

Bee Newsletter

6 January 2026

Christmas is coming

The “Polar Express” is passing through the neighborhood!

NO BEE CLUB MEETING IN JANUARY

THE COLLEGE IS CLOSED (STILL) FOR CHRISTMAS BREAK

SEE YOU IN THE SPRING (FEB 3, 2026)

What can a beekeeper do all curled up by the fire place dreaming of what can go wrong.

For now, 16 January, all the bees are snug in their cluster, with visions of Miami Breech dancing in their heads.

There have been reports of early winter die off. Unfortunately, this can only be attributed to varroa mite transmitted viruses. A scolding here: whatever you did to fight the mites last summer it was not adequate. You can only try something different next spring and be more diligent.

What can you do this winter (December, January, 1st half of February). Read up and research changes to supplemental feeding, medication use, and beekeeper practices. There are several new and always promising products to attack mites and enhance the dietary regime for the honeybees.

Warren Buffet is one of the countries expert investors. He claims to read for 8 hours a day. And this is stuff he already knows a lot about.

By the time a beekeeping book is written the information is OLD. One good place to read about current comments, practices, and products about beekeeping is the “Honey Bee Health Coalition”.

There are several columns of subjects. Feeding, Habitat, beekeeping husbandry practices, bee science. The important part is you need to be prepared to

implement changes in January to take effect in February before the mites start expanding with the new brooding season. You need to decide on your techniques and have the products necessary on hand so you are ready when the bees are ready.

You probably will have to be thinking along two tracks simultaneously. Hopefully you will have colonies that survive the winter which will start expanding populations in February. These colonies can either continue and die or squeak by. If they pass test one, they may starve to death. You need to be inspecting and supplementing store food as needed. As brooding starts the colony can very quickly exhaust what you thought were adequate food stores. Passing test two, you want to get ahead of the inevitable varroa mite populations while they are at the lowest count. That is before the mites start brooding on your new larvae.

Having made it to the end of February or into March, You Cannot Go on Spring Break! Your next problem (which is good) is getting ready to manage against swarming. What a wonderful situation to look forward to. Splitting your colonies before they swarm. Your less fortunate friendly beekeepers might want to buy your excess colonies from splits.

I am refilling my pollen substitute field feeder today (19 Dec 2025). Some of my latest reading indicates that honeybees may not store pollen substitute in the cells as bee bread, but they do consume it as food. That would make the stored bee bread that is natural pollen based last longer into the winter. This is good because it is that late in the winter food that becomes more critical to have in the hive.

Check out the web page for helpful hints under the different pull-down menus. I don't try to remember everything I know about beekeeping. I look it up in the different files I have created to remind myself that this is what I need to get ready to do and how to do it without forgetting a step or two.

I am using this cold weather that started in November, got worse in early December, will come and go through January and part of February as a brood break for mite control. I think the life expectancy of an adult mite is about 11 days. It doesn't really matter if you do the brood break for 30 days. The Adult

mites leave the host bee and look for open brood cells. If there are no larvae to get on to, the mite dies without reproducing and your mite count drops eventually. At first there are a lot of mites dropping onto the sticky board, but they are not alive.

When you start managing for brood expansion in early February you are starting at the lowest viable mite population count of the year. I will start "Norroa" treatment then. It is supposed to work like the "flea & tick" treatment we use on our pets. The nurse bees consume the Norroa and mix it with the larval food. The few viable adult mites lay their eggs in with the brood larvae. When the next generation of mites parasitize the larvae and take in the Norroa with their meal, they become non-viable egg layers. This stops the next generation of mites from developing. You have to repeat Norroa treatments every 3 months as new viable mites keep entering your colony on wandering foragers and drones. You can't use Norroa during honey collection as it is feed to the bees in a syrup carrier liquid. I will use oxalic acid fumigation during honey collection to keep the mite populations from expanding during the summer.

Wayne's Feed and Seed in Murphy NC is taking over my package order and delivery. Tele: 828 837 2139

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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