



Master Beekeeping Program

Lesson 5- Swarming



Swarming

Swarming is an instinctive behavior of all races of honeybees.

Swarming propagates the species – the colony splits 1 or more times creating new colonies.

Swarming typically occurs in the spring during a nectar flow and rapid growth of colony size.

Swarm season in Washington Mid April to Mid-June.

Why prevent Swarming:

- Loss of investment – half or more of your bees depart during the process of swarming
- Nuisance – Swarms can quickly become a nuisance to others, and can crat risk for keeping beekeeping legal – especially in urban environments
- **It's the Law!** Most beekeeping laws require beekeepers to practice swarm prevention with clauses like the following:
 - “Adequate space shall be provided in each hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming”
 - “Colonies shall be re-queened following any swarming or aggressive behavior”

Beekeeper tips to prevent swarming:

During swarm season - examine for hives about every two weeks for the presence of Queen Cells

Quick Tip! Inspect for queen cells without having to remove frames! Tilt hive bodies up/forward and inspect frames from below for queen cells on the bottom of the frames

Start studying swarm management techniques now before you need them !

- Demaree System of Swarm Prevention
- Making splits
- How to keep the brood nest open
- Checkerboarding

Good presentation by Michael Bush on Swarm Control:

www.bushfarms.com/beesswarmcontrol.htm

The Demaree System of Swarm Prevention

1. The Demaree System of Swarm Prevention is an effective method of swarm prevention.
2. The sealed brood and some older unsealed brood of the colony is transferred from the brood nest to a hive body at the top of the colony above a queen excluder.
3. The remaining space is filled with empty combs.
4. Supers are added under the top story.
5. If queen cells develop in the top story, destroy them so new queens will not emerge.

Notes:

Resources Online:

PSBA website: www.pugetsoundbees.org

WSBA website: www.wasba.org

National Honey Board: www.nhb.org

Bee Informed: <http://beeinformed.org/>

Honey Bee Suite - Rusty Burlew: <http://www.honeybeesuite.com/>

The Practical Beekeeper - Michael Bush: <http://www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm>

Scientific Beekeeping - Randy Oliver: <http://scientificbeekeeping.com/>

WSU Diagnostics lab: <http://entomology.wsu.edu/apis/diagnostic-lab/>

Apiary Registration form: <http://agr.wa.gov/PlantsInsects/Apiary/docs/ApiaryRegistrationForm.pdf>