



The Four Seasons of Beekeeping Calendar

It All Begins or Begins Again: March, April, May

MARCH:

1. As always mites, three treatment of OXALIC 7 to 10 days apart and continue this every other month or alternate with Mite Away II if weather is appropriate for such use. You can substitute oxalic vapor with dribble if desired in any of these applications.
2. Depending on your level of beekeeping experience and where you want to be will determine what you do at this point. WE LOSE MORE COLONIES THIS TIME OF YEAR THAN ANY OTHER TIME FRAME THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.
3. Monster colony how to's - add a pollen substitute and feed a stimulus feeding. A stimulus feeding is a feeding that is not considered a necessary feeding for colony survival, but done so to achieve a desired result, which in this case is to build the colony. Large colonies are desirable for maximum honey production or maximum split potential.
4. Watch the weather and keep an eye on those bees at every opportunity - which means open them up and see what is there.
5. Colonies need a minimum of 3 frames of honey at all times or they go into preservation mode and will not build up adequately for spring - this is where you step in.
6. Honey manipulation or food management is done at this time. Brood fixes the nest and bees cannot randomly wonder about the colony for food at these temperatures, so this time of year on a 60 plus temp day rotate honey from the periphery of colony next to the brood nest.

APRIL:

1. Queen viability and a feeding of Super DFM - a must. Not all races of bee perform the same, know your race of bee and the characteristics of that race and have realistic expectations for spring build-up and brood pattern.
2. Thoroughly inspect colony ASAP and do necessary house cleaning at this time.
3. Do weekly inspections for cups and brood congestion is a must, set up nucs or splits, if desired, or start swarm prevention techniques at this time to maintain large, healthy colonies.
4. Add boxes as needed, where needed, plan for vacations.
5. Expect early swarms and do preventative work; you will hear or see swarms the first week of April in poorly managed colonies in some years. Upper entrances are a must at this time, to reduce congestion at the entrance. Maintain these entrances all summer and even more so as weather starts to heat up. You may want to consider a shim entrance between boxes.
6. You must manage colonies and frames, both up and down, north and south, east and west. Expand the brood nest incrementally. If weather is nice and colony is strong do so more radically to the point of placing honey supers between brood boxes, allow supers to be filled with brood, then place them on top and bring deeps back together as the brood hatches. Do not be afraid to repeat - as needed. Try different things to expand the brood nest areas to control a swarm impulse.
7. Do NOT reverse boxes, this is much too general. Move frames of brood and bees down and empties up, as colony becomes congested giving room above for brood production as queens always like to move up, examining each frame for cups or queen cells. Arrange these frames for maximum brood production throughout the season starting now. This means expand the brood nest by placing empty drawn comb into the middle of the brood nest, followed by eggs and larva lastly capped brood on the outside. As the brood hatches on the outside move empties back to the middle, this is done throughout the brood nest as needed.
8. Set out swarm bait traps for poorly managed honey bees and live traps for yellow jackets.
9. There are several honey flows at this time, but they are weather sensitive. Maples, Buckeye, Apples, Cherry, Willows, and dandelion.
10. Treat for mites every other month, see Varroa Mite Treatment Plan on page 8 of the catalog!

MAY:

1. Colonies that did not overwinter well are now built up and need the same skills as administered to those above.
2. Swarm season will continue at least through June, and may occur anytime during summer.
3. Set up nucs, splits, for next season's production or to sell, think ahead - always think ahead when working bees, make a junk yard from which the beekeeper may, at any time, retrieve necessary components to repair or build other colonies. Resist the temptation to make a junkyard colony permanent with the exception of trying to overwinter it.
4. Add supers underneath and before they become necessary, watch for queen cups, continue to manage brood nest, expand, expand, and expand again.
5. Spring is here in all its glory, lots in bloom, dandelion, clovers and many minor nectar sources.
6. Treat for mites every other month with Oxalic.
7. Check colonies every 7 to 10 days for cups and brood congestion.
8. Here is a nice trick, try to catch a swarm, and use the swarm's natural desire to draw foundation for all colonies in your bee yard, nucs, packages, weak colonies, and honey supers. Keep the swarm working on new foundation. As soon as it is started, move it out to where needed, make them work for their keep.

The Buildup Season: June, July, August

JUNE:

1. Use Mite-Away II, before it becomes too hot.
2. Look for queen cups.
3. This is Black Locust season - remember 35 to 50 pounds per colony in the right location and season, know what is in bloom.
4. Super underneath - keep expanding brood nest always.
5. This is all light honey season, you may want to take it off and keep it separate from fall flow.
6. Super DFM, a must, may be used with supers on.
7. Treat for mites every other month!
8. Check colonies every 7 to 10 days for cups, brood congestion, etc.

JULY:

1. Clovers, alfalfa are major, lavender and other minor blooms.
2. Prepare to enter the fair.
3. Keep expanding the brood nest and always super underneath.
4. Lots still in bloom, soybean, alfalfa, thistle, milkweed and many minor floral sources available at this time.
5. Start to pay attention to heat and provide Styrofoam as an insulation against heat on tops and sun exposed sides of the colony. Bees will be happier, less aggressive and easier to work with in the summer heat.
6. Treat for mites every other month with Oxalic in warm weather.
7. Check colonies every 7 to 10 days for cups, brood congestion, supering.

AUGUST:

1. Late August Goldenrod is a major flow. Take this honey off separately as a premium honey so super accordingly.
2. Possible requeen, if you can find her.
3. Bees may turn aggressive with the heat and large colonies, give plenty of room and ventilate, ventilate, ventilate. Use Styrofoam for shade on sunny sides of the hive. If you doubt this works do it on just one colony, the biggest, meanest one you have.
4. Watch for yellow jacket problems, set a bait station. Possible robbing, so prepare weak colonies, nucs with smaller entrances and protection before the condition exists.
5. Winter prep starts, have this mind set.
6. Check colonies every 7 to 10 days for cups, brood congestion, supering.



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The Winter Prep Season: September, October, November

SEPTEMBER:

1. Aster bloom is major and Smartweed, Catnip, Joe-pye weeds last nectar of the season.
2. Start winter prep, watch for colonies that may struggle making it through winter and do what is necessary for this time frame, and make use of the junkyard colony you started in the spring if needed.
3. All honey should be off by the end of the month and winter prep in full swing, mite treatments, queen viability, winter stores consideration, etc.
4. Feed Super DFM, a must.
5. Possible robbing.

OCTOBER:

1. Treat for mites with Oxalic, 3 treatments 7 to 10 days apart or use Mite-Away II as temps start to cool off.
2. Bees are now consuming more than what is coming in, plan ahead. Large colonies with lots of brood and bees can consume lots of honey at this time and run out before winter's end!
3. Time for serious winter prep, honey off. We recommend insulation - not just a wrap. Nights are cooler and more honey is needed to maintain brood and heat, ventilation, pollen substitute - if needed, feeding - if needed, ventilate.
4. Super DFM, early in the month - a must.
5. Pay attention to this one: If colony population is (VERY) high-experience will tell you this, and that comes with time, so this is not for the newbie, because I do not trust your judgment on such matters, to reduce a colonies' population and remove most of the old population, move colony mid-day to another location, numbers will drop significantly; these are all dead bees anyway. If you have a weak colony instead of doing the above, move the strong colony several yards away and place the weak in its place.
6. Put insulation in place, keeping in mind those colonies will be opened before winter sets in permanently. This will reduce honey consumption by the colony in these cold nights as they try to keep temps high for the brood's sake.

NOVEMBER:

1. Time to start once a month treatments for Varroa, one treatment a month as needed. Dead bees can block an entrance so watch and clean as needed, if used.
2. Oxalic acid can still be used and is most effective this time of year on a day 50 degree plus day.

The Dead Season: December, January, February

DECEMBER:

1. Mite treatment if needed, with Oxalic - 50 plus degrees. Clean bottom board of dead bees with hook of sorts - like a cloths hanger, watch entrances for blockage of snow and ice as well.

JANUARY:

1. Mite treatment if needed, with Oxalic - 50 degrees plus. Clean bottom board of dead bees. Look at bottom board five days after each treatment during winter to determine if mites are still falling, if not skip a month's treatment.

FEBRUARY:

1. Mite treatment, if needed, possible feeding, if needed of pollen substitute or sugar syrup.
2. Spring management starts here with checking honey reserves and possibly moving frames of honey from periphery of hive close to cluster as weather permits.
3. Late February, feed pollen substitute and stimulus feeding of syrup. Clean bottom board as needed. Watch entrances for blockage. Open colonies as needed weather permitting.

If you have done the above you will have bees in the spring, if not,

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Varroa Mite Treatment Plan

1. New packages should be treated with vaporized Oxalic while in the package, remove queen first. This is accomplished by placing an 10 inch long 2 x 4 with the 2-inch side down on a bottom board, then place package of bees on its side atop this the 2 x 4 in a standard empty deep box with the top in place, treat. Or Oxalic dribble can be used in the same way, use 30 cc of dribble while the bees are still packaged, queen need not be removed nor does the package need to be enclosed in a box. With either treatment wait until bees have calmed down before instillation.
2. Nucs should be treated in the same manner within the first month of purchase three treatments of vaporized Oxalic, or three treatments of dribble, because brood is present.
3. Then a program of vaporized Oxalic should be used every other month. Three treatments each as long as brood is expected to be present. Time your treatments in spring so that one treatment can be done before honey supers are added and the last after honey supers are off if possible, just for convenience.
4. In December, reduce the number of treatments to one treatment a month, not the three consecutive treatments and only when temps are 50 plus.
5. Make an effort to skip or alter treatments every other month by checking bottom board or tray for mites before and after every treatment. This is accomplished by cleaning the tray one week after each treatment and examining it before each application for any newly fallen Varroa. Skipping treatments should only be done during the winter months.

6. Also time treatment so that it coincides with your weekly inspections, and before colony is put back together. Leaving honey supers off treat only the brood boxes, when using the vapor method, treat the brood nest with the telescoping cover in place and then after treatment put supers back in place. When using the dribble method no honey supers should be exposed to the dribble solution, this can be accomplished by placing a sheet of newspaper between the treated boxes and the honey supers after treatment. Yes this will miss the bees in the supers as well as any bees in the field at that time, but you still have two more applications to go and any missed bees can more than likely be made up in the next application. Also a concerted effort should be made to treat colonies at night when most bees are in the hive or very early morning with the vapor treatment, I would not recommend this with the dribble method.

Doing this will save you money in the long run, and the disappointment of cleaning a dead hive next spring and starting over. This is a prophylactic program, because you have mites so you are better off treating. We do NOT recommend an ether or sugar roll to determine mite counts, because this can and will cause the loss of queens when scooping 300 bees out of a brood nest for the novice is idiocy. Plus ether and sugar rolls are inaccurate, when trying to determine mite counts. It is not a science and can accomplish different outcomes with every use and user and resulting in false readings.

Keep Beekeeping Fun by Doing it Right!