

January • February • March • April

January

The Bees: During colder weather, the Queen is surrounded by thousands of worker bees. This is considered the “Winter Cluster”. You should not disturb this cluster, only open the hive and work bees when the cluster is loose. Activity will be apparent on warmer days (45-50 degrees), this is when bees are taking cleansing flights. These days are acceptable for colony inspection. If feeding is needed, choose a feeding method that is near the bees so they can feed even when clustered. If the colony needs protein, a pollen patty may be placed directly over cluster of bees.

- Check food stores (Pollen & Honey)
- Check for proper ventilation
- Attend bee meetings
- Assemble bee equipment
- Order Bees

February

The Bees: The Queen still remains in the cluster and as the days become milder she begins to lay more eggs. The previous protein (Pollen Patty) is used to feed young larva. These bees will hatch out of the cell in 21 days. When young bees are being raised and days are warm the bees will consume more food. At this time, the cluster will begin to grow in size. A Varroa Mite, Foulbrood inspection should be done and a proper evaluation of “Queen Activity”. By Mid February, you should see bees carrying natural pollen into the hive. When this occurs, the Queen will also begin to lay drone Eggs (Unfertile eggs) these drones will hatch in 24 days.

- Check food stores (pollen and honey)
- Treat for Varroa Mites or Foulbrood if needed
- Begin a “Bloom Calendar” to document pollen and nectar
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Assemble Equipment
- Order Queens

March

The Bees: This is the critical time for starvation. The young bees are hatching daily and the size of the colony increases by hundreds if not thousands per day. The worker bees are beginning to forage and drones begin to appear. As the days grow longer, the Queen increases her rate of egg production and colonies wishing to swarm may start to raise swarm cells and colonies with failing queens may start supersedure cells. These will hatch in 16 days. Weather permitting, a few early swarms could occur in March. Food stores are being consumed at a rapid rate. Natural Pollen is coming in rapidly but cold, windy weather can affect nectar sources so a close watch on food stores is critical.

- Check honey stores
- Re-queen failing Queens
- Make sure all medications are removed as specified on label
- When hive body is full of bees add Honey super
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Update “Bloom Calendar”

April

The Bees: It is a steady pace, bees are roaring, new bees are humming with orientation flights and Drones are on the hunt. This is when swarming is at an all time high. Swarming generally occurs right before the heavy “Honey Flow”. Drones are fully mature for mating and Queen Cells are hatching. Love is in the air. Overcrowded hives need more room so additional equipment should be placed on top of these hives to allow space for brood rearing and honey storage. The honey flow has started when bees are coming in heavy. This is noticeable by the dip that the workers make upon entering the hive entrance. They are carrying in fresh nectar to process into honey.

- Watch for swarms
- Catch the swarms
- Watch for full boxes and keep adding empty boxes
- Have additional equipment ready to house more swarms

•May•June•July•August•

May

The Bees: The hive is working at top speed. Beekeepers hustle to keep up with the working bees by adding empty boxes underestimating how much equipment you need could cost you a honey crop and could enhance the warming impulse. Make sure to keep an empty box on top during this time of year. Swarming continues as new bees continue to overcrowd colonies.

- Watch for Swarms
- Apply empty Supers
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Update “Bloom Calendar”

June

The Bees: Colonies that did not swarm will be boiling over with bees and the “Honey Flow” continues. Keep up swarm inspections and continue adding additional space as needed. Spring honey sources start to fade and a short honey dearth may happen between blooming cycles. Rain and weather conditions affect the summer nectar sources greatly. Under good conditions, the bees will continue to make honey. The start and stop honey flow will sometimes cause a few “After Swarms”. The pace of honey production slows a bit and the Queen starts to lay fewer eggs. Fully Capped Honey Supers may be removed and extracted.

- Watch for Swarms
- Keep adding empty supers as needed
- Remove Fully Capped Honey
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Update “Bloom Calendar”

July

The Bees: This is a “Hot and Humid” month and the bees will cluster on the outside of the hive to cool off. They will continue to make honey, weather permitting and beekeepers should start to remove ripe honey. Remember to leave enough honey for the bees. If you remove all the honey, the stress level of the bees elevates and could cause an unhealthy colony. If weather conditions are too dry, collapse could occur due to starvation. Remember to keep enough empty room for the bees when they come inside. Perform a Queen check and mark colonies for Re-Queening.

- Remove Honey
- Leave enough honey for the bees (one full super)
- Keep at least one empty super on top
- Extra ventilation
- Order Queens
- Attend State Beekeepers Association Meeting
- Update “Bloom Calendar”

August

The Bees: The colony’s growth is diminishing in numbers and the honey flow is coming to an end. When bees stop producing honey, remove all honey supers. (Except one!) Remember to leave one full super of honey for the bees. This is what they will live on during the winter. No more chance of swarming and the honey dearth will appear. Weaker colonies may get robbed of their honey so entrance reducers should be placed on weak colonies or move weak colonies to another bee yard. The Varroa Mite levels are high now and an evaluation of Mite levels should be maintained during this time of year. If you determine mite levels are too high, an integrated pest management (IPM) practice should be added to your list of beekeeping chores. Some colonies may need food and some small clusters may need additional frames of brood to increase bee numbers.

- Check for failing Queens and Re-Queen.
- Remove Honey and Remove empty supers
- Check for mites (medicate if needed)
- Feed weak colonies (Pollen & Syrup)
- Equalize colonies
- Attend Bee Meetings & purchase equipment
- Update “Bloom Calendar”



September

The Bees: Hive population continues to drop and Drones start to disappear. The Queen is laying fewer eggs. Some or all colonies may need feeding. Some or all colonies may need Re-Queening.

Pollen should only be fed dry in outside feeders or mixed in syrup. No patties should be fed due to increased small hive beetle activity. Look out for robber bees-reduce the entrance.

- Feed if necessary (especially if re-queening) Pollen & Syrup
- Equalize colony strength
- Continue Mite Evaluations
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Update "Bloom Calendar"

October

The Bees: Continue to combine weaker colonies and make "double sure" all queens are accepted and present. Queenless colonies should be combined with queen-right colonies. This is the time of year to feed as much syrup as you can get them to take so they can insulate the brood nest with honey. Replace broken equipment and make sure they have good tight hives to survive the cold winter months. Not much bee activity. Close down the hive entrance to help protect unwanted intruders.

- Combine the weak
- Equalize bees
- Repair or replace bad equipment
- Attend Bee Meetings
- Review "Bloom Calendar" for next season.

November

The Bees: Even less bee activity and cold weather will send them back into cluster. On warm days watch for bees to fly out to make cleansing flights and forage for pollen. Keep the entrances just small enough for two bees to enter.

- Attend Bee Meetings & bring a friend.
- Make sure equipment is stored properly to stop wax moth damage
- You can feed syrup when the temperature allows (45-50 degrees)
- Talk to experience beekeepers for winter preps.
- On warm days bees will forage for pollen.
- Pay State and Local Dues

December

The Bees: The bees are in a tight cluster so do not open colonies, there is nothing you can do except hope you did everything right. On warm days visit your hives for entrance inspections. Make plans for new bee food in your apiary.

- Read a good beekeeping book
- Pay your State and Local Dues
- Give Honey as a Gift
- Continue to assemble equipment
- Order Bees
- Plan for the New Year!

