

Bee Newsletter

2 December 2025

And a Happy Thanksgiving to all, I hope!

Next week is actually the great turkey day, but I have to get to writing this early.

Nov. 6 is sunny, 73° outside with no wind. So it is colony inspection day. I will tear the colonies completely apart and try to see the queen. Also looking for brood conditions and stored winter food. I will feed syrup in the hive and field feed pollen substitute. I will make sure all colonies have solid bottom boards and reduce the entrances. Then I will be ready for the upcoming cold snap.

Looking at winterizing the hives I have seen several techniques in the catalogues and on line. The new trend seems to be wrapping the colonies, installing some type of inner cover that will reduce or catch the condensation and using Styrofoam hive body/honey super components.

I saw all this way back in the early 1990's. Remember these insects are conditioned to live in hollow trees. The Russian bees come from Vladivostok in Siberia. For more than a few years they have raised honeybees in Minnesota. Don't go overboard spending money to solve problems you don't have.

Wind is the worst problem you need to be concerned with here in the North Georgia Mountains. Reduce your entrances and close up your screened bottom boards.

Inner covers were invented and designed to catch the condensation dripping off the underside of the cover on really cold days. On warm days the bees will go up through the vent hole and lick up the water which they must use to mix with the stored honey as they eat it.

Open bottom boards are too drafty for the health of clustered bees. Placing something like roofing tin from the ground up to the side of the stack on the windward side of the colony stack can break the wind, somewhat. Solid bottom boards are the best for winter.

The bees will need to go on purging flights on warm days even if there is snow on the ground. Wraps usually will interfere with that.

Medicate your bees and make sure they have adequate stored honey and pollen to get them through until February 15th. That is 90 LBS. of honey. Who knows how much pollen stored as bee bread. That is why I have my pollen field feeder out all winter. The bees visit on warm days. They stop taking the pollen around 15 February when the henbit weed starts to bloom.

That is the best and all we can do today for our bees.

There are two magical anti varroa mite practices we will need to try next year. Both have to do with fighting diseases by strengthening the honeybee larvae. Hence, we have to wait until the next brooding cycle starts. One (norroa) makes the female varroa mite lay non-viable eggs. Hence, no new mites. The only mites you find will be ones that arrive on migrating wandering forager bees and drones from other apiaries. The other treatment is adding microalgae to the larval food, strengthening and maybe making the larvae grow larger and stronger. Both these attempts need new brood to be applied to the colony. Be prepared in January to try these new tricks in February when your queen starts brooding. Don't wait until April when you have new bees that carried over the diseases. The bad news is that your bees are already infested to whatever is the normal level. Hence there can be some winter die off that we cannot avoid.

WARNING # 3 NO JANUARY BEE MEETING it is too close to January one, and some members may still be out checking their bees. Not Really. The college is still closed for Christmas.

Steve Towe knows a family whose beekeeper has passed away. There may be an opportunity to purchase complete colonies in established hive boxes and sundry other equipment at a good price. The equipment has been well cared for, so it is not free but at a discount to buying new and the bees are already settled in.

See everyone at the meeting

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