

Honey Bees and Pollination

What's the Buzz Newsletter

November 2016

What's Happening in the Hives?

As the autumn days progressively get cooler, a population of winter bees inside a hive will form a cluster and consume stored honey while awaiting the return of warm weather. The queen at the centre of the cluster will temporarily cease her egg-laying until after the winter solstice. Although the bees comprising the winter cluster will generate their own heat by vibrating their wing muscles, hives in the Maritimes typically need additional insulation to keep them alive over the winter.

Let's Get Wrapping!



While next month is time for wrapping presents, November is the month beekeepers in the Maritimes are wrapping honey bee hives. Several different wrapping materials are used to insulate honey bee hives. **We have prepared a useful comparison of the pros and cons of different wrapping materials.**

Although there are variations in climate throughout the Maritimes, **one useful rule-of-thumb to remember is to wrap colonies around November 11th (hence, Remembrance Day).** However, if the temperature is unseasonably warm and the bees are still active, wrapping hives too early poses the risk of stimulating the queen to begin rearing brood again. This could in turn, result in an overly large overwinter population that would deplete crucial food stores before the return of spring.

Hive Ventilation

Hive wraps typically cover the entire exterior of the hive except for the bottom entrance. This entrance however, should be reduced and have a mouse guard in place to protect against excessive cold air entering and rodents seeking an overwintering spot themselves. It is also important to include a top entrance – typically a notched inner cover – that couples as both an escape for bees to perform crucial cleansing flights on mild winter days and as a means for hive ventilation. Colonies that are unable to vent the moisture and CO₂ produced by their vibrating cluster of bees risk succumbing to winter mortality.

Facing South for the Winter

Now that there are little to no floral sources available for the bees in your summer apiary, this is the time of year to consider if your apiary is appropriate for overwintering or if your hives should be moved to a different area. If wintering outdoors, hives should be placed in a yard that is sheltered from northern winds naturally by trees/ bushes or by an artificially constructed windbreak. All hives should be south-facing location and placed above hollows to avoid contact with pooling cold air.

Treating for Varroa Mites

At this time, treatment with formic acid should be complete as long as there is no more brood in the hive. If desired, late fall is the appropriate time to treat for varroa mites with oxalic acid. Instructions on the trickle method can be found with [the Ontario Beekeepers Association Tech Transfer Team](#).

An alternate method of application is vaporization and a discussion of this method can be found [HERE](#)

Do a Little Housekeeping

Now that winter is approaching, you may also have the opportunity to clean any beekeeping equipment prior to storage. Empty supers along with their associated comb should be stored and protected to avoid wax moth and rodents from destroying it.

On the Horizon

ATTTA Fall Mangement Guide

A video containing Information about the technique of wrapping hives along with additional discussion of the different materials is being edited and should be available before long.

Stay tuned for updates on when registration for our biosecurity webinar will be open.

Look for more What's the Buzz? in December.

ATTTA Fact Sheets