

Bee Esoteria 32

Are you feeding Syrup?

You should bee!

Do you shop for the cheapest sugar? You should bee! If you think you don't use enough sugar to worry about the price, you are not feeding enough syrup.

Start feeding syrup as soon as you pull off the honey supers. This will give the colonies the most time to store winter food stores before the temperatures drop in late fall.

You have the highest bee population of the year in each colony. Ironically, after sourwood there is a nectar drop until the goldenrod starts to bloom. There will be a sumac bloom, but the volume of nectar is unreliable. If you feed the colony can put up honey very fast. If you need to pull new comb you have enough bees to do that quickly.

One technique is to checkerboard new foundation with drawn comb and go from a single hive body to a double. It is not true that you can keep bees year around in north Georgia with a single hive body. Those beekeepers who say they do usually add a honey super full for winter food. Why fool around? Just put on the second hive body and let the bee go to work.

The second hive body may not get filled completely with honey. But the amount of honey will be the same as that colony would have put into a honey super. The advantage is: the bees start working the upper hive body in the center (usually). This will locate the stored honey in the location that the cluster will move into later in the winter. In a full honey super the honey to the outer frames may not be available to a cold cluster. As the bees continue to move "up" over the winter they will hit the top of a honey super sooner than the top of a second deep brood chamber. If it is too cold the cluster may not expand to eat on the outer frames during the day. This will cause starvation while there is still honey available.

The large bee population will keep the queen laying eggs at her maximum ability. With warm weather, lots of nurse bees, and plenty of food the queen will keep

producing all those young bees you need to winter over and then start foraging next spring.

The larger populations might swarm. This gives you a chance in August to do 5 frame splits without diminishing the work output of the parent hive. These extra colonies with purchased mated queens will build up quickly to the size necessary to survive the winter. Fall queens seem to start a little earlier next spring. Maybe because they are younger.

Any double hive body colonies that make it through the winter can easily be split in the spring just by moving the box full of bees and going back to single hive body colonies. Larger double-hive body colonies have a better chance to winter over because there are more bees keeping the queen warm.

Now you made it to February/March of next year with too many hives. You can sell the extras or give them to a new beekeeper.