

Beekeepers Newsletter

3 March 2026

“Shiver me bee boxes”!

Here we are thinking “What a terrible February. Worst one I can remember!”

WELL, I could copy March '25 Bee Chronicles and it would be exactly what I would write this year. Cold temperatures with the addition of 2 bad cold snaps and a little snow (3-4 days) inconvenience. Look out for a hard late frost that can hurt the blossoms in April.

What this tells us is we have just come out of a normal winter. The cold snaps might have been enough to “chill kill” your weak colonies. I lost one which I expected because the population was small. About enough bees to cluster the size of a grapefruit.

Surviving five colonies were inspected the day before the cold snap. They all had 4-5 frames with bees on them shoulder to shoulder on both sides of the frame. The intriguing point is they only covered half the length of the frame. Whalla!! This is normal for my apiary. The bees are hanging out on the south facing side of the hive body. It warms up earlier in the morning. As it gets warmer and there are more bees they will spread out inside the box.

As the bees have quit coming to my pollen field feeder, I am preparing pollen patties to put on the top bars. I want to feed my Larvae spirulina to enhance larval and pupal growth. The best way to do this is mixing it with pollen. I will use pollen patties on the top bar as the most reliable method.

Pollen Patties

How? And Why?

Pollen patties are a large chunk of garbage in the wrong place in the hive. The in-hive workers go into overdrive cleaning it up! When the nurse bees are helping, they realize “This is easy brood food!”. By mixing the spirulina powder with pollen

powder in home made patties you create the perfect vehicle to get the enhanced food to the brood.

If you want to continue Norroa feeding to attack future varroa mites use it as part of the syrup base you are mixing with the powdered pollen substitute to create your pollen patties. Mix so the patty dough is like fondant. On waxed paper (over & under) a gob of patty, roll it out to less than 1/2" thick. Rectangular patties are best for feeding. Cool the patty in the refrigerator, store in the freezer. Cut into 1" wide strips 6" inches long to feed.

You want the colony to consume the strip in one week. Hive beetles will lay their eggs in pollen patties. The eggs hatch in 11 days. Come back in a week to check the patties. If they are completely consumed you can add another patty plus maybe 1/2 more. If not consumed, throw the remainder out in the yard for forager bees and possums to visit .

The bears will wake up in March. Have your electric fences ready around your apiaries. Connecting the charger to 120 volt is the most reliable. A charger running off a car battery is next and Solar powered (most common) is the least reliable in the multi-year long run. I use solar and car batterie.

Start getting your equipment ready to accept your packages mid-to late March.

On your wintered over surviving colonies, start looking at your "Swarm Control" equipment. Be prepared to split your colonies before the end of April which is the beginning of swarm season. Split them, don't loose bees to swarming. That swarm queen is the best queen you had. A neighboring bee keeper can use your extra colonies, for sale or free.

When you split, move the old queen with the split and let the large "stay behind" colony grow a new queen. That colony is large enough and has lots of growing brood, it will hardly notice the missing queen. The brood break will help keep your summer mite count down.

More about splits in April, but now is the time to order or prepare the equipment. Any style of a nuc box works (plastic, cardboard, wood). I use 10 frame deep boxes with 3-5 frames with the split. I will need the deep boxes in the fall and

winter to cover my in-hive feeders. I can store the telescoping tops, inner covers, and bottom boards easier than empty nuc boxes. During the summer the extra deeps are ready to expand fast growing colonies. There is nothing wrong with having a colony strong enough to be working on three deeps. You or your neighbor will need the bees come fall.

This super colony will also be providing you with extra parts. Drawn comb frames and bees to balance and strengthen your “spring split colonies”.

Do repairs on your “dead out” colonies. Painting and cleaning.

Check out the Georgia Beekeepers’ Association web site for up coming training events you might like to participate in. gabeeking.com

GBA has announce that since the creation of the GA Honeybee License Plate; One Million Dollars has come back to the GBA to be used to advance beekeeping in Georgia. Thanks to all who drive a “Bee Car”.

See everyone at the Meeting

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