

# WINTERIZATION FOR BEEHIVES

by Chuck Bauer

1. AT THE SOLSTICE (THE FIRST DAY OF SUMMER), EVALUATE HONEY STORES IN THE SECOND BROOD BOX, IT SHOULD BE WELL ON ITS WAY OF BEING AT LEAST  $\frac{1}{2}$  FULL. LEARN TO “HEFT” THE BACK OF THE HIVE TO CHECK ITS WEIGHT. IF NOT, TAKE ACTION, MITE CONTROL, RE-QUEEN, IF THE POPULATION SEEMS LOW ADD SOME CAPPED BROOD FRAMES.
2. AFTER THE LAST HONEY HARVEST, (LATE AUGUST OR BY LABOR DAY, PUT ON ENTRANCE REDUCERS TO THE LARGE OPENING. THIS IS TO HELP IN CURTAILING ROBBING.
3. IF MITES ARE OUT OF CONTROL, THEN AFTER THE LAST HONEY HARVEST IS THE TIME TO TREAT, (DO YOU WANT TO TREAT OR RISK LOSING THE HIVE?) RANDY OLIVER OF “SCIENTIFIC BEEKEEPING”, TREATS WHEN THE MITES ARE OUT OF CONTROL. HE PREFERS AN ESSENTIAL OIL/THYMOL PRODUCT SUCH AS “APIGUARD”. THYMOL IS A NATURAL PLANT BASED OIL FROM THE THYME PLANT, A HERB. I USE “APIGUARD”.
4. BEFORE COOLER WEATHER SETS IN, PUT ON THE MOUSE GUARDS, BY THE FIRST FROST THE MICE MAY BE IN THE HIVES. THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER IS A GOOD TIME.
5. EVALUATE THE HONEY STORES, THERE SHOULD BE ALMOST A COMPLETE FULL DEEP OF HONEY IN THE TOP BOX, THE BOTTOM BOX SHOULD HAVE THE OUTSIDE FRAMES COMPLETELY FULL AND THE REMAINING FRAMES  $\frac{2}{3}$  TO  $\frac{1}{3}$  FULL. IF YOU HAVE EXTRA HONEY FRAMES FROM A SUPER STRONG HIVE, SUCH AS A 4 DEEP HIVE, REDUCE IT TO 3 BOXES AND USE THE EXTRA HONEY FRAMES IN THE HIVES THAT NEED MORE STORES. DON'T TAKE HONEY FRAMES FROM A 2 BOX HIVE TO HELP A WEAKER HIVE, YOU RISK LOOSING BOTH HIVES. I STRIVE FOR 3 DEEP HIVES GOING INTO WINTER.
6. AFTER THE FIRST FROST, ROBBING CAN OCCUR. ON THE WEAKER HIVES PUT THE ENTRANCE REDUCER TO THE SMALL OPENING. WEAK HIVES SHOULD BE FEED A 2:1 SUGAR SYRUP USING A HIVE TOP FEEDER. TRY REFILLING IT EARLY IN THE MORNING BEFORE THE BEES ARE OUT OR A ROBBING FRENZY CAN OCCUR. REMOVE THE FEEDERS BEFORE FREEZING WEATHER SETS IN.
7. BY NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> PUT THE SLIDERS ON THE BOTTOM BOARDS, MINE HAVE A 1 INCH OPENING IN THE CENTER OF THE SLIDER. IF YOU HAVE SCREEN BOTTOM

BOARDS AND DON'T CLOSE THEM OFF, THEN THE COLD WINTER WINDS WILL DRIVE THE BEES UP INTO THE TOP BOX, PAST THE LOWER HONEY STORES.

8. ALSO BY THIS TIME YOU SHOULD HAVE A MOISTURE DEVISE ON TOP OF THE HIVE TO CAPTURE CONDENSATION. I USE A TRAY WITH A SCREENED BOTTOM TO HOLD CEDAR CHIPS. ONLY A COUPLE OF INCHES OF CEDAR CHIPS IS NECESSARY. YOU WANT A CONTROLLED SLOW AIR FLOW THRU THE HIVE. THE CEDAR CHIP TRAY HAS  $\frac{1}{4}$  INCH SHIMS ALONG THE SHORT SIDES OF THE TOP OF THE TRAY TO ALLOW THE AIR TO ESCAPE. REMOVE THE INNER-COVER FOR THE WINTER.
9. MY TOP COVERS ARE INSULATED WITH A  $\frac{1}{2}$  INCH OF STYROFOAM INSULATION, THIS PREVENTS THE CONDENSATION FROM FORMING ON THE BOTTOM SIDE OF THE TOP COVER WHICH COULD BUILD INTO ICE SICKLES. I USE THE INSULATED TOP COVER YEAR ROUND.
10. BY NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> THE ENTRANCE REDUCER IS SET TO THE SMALL OPENING AND INSTALLED UPSIDE DOWN. THIS ALLOWS THE BEES TO ESCAPE FOR CLEANSING FLIGHTS INCASE THERE IS AN ACCUMULATION OF DEAD BEES BLOCKING THE ENTRANCE.

THE HIVES SHOULD BE WRAPPED BY NOW WITH TAR PAPER, PICK A COLDER DAY FOR THIS TASK SO THE BEES DON'T BOTHER YOU.

11. PROBABLY MOST IMPORTANT BESIDES HAVING ENOUGH HONEY STORES AND VENTILATION IS A GOOD WIND BREAK. I USE A TARP HUNG OVER THE WOODEN FENCE BEHIND MY HIVES. THE FENCE SHOULD EXTEND SEVERAL INCHES ABOVE THE HIVES, THE WIND BREAK IS ON THE WEST SIDE. A GOOD OPTION IS BALES OF HAY OR STRAW STACKED UP BEHIND THE HIVES RIGHT NEXT TO THE HIVES.
12. IF YOU USE THE BOTTOM BOARD SLIDER WITH THE VENT HOLE, LET THE SNOW BUILD UP ON THE LANDING BOARD. THIS WILL HELP KEEP THE EAST WINDS FROM BLOWING INTO THE FRONT DOOR. REMOVE THE SNOW FROM THE TOP COVER AND LANDING BOARD WHEN TEMPS ARE FORCAST ABOVE 30 DEGREES. SOME BEES WILL BE DRAGGING OUT DEAD BEES THEN.
13. ONCE A MONTH ON A COLD DAY, RAKE OUT THE DEAD BEES, DON'T BE ALARMED BY THE AMOUNT OF DEAD BEES, MANY TIMES I THOUGHT A HIVE WAS DEAD AND IT WASN'T. THIS IS TO KEEP THE ENTRANCE CLEAR AND TO REMOVE THE EXTRA MOISTURE THE DEAD BEES PRESENT TO THE HIVE.
14. IN LATE WINTER, REMOVE THE TOP COVER, PUSH ASIDE THE CEDAR CHIPS TO CHECK THE HIVE, IF THERE ARE A LOT OF BEES AT THE TOP, YOU MAY WANT TO PUT IN A SUGAR BLOCK. ON NICE WARM WINTER DAYS WHEN THE BEES ARE

DOING CLEANSING FLIGHTS, I REMOVE THE ENTRANCE REDUCER FOR THE DAY SO ALL THE BEES CAN GET OUTSIDE.

15. IN APRIL YOU CAN REMOVE THE TAR PAPER, KEEP IT FOR NEXT YEAR, I GET 4-5 YEARS USE OUT OF MINE. PUT THE ENTRANCE REDUCER TO THE LARGE OPENING. IF IT LOOKS LIKE THE TEMP IS GOING TO STAY ABOVE 30 DEGREES, YOU CAN REMOVE THE CEDAR CHIP TRAY. LEAVE THE SUGAR BLOCK. CONSIDER PUTTING IN A POLLEN PATTY.
16. CHECK THE WEIGHT OF THE HIVE, IF IT FEELS "LIGHT", FEED 1:1 SUGAR SYRUP. AT THIS TIME THE HIVE IS GETTING READY TO GO INTO FULL POPULATION PRODUCTION.
17. BY MAY 1ST, REMOVE THE BOTTOM BOARD SLIDER AND THE WIND BREAK.
18. KEEP FEEDING UNTIL THE DANDELIONS ARE IN FULL BLOOM OR UNTIL THEY QUIT TAKING IT.
19. KEEP A ROCK OR BRICK ON THE HIVE TOP YEAR ROUND.