Work by the Box

- Let bees and queen work in supers.
- Later shake bees out & add excluder
- Check for queen cells within 9 days if moving brood.



Don't forget a drone entrance!

**IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO
USE EXCLUDERS?**

WORKING WITH THE BEES

Upside Down Hive Management

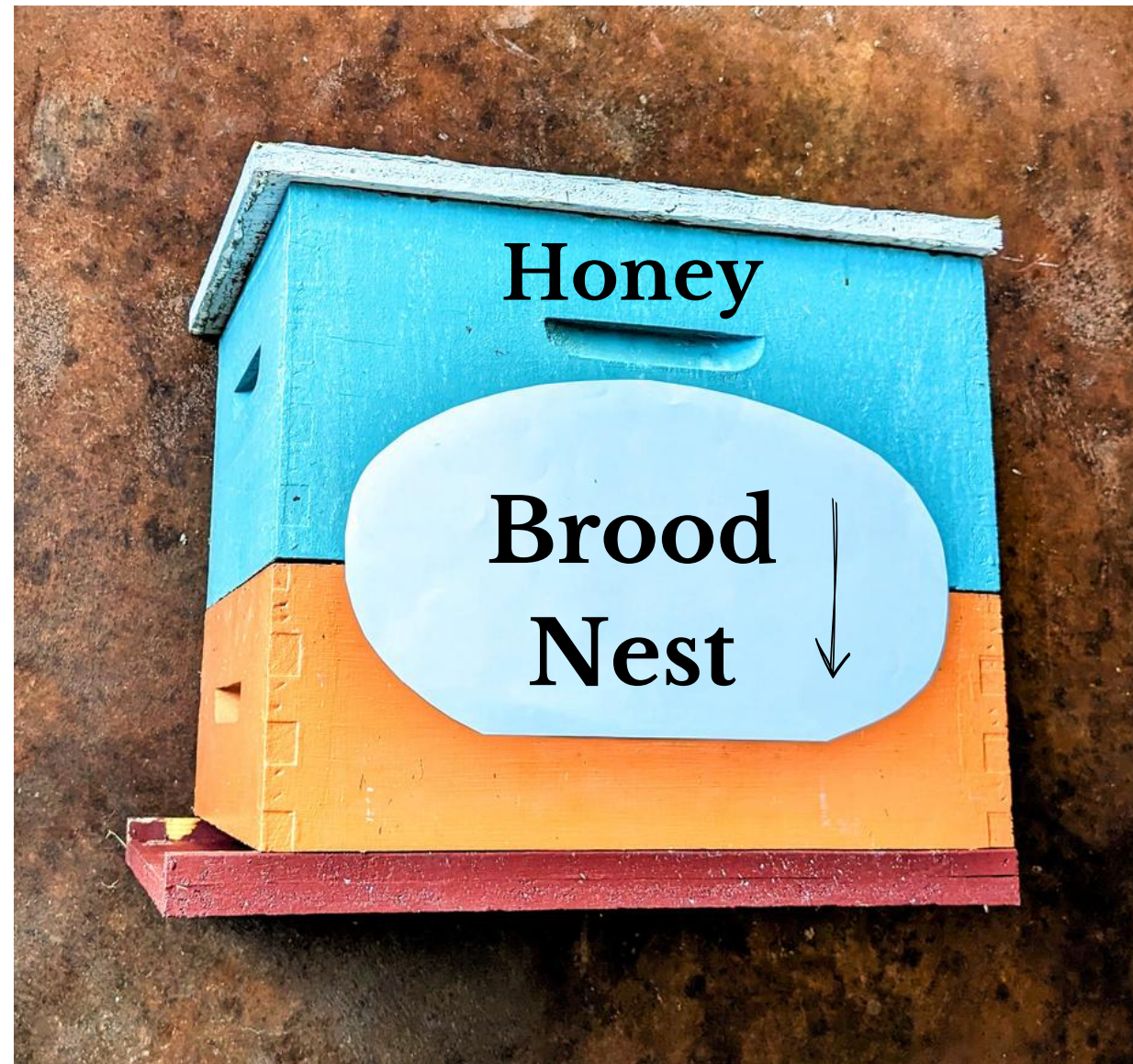


- Run brood nest 11 months with a medium on the bottom
- Less lifting and less robbing
- Increased my honey production



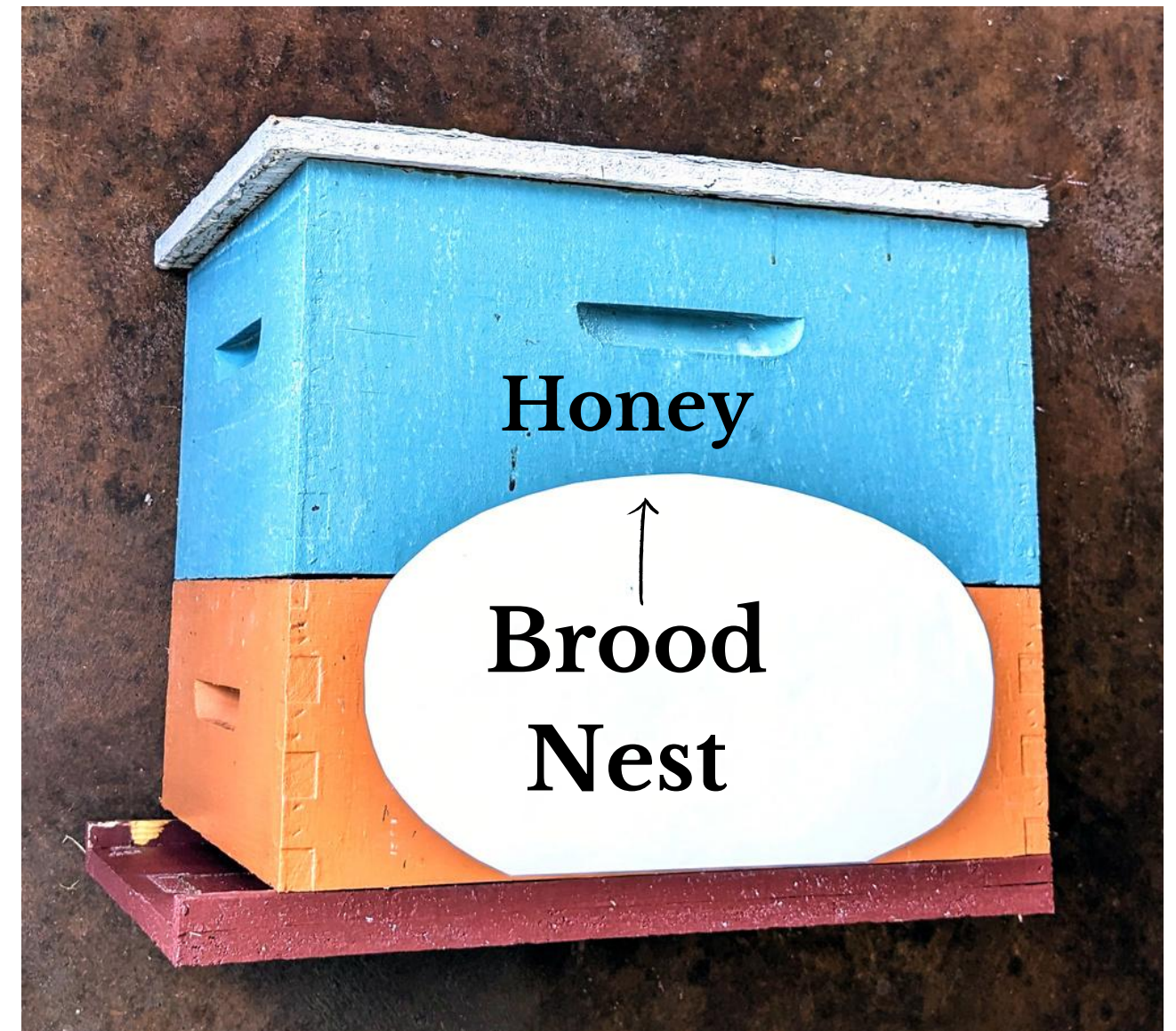
- Honey is in Deep Box
- Brood is low spanning the boxes
- Pollen stores below for dearth nutrition
- Feed if needed

Fall Flow



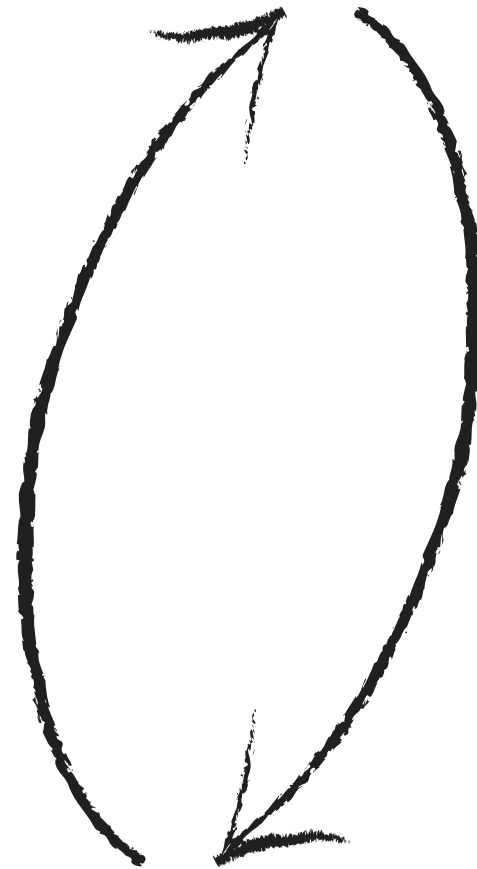
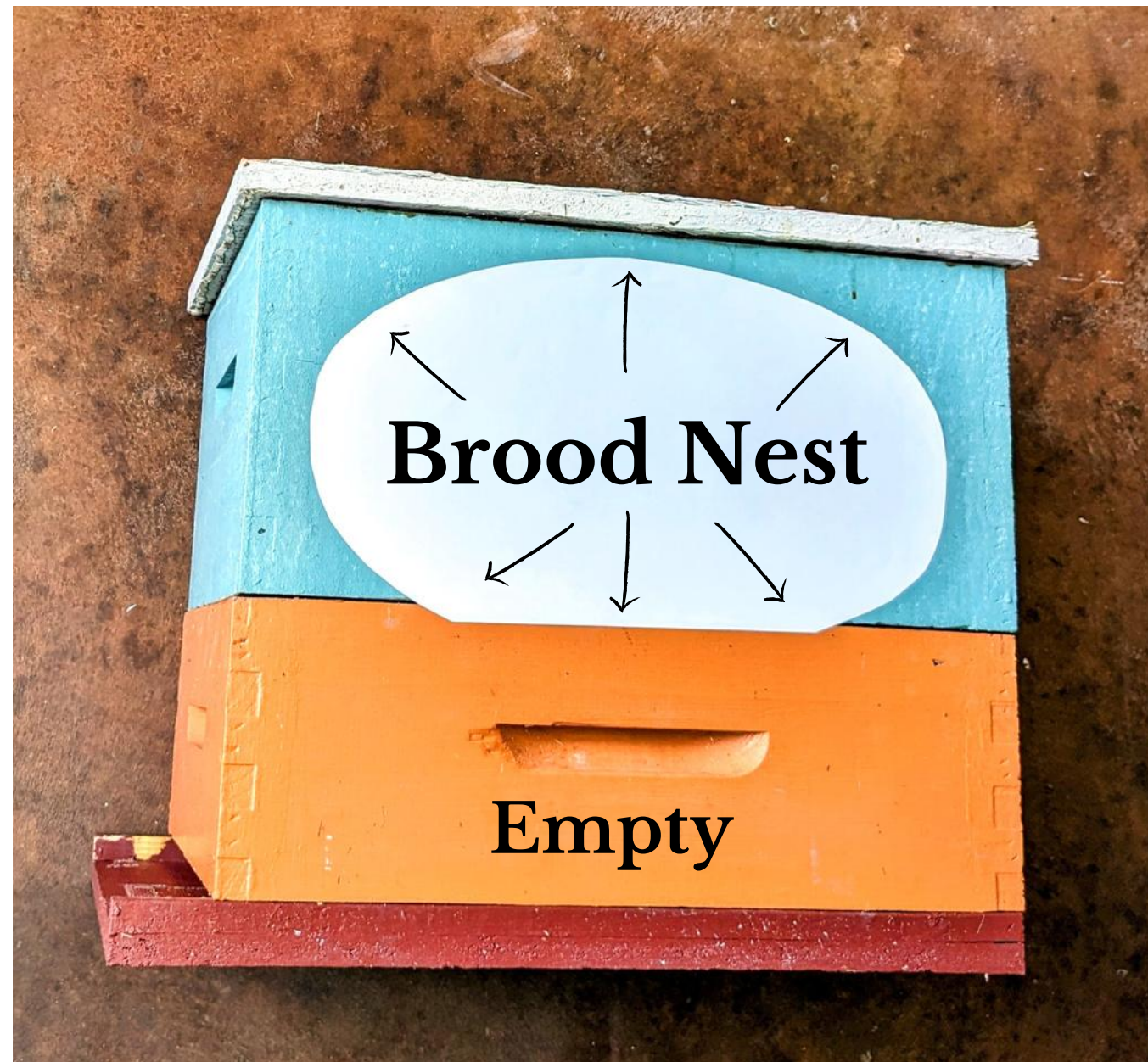
- Brood moves down into medium
- Brood at bottom of deep frames
- Feed if needed

Winter

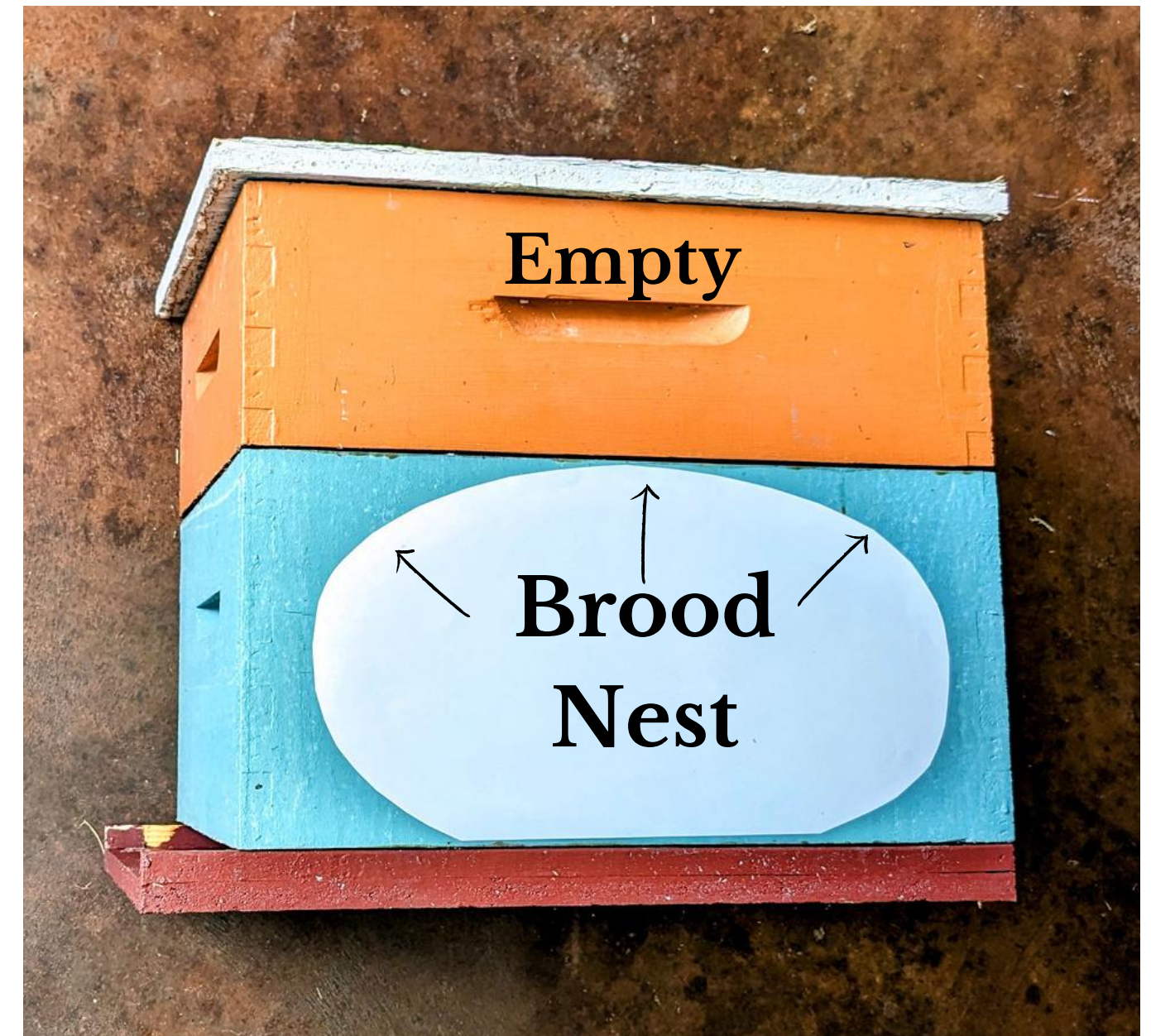


- Brood Nest moves up into deep
- No lifting honey box to inspect
- Propolis seal stays intact

Late Winter



Reverse



- Brood nest is normally in deep box
- Medium acts as a weather buffer
- Feed sugar brick or syrup if necessary

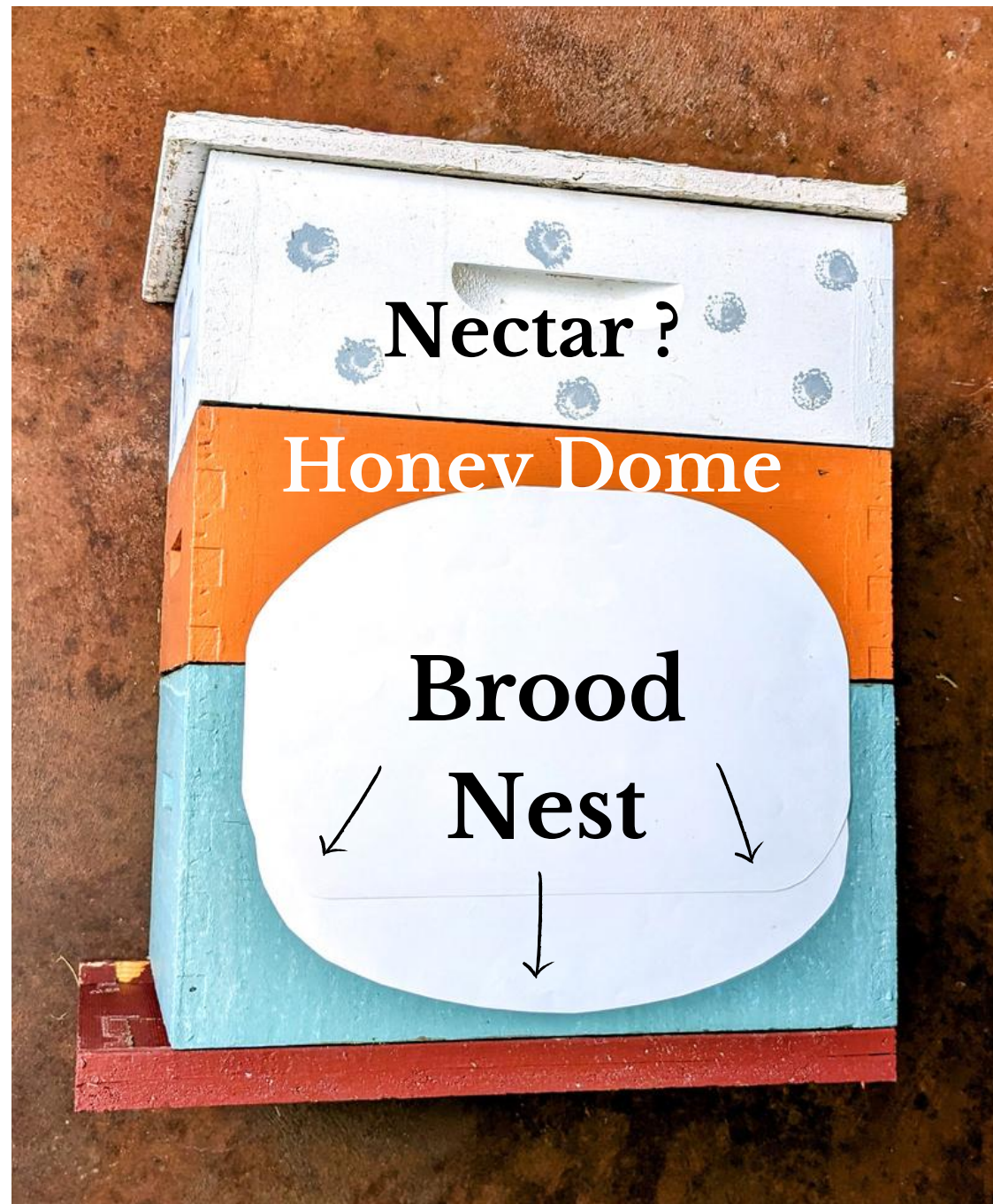
- Reverse empty medium to top to give bees sense of space. Maple Bloom in VA
- Bees will expand brood nest
- Bees use or clean out old pollen
- Bees build a new honey dome

Late Winter Reversal



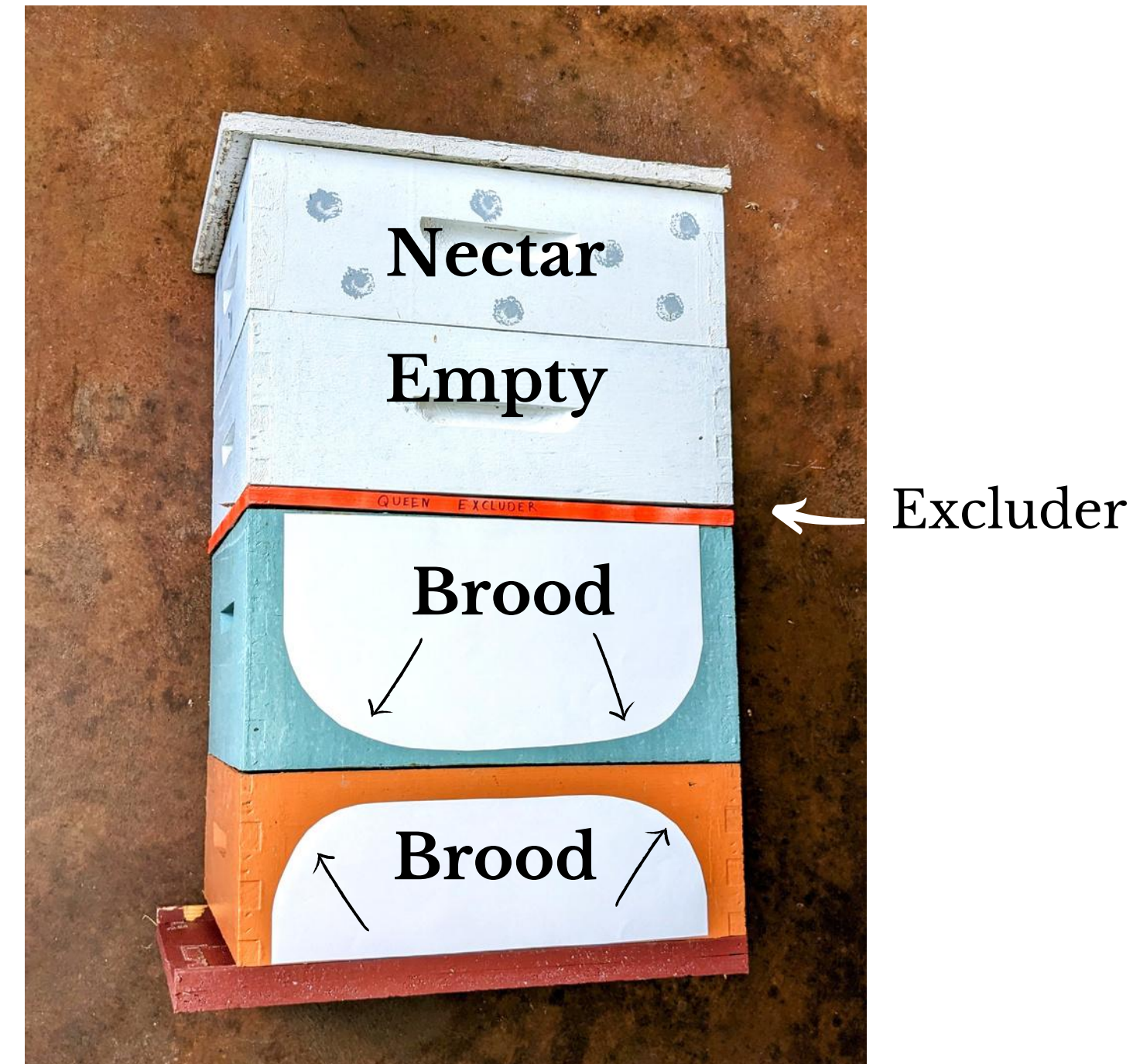
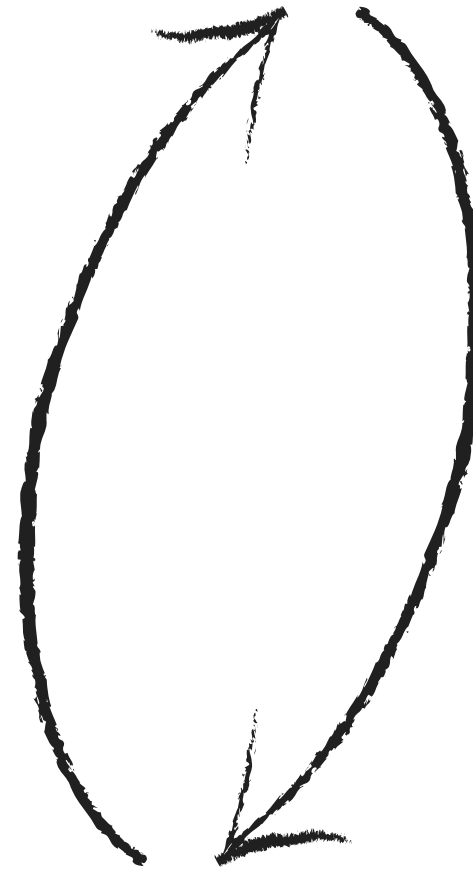
During First Nectar Brood Expansion
Red Maple Flow in Virginia

Flow is on!



- Add empty super
- Weather must be warm
- Autumn Olive Bloom in Virginia
- Reverse medium back to bottom to remove honey dome

Reverse + Excluder



- Add queen excluder
- Bees want to store nectar above brood so they will go through excluder
- Make sure queen is below excluder



PSA!
No Drawn Comb
= No Excluder!

Early Spring Reversal

During Early Honey Flow
Autumn Olive in Virginia



OSBN

Opening the Sides of the Brood Nest



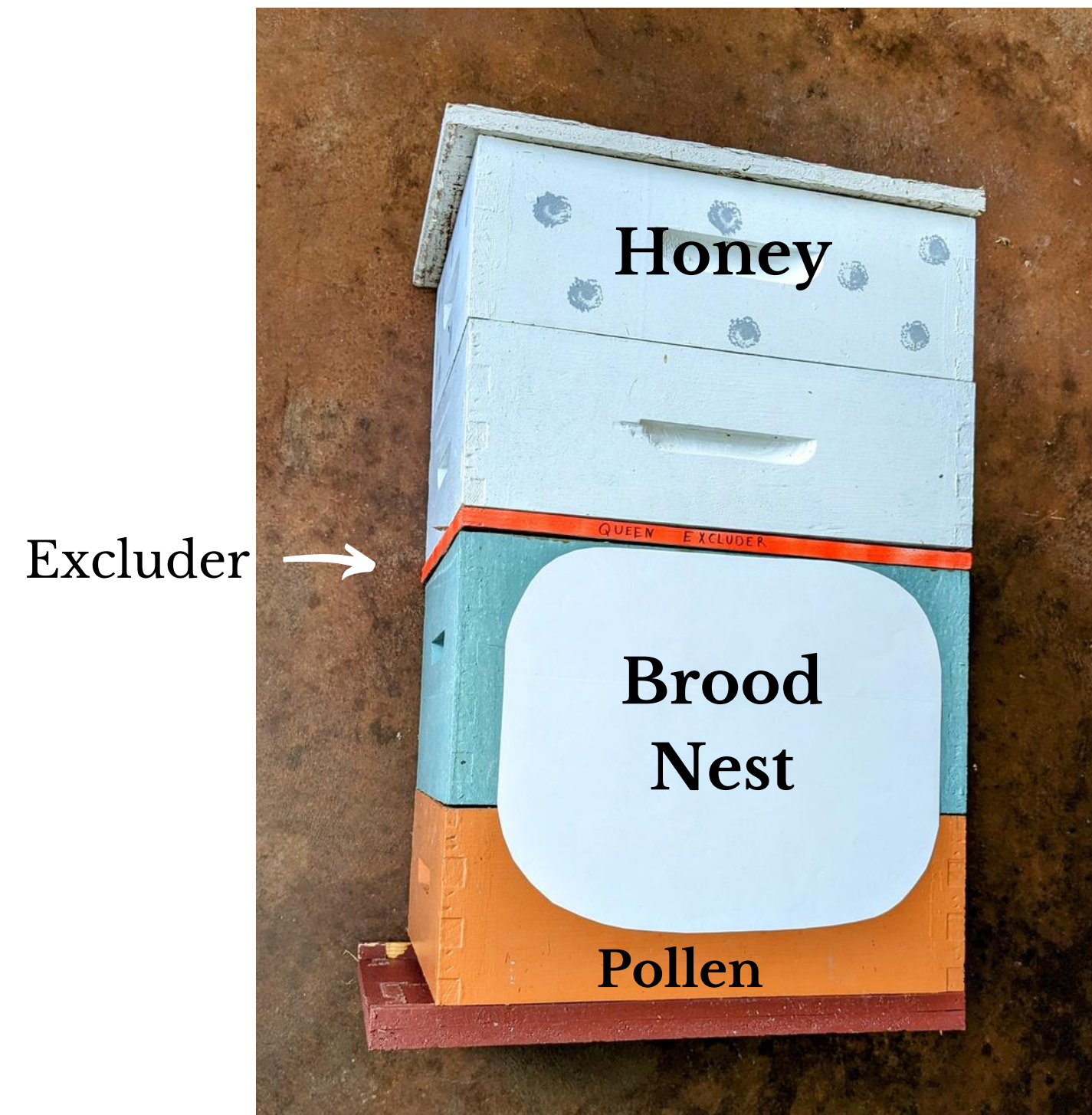
- OSBN gives bees the sense that their brood nest is not complete
- Remove excess frames of honey or pollen in brood nest
- Install drawn comb or foundation at edge of brood nest or within it. **Keep brood in twos.**
- Failure to draw foundation = swarm prep
- Visit every 9 days

Let Them Make Drones

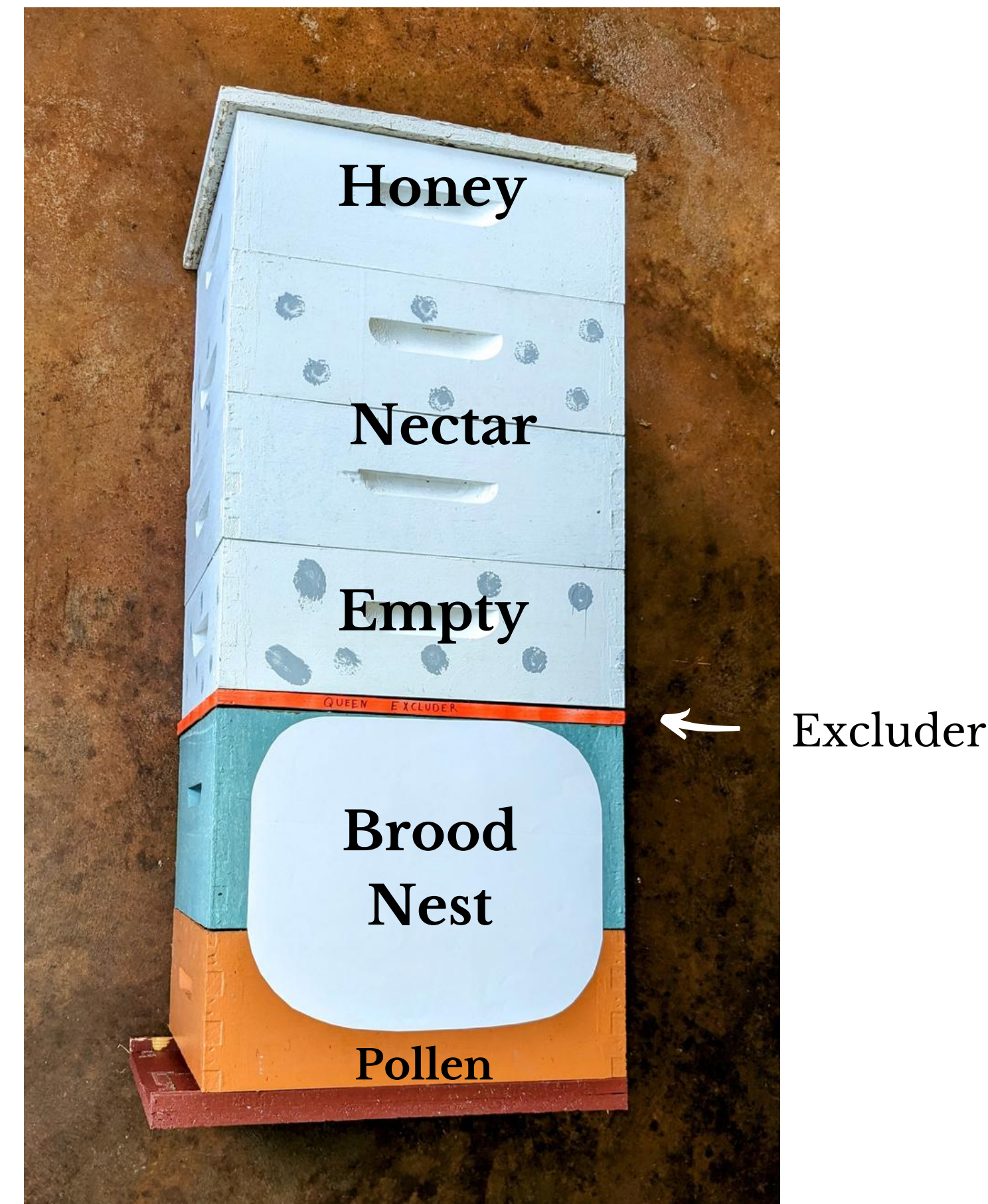


- Bees want drones in the spring
- Disrupts the brood nest.
- Can cut out drones for mite control or unwanted genetics

Flow Management



- Easy to tip deep to look for swarm cells



- Add supers to prevent backfilling
- Under super to remove honey dome

Add Supers as Needed

Under- or Over-Super?



- I prefer under-supering during heavy flow and over-super at the tail end
- Undrawn foundation-- Always under-super
- Extract and return “wet” supers – stimulates more nectar gathering

Swarm Prep?



- Check every 9 days.
- Typically on bottom of frames in multi box setups

Double-Queen Hives



Flow



- Hives in this yard using queen excluders had an 135-lb average in 2024

Alternative Triple Medium Management



- Move honey dome box above the excluder and run a two medium brood nest, recombining the honey post-flow. **Less feeding this way.**
- Reverse when adding the excluder to drop the honey dome.

Alternative Double Deep Management



- Move honey dome box above the excluder. Run a single deep during the flow.
- **Check for queen cells within 9 days.**
- Don't forget a drone entrance!
- Second deep stays with the colony, but leave the excluder till fall. **Less feeding this way.**
- Or drop the honey dome by reversing double deeps at the time you add the excluder. I have had mixed results.

Harvest the Honey



Condense For Dearth



- Pull off honey supers near the end of the nectar flow so bees store for summer
- Reduces the brood nest area
- Smaller can be easier to treat for mites
- Better hive beetle control
- May have to feed

Give it a Try?



Don't Forget the Fun & Awe

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Presentation PDF



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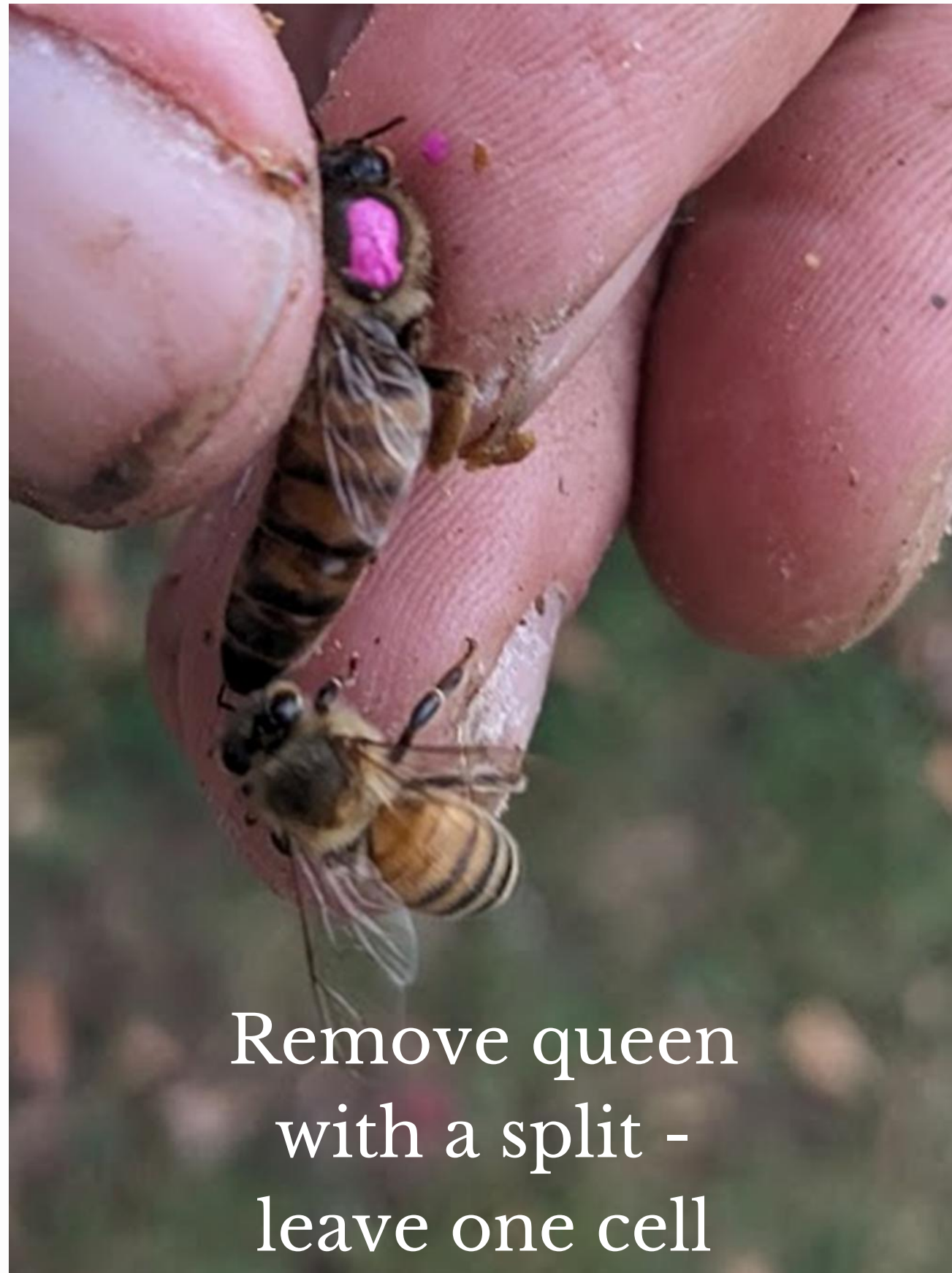
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Found the Queen?



Swarm Cells!


- Are they capped?
- Can you find the queen?
- Remove all but one or two max



EMERGENCY!



Decisions???

Developed Uncapped
and Capped Queen Cells

Can't find queen  -Bees- Make lots of splits with cells
 -Honey- Leave one cell.

Found queen  -Bess- Make lots of splits with cells
 -Honey- Split or cage queen.
Leave one cell. Ideally split above

Young Uncapped Cells

Can't find queen  -Honey- Split with one cell on top of colony.
Merge back later in flow

Found queen  -Want Honey- Tear Down all cells.
Add lots of room. Check back 9 days.

 -Honey & Bees- Split with queen.
Leave one cell.