



# LATE WINTER & SPRING MANAGEMENT

Matthew Brandes,  
EAS Master Beekeeper

# LATE WINTER MANAGEMENT ITEMS

- Keep entrances clear
- Monitor resources
- Deal with your colony losses
- Treat for mites
- Plan for Spring



Credit: Cheryl Burkhead

# LATE WINTER MANAGEMENT

- Food resources

- Perform the 'Heft Test'.
- Provide emergency feed if necessary.



- Keep entrances clear

- Remove snow
- Remove dead bees



Credit: Frederick Dunn

# DEALING WITH DEADOUTS

- The Process

- Take pictures & notes
- Inspect bottom board
- Inspect frames
  - Signs of varroa?
  - Availability of food?
  - Where are the bees?
  - Mold?
- Do a mite wash
- Repair/clean equipment



# WINTER VARROA TREATMENT

An Oxalic Acid Vaporization treatment is most effective when the colony is broodless.

Pick a warm day in early January when the temps are above 50 or so.



# **SPRING MANAGEMENT IS ABOUT PREVENTION AND PLANNING**

- Prevention
  - Starvation
  - Swarming



Don't lose your bees now!

- Planning
  - Honey production
  - Apiary expansion
  - Colony replacement

What are your goals?

What do you have, and what can you do with it?

# What's Going on in the Hives Now?

Queens started laying eggs late January/early February, but only as brood nest size allows. Workers before drones.

New bees emerge in 21 days.

Population increases as Winter bees die off.

Food needs & population increase, food stores decrease.  
Natural forage isn't available, weather wet or cold.

**\*\*Check food stores frequently – heft test or peek under the cover.\*\***

Overwintered varroa can start to reproduce in the brood cells.



# WHEN TO DO A FULL SPRING INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE?

Late February to Early March

Warm, calm, sunny day – close to 60 degrees or higher is best.

The cooler it is, the quicker you work to avoid chilling brood.





# ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN BEFORE YOU INSPECT

Why are you going in?

What are you needing to do?

What are you expecting to find?

-Best scenario vs. worst scenario?

Do you have everything you need no matter the situation?



# THINGS TO TAKE WITH YOU: BEE READY!

Extra food: spare honey frames, solid sugar candy, pollen patties, 1:1 sugar syrup, feeder

Replacement parts for damaged pieces, a nuc of frames, new foundation for culling old wax comb

Queen cage or clip

Notebook and pencil

Mite testing kit

Shims

Entrance reducers



# WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Before you open the hive:

Is there bee activity?

How many dead bees?

Are the entrances blocked?

Has there been animal activity?

Does the hive need levelling?

Do outer parts need painted or replaced?

Do a heft test.

Does the hive need to be relocated?



# LOOK INSIDE:

Are there pests?

Is there mold or mildew  
needing ventilation?

Is there candy board or fondant remaining?

Are there frames of honey and pollen?

How big is the bee cluster?

Where is the bee cluster?



# GOT FOOD?

Are there honey frames in the hive to move to the cluster?

If not: Borrow honey frames (lost colonies, equalize colonies)

Solid food (candy, fondant, winter patties, pollen patties)



**\*\*\*If your hive has honey frames and you don't plan to split the colony, do not feed syrup, which stimulates brood build-up and risk of swarming.\*\*\***

# IS YOUR COLONY WEAK, OR YOU WANT TO BUILD IT UP FOR SPLITTING?

**CAN ADD 1:1 SUGAR SYRUP AND POLLEN PATTIES.**



# NEED SPACE?

Provide ample space

\*\*\*but keep food in contact with the bee cluster\*\*\*

Equalize brood frames with weaker hives

Rotate brood boxes

Add a third brood box

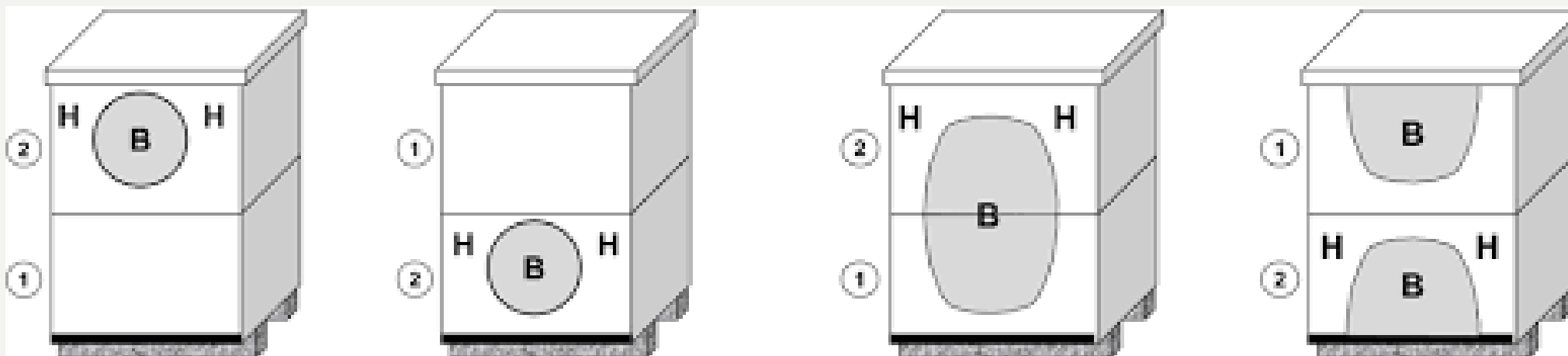
Make a split (if a queen is available)



# IS ONE BROOD BOX MOSTLY EMPTY? ROTATE!

If the cluster is entirely in the top brood box, and you have honey frames, you can rotate the brood boxes.

Good opportunity to replace the foundation in the 4-5 frames with the oldest wax (3-5 years old) to prevent chemical build-up.



\*\*\*Do not split the cluster between two boxes, or place them away from their food source.\*\*\*



# HOW ARE YOUR BEES?

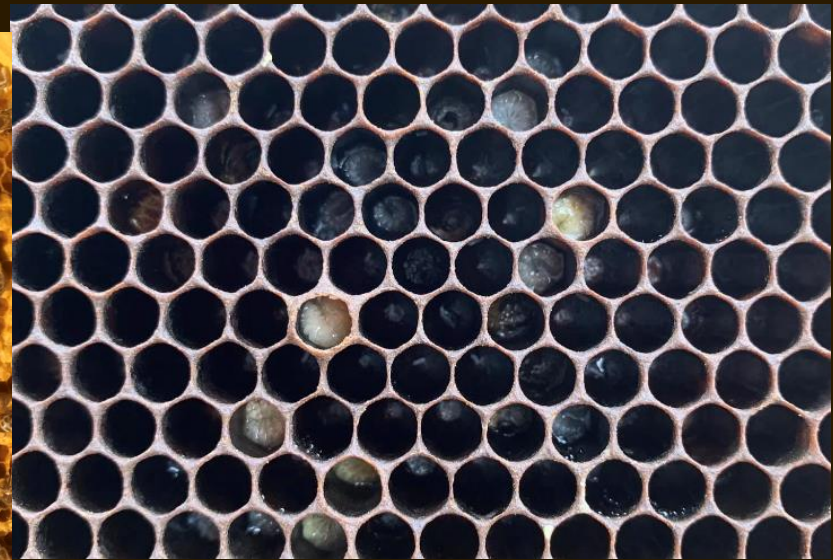
Size of the cluster:

Weak or strong?

Go frame-by-frame to find stages of brood and health of brood.

Do the bees look healthy?

Any signs of disease in the brood?



# HOW'S YOUR QUEEN?

Find the queen?

Is she the queen you expected?

How is her brood pattern?

How is her retinue?

Are there supercedure cells?



# SWARM SIGNS?

Are there drone cells?

Risk of swarming is lower until drones are mature.

Are there queen cells with larva inside?

If so, may need to split into a nuc box.

Capped swarm cells mean swarming is imminent.



# Time to Clean it Up and Put it Back Together!

Scrape off debris from bottom board. Check underneath for signs of mice.

If you are rotating brood boxes, bee cluster box goes on bottom.

Add replacement hive parts and frames as needed. New frames go to outside.

Add food as needed – above and next to the bee cluster.

Replace covers, with added ventilation as needed.

Adjust your entrance as needed.

Level the hive with shims, leaning slightly forward.

Brick on the top – Spring storms are coming!



# COMPLETE YOUR NOTES

What did you find?

What did you do?

When do you need to go back?

What do you need to bring?

What do you need to research/ask your mentor?

