

Apis m. Esoteria 14

Opening stored honey

Can you tell the difference between honeybees putting honey in a frame and taking honey out? That is the bees doing it, not running in an extractor.

If the honeybees are removing the honey to make room for the queen to lay eggs, they will clean a football shaped pattern starting at the bottom middle of a frame of honey, above the center of the brood area below. They will expand that pattern as needed.

If they are opening the honey for food and moving it down into the brood chamber, they will open it straight across the bottom moving up approximately one cell row at a time.

When moving up to the second brood box to lay eggs you can tell this is an emptying exercise versus a filling operation because when they fill the comb with brood they start in the center above the bottom of the frame (not necessarily right at the bottom of the frame) and work outward in a generally half-round pattern. When filling the second layer up with honey and not expanding the brood area they will start in the center of the frame next to the top bar working in an inverted parabolic curve drooping downward.

Why does this matter? When you are inspecting your honey supers to determine if the frames are capped off enough to remove the super for honey extraction you need to know if the honey is “ripe” or “green”. Do you wait a little longer to remove the super until it is capped? If you see the open honey straight across then you know it was capped and has been reopened. If you don’t remove it the bees will continue to eat it.

The rule is: don’t spin out uncapped honey. But rules are made to be broken. This honey has been dehydrated to 18% then capped. Once it is reopened the ambient air moisture can reenter the honey and bring it above 18% but it will still be low. You can feel safe slinging it out and mixing it with capped honey. It should not ferment. The bees will not recap it so you might as well take it with your other

honey. If you want to get really technical you can use a refractometer on the honey to determine moisture levels.