



Appalachian Beekeepers

March, 2020

UPDATE FROM DON REYNOLDS, Club President:

The topics for March are: Feeding, Queen Checks and Swarm Management. I will discuss them one by one.

Feeding:

Even though the maples are in full bloom, you must ensure your hives have enough stores to last them until the first good honey flow (tulip poplars). This could be as much as 30 pounds of honey! The lengthening daylight period triggers brood rearing, so your hives need plenty of honey to not only feed the developing brood, but to keep the hive at the brood rearing temperature of 95.5 degrees F. This time of year, you can use sugar water in a 33% mixture (4 lbs sugar to 1 gal. water). I see that our bees are bringing in plenty of pollen, but if yours are not, use pollen/protein patties to supplement natural pollen.

Queen Checks:

On a warmer day, it is time to check to make sure your hives are "Queenright". With the warm weather and the longer daylight period, your queens should be laying to start building up for the coming honey flow. You need to make sure the queens are okay. Check for eggs and larvae. Remember, if you see eggs and or larvae, you do not need to "find" the queen. This time of year, I prefer to not leave the hive open for any longer than necessary as it can "chill" the brood and make the bees work harder to build up the hive temperature again to that 95.5 degrees. If you find no eggs nor larvae and cannot find a queen, you have a few choices:

1. See if you can buy a queen (it may be too early for that, but try)
2. You can combine that hive with a "Queenright" hive.
3. You can transfer a frame of brood (must have eggs) from another hive to the queenless hive and see if they will make a queen.
4. If another hive happens to have a swarm cell, place that frame into the queenless hive.

Swarm Control:

It may be a little early for us in this region, but if the weather stays warm, the bees will have swarming on their little bee brains. Again, on a warm day soon, get into your brood chamber/box and check for queen cells. Remember, if you find any and they are located on the lower part of frame(s), they are most likely "swarm cells". If they are located on the mid to upper part of the frame(s), they are probably supersede cells. There may be an issue with the queen and they are going to replace her. You do not need to worry about these too much. So, what are the choices if you find "swarm cells"?

1. You can make a "split" by taking the frames with swarm cells on them and place them into a new hive box (just use a single deep box) along with a couple of other frames that have honey, pollen and more brood. Fill the remainder of both boxes with either drawn wax frames (the best) or wax foundation frames. You will have to feed them a lot to help them build out the wax and keep building up.
2. You can allow the hive to swarm and hope you can capture them into a new box.
3. You can destroy the swarm cell(s) knowing they will build new swarm cells every 3 - 4 days, so you will have to keep checking the hive. Once they cap that swarm cell, they will swarm.
4. Another method is to reverse the boxes. If the queen is laying only in a top box (several of mine are laying up in the super) and not the bottom box you can swap boxes (place top box on the bottom and bottom box on top). This allows the queen space to move upward since bees like to expand upward anyway. This gives them "space" and should help decrease to swarm tendency. DO NOT use this method if the queen is laying in both the top and bottom box as it will be too hard for them to warm both boxes.
5. You can "equalize" between hives. Take frames of mostly capped brood and place into a weaker hive. Then place frames of just foundation in the hive you just removed the capped brood from. This also provides "space" and gives the bees new work in building out the foundation.

The key to swarm control is "SPACE". Give the hive space and it will decrease the swarm tendency. It does not guarantee no swarming, but helps. I know there are many other ways to do these spring checks, so please join in if you have different methods. Inquiring minds want to know.

I hope you are all doing well and doing a lot of hand washing. Hopefully, the COVID-19 will have abated and we will be able to meet next month.

Don