

Calendar of Apiary Tasks May

The 10-year weather averages provided by Timeanddate.com

Avg temps: HI 79°F to Lo 58°

Avg Precipitation inches: 4.84"

Avg last over night frost day May 10th

In May we will begin to see the pattern of a few rainy days followed by several days of sunshine and afternoon winds. Multiple days of rain can hamper mating and may lead to poorly mated queens and limited production of fertilized eggs. This will show up as a spotty brood pattern later in the summer.

The General inspection begins when you enter the apiary. Listen to the sounds your bees are making. Is it the happy hummmm of a queen right colony, or a higher pitched whine of workers without a queen. Become familiar with your bees' mood and personality. Look around the entrance of the hive. Do you see evidence of predators (scratching marks on the hive, lots of half-eaten bees on the ground) or illness? (Chalkbrood is the only honey bee disease that can be identified before opening the hive)..if you have questions call a mentor.

- Continue your general inspections at least every 2 weeks. Newly installed packages, splits and hived swarms should be checked a little more frequently until the colony shows ample food stores, and capped brood. You may need to supplement their diet (1:1 sugar water) depending on the nectar flow.
- Hive packaged bees and catch swarms.
- Do mite thresholds if not already completed. Treat if necessary
- Reducing your bees' exposure to pesticides and chemicals by replacing 20% of old frames of comb each year. (New beekeepers should start this policy in year 4)
- During every inspection you should notice:
 - Percentage of drones to workers
 - The queen's laying pattern
 - Identifying brood in all stages; egg, larval and capped pupae
 - Look more closely at the capped brood. Do you see small holes, are the caps sunken, off colored, or wet?
 - Is the brood nest congested, are the workers filling every available cell with nectar? This is called being "honey bound". Add a honey super for the nectar being brought in. Consider using a queen excluder (a grid of plastic or metal that allows workers to pass thru freely, but restricts the queen's movement to the area below the excluder). Make sure the queen is in the brood box BEFORE adding the excluder. Otherwise, she will lay in the cells of your honey frames.

And as always, watch for disease or abnormal activity in the hive (trembling, holding their wings in odd positions, frass streaks (insect feces) on the outside of the hive, etc.).

