

Factsheet #103

BEEKEEPING CALENDAR FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

January:

- Make or order hive parts, equipment and supplies required for the season. Order bees or queens. Select suppliers from journals or contact Apiculture office.
- Keep hive entrances clear of dead bees.
- In areas with mild winters, apply one Apistan strip to the second super in late January, for colonies that received only one mite control treatment in early fall. Leave for 6 weeks. This precautionary treatment is not needed when Apistan strips had been applied later in the previous fall and removed in mid-late November.

February:

- In southern areas, pollen patties and sugar syrup may be fed near the end of the month to stimulate the colonies into brood rearing.

March:

- New beekeepers should apply for registration of apiary location(s). Registration forms are available at the Apiculture office or from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands website <http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/apiculture>. In warmer parts of the province, bees will be flying intermittently, bringing in pollen.
- When weather permits, take hives apart and clean floor boards. If there are no bees in the bottom brood chamber, remove, sort combs, clean, repair and paint where necessary.
- Check for eggs and brood to confirm a laying queen. Install entrance reducer. Stimulative feeding of syrup may begin or continue. Ensure sufficient pollen stores or provide pollen patties.
- Feed warm, thick syrup. Prepare sugar syrup by adding 3 parts sugar to two parts hot water (some prefer 2:1). For the use and handling of antibiotics, refer to **Factsheet #204-Antibiotics for Bee Disease Control**.
- When weather permits and bees have resumed flight, test for Varroa mites (refer to **Factsheet #222-Varroa Mites Detection Methods**).
- If tracheal mites are suspected, apply formic acid treatments (**Factsheet #219-Tracheal Mites in Honeybee Colonies**).

April:

- Packaged bees arrive. After hiving, reduce entrances to about 8 cm.
- If the bee package is placed on foundation only, feed a minimum of 1 gallon of sugar syrup every week and pollen substitute patties every two weeks.
- Check all hives, whether wintered or packages, for queens and stores regularly (every 10-14 days). Apply antibiotic only when brood disease has been confirmed.
- Feed syrup as required and replace queens if necessary.
- Wintered hives in southern areas may need an additional super to hold bees and honey near the end of the month.

May:

- Continue feeding syrup as necessary and closely examine colonies for disease.
- Check hives for queen swarm cells, disease, stores and space requirements.
- Reverse brood chamber during regular checks and replace frames that have 10% drone cells or more, with worker comb or with full sheets of foundation.
- For colonies started from packages, add a second brood chamber as soon as bees have begun to occupy the outside frames of the first brood chamber.
- Use drawn combs when available or a super of foundation with one or two drawn combs in the middle. These combs may be removed from the bottom brood chamber and replaced with foundation.
- Add supers of combs or foundation as required to provide room for expanding bee population and for the storage of surplus honey.
- If a queen excluder is used, place it over the second brood chamber. Do not use a queen excluder if foundation is used in the third box.
- Select a few colonies at random in the apiary and test for Varroa. When mite levels are high (approx. 60+ on sticky board after 24 hours), remove honey supers and apply recommended numbers of Apistan strips for few days. Remove strips and replace honey supers.

June:

- Continue regular hive checks for queen performance, swarm cells, stores, disease, and sufficient space.
- Reverse brood chambers when bottom chamber is underutilized. Do not use antibiotics when honey supers are on.
- Prevent or control swarming by recommended manipulations as outlined in **Factsheet #404-Swarming**. If a swarm emerges, and no additional colony is required, return the swarm to the hive from which it came. Kill the old queen and destroy all queen cells but one, or provide a purchased queen.

July:

- Nectar flows are at their maximum in most areas. Add supers as necessary.
- In some areas, beekeepers begin extracting in July. Supers should be removed and honey extracted as soon as combs are two-thirds capped.
- In areas of high production and where the flow extends to mid-August, extracted combs should be returned to the hives.
- Test for Varroa in randomly selected colonies. Be aware of colonies with unusual population expansion which may be receiving large numbers of Varroa infested bees from collapsing colonies nearby.

August:

- All supers containing honey in excess of that required for wintering should be taken off in the second half of the month.
- When removing honey supers, and when the honey flow is over or temporarily ceased, remove supers in early morning or near sunset to prevent robbing.
- Near the end of the month reduce hive entrances to prevent robbing.
- Colonies may be requeened with young laying queens following the removal of honey. Feed sugar syrup when requeening.
- Do not spill syrup as this may initiate robbing. Reduce hive entrances drastically, using screen if weather is warm.
- In areas where tracheal mites are endemic, start Formic Acid applications promptly after honey supers have been removed (for different application methods refer to **Factsheet #221**).

September:

- Finish extracting. Check all hives for wintering needs.
- Select hives suitable for wintering. Do not attempt to winter weak hives, queenless hives, hives with a poor queen, or one that has little or no pollen.
- A hive requires 50-80 pounds of honey (depending on area) and pollen stores equal to two combs filled on both sides with pollen. When honey stores are insufficient, supplement with sugar syrup.
- Feeding should begin early enough to finish by early October in the north, and by late October in the south. Feeding too late prevents bees from inverting the sugars, evaporating the moisture, and properly storing and capping the material.
- Add fumagillin to syrup for Nosema prevention according to recommendations in **Factsheet #204**.

October:

- Finish feeding. In colder areas, wrap hives for winter near the end of the month.
- Entrance openings are adjusted for wintering according to regional requirements.
- Complete cleanup of apiary.
- Around October 1st, apply one Apistan strip to each wintered colony and remove by the middle of November.

November:

- Equipment should be sorted and stored or set aside for cleaning and maintenance.

December:

- Continue sorting and maintaining equipment. Begin making or ordering equipment and supplies for the new year.

**Mite controls: Mite control treatments suggested in this factsheet may not be the only effective methods available. Efficacy is determined by many factors including management and climate. In areas with prolonged winter conditions, the frequency, timing and duration of mite control treatments may be different from those applied in areas with mild winters.*