

A tip (April 1998)

Here's an easy way to light your smoker: buy a cheap butane charcoal lighter at Safeway for about \$5.00. The flame comes out of long tube that you can stick down to the bottom of your smoker. With regular matches it is sometimes difficult to get the fire started at the bottom. Not with the charcoal lighter.

A tip (June 1998)

You can sometimes see varroa mites in your hives on drone larvae that are exposed when burr comb is split open. The mites are reddish brown and slightly bigger than the head of a pin. Tracheal mites are too small to see without a microscope, but one indication of their presence is bees that are holding their wings askew on one side in a sort of K-shaped pattern.

A tip (Aug 1998)

Grease patties are an effective tool for the beekeepers. They can be used to protect hives from tracheal mites. Also, terramycin (TM-25) can be added to the grease patties (they are then called extender patties) as a prophylactic treatment for American foul brood. Please note, however, that many wise beekeepers and scientists are opposed to using extender patties, thinking that they are easy to leave on the hive too long, causing the AFB bacteria to build a resistance to terramycin.

Here is a recipe for grease patties and extender patties.

2 Patties

1/3 lb. vegetable shortening
2/3 lb. granulated sugar*
2 tablespoons TM-25**

6 Patties

1 lb. vegetable shortening
2 lb. granulated sugar*
6 tablespoons TM-25**

20 Patties

3 lb. vegetable shortening
6 lb. granulated sugar*
1 pack (6.4 oz.) TM-25**

*Some formulas call for powdered sugar, but granulated seems to work just as well.

**TM-25 should be used only for extender patties

While the shortening and sugar can be mixed by hand, the easiest way is to use a food processor. After blending the ingredients, roll each patty out between two sheets of waxed paper until it is about a quarter inch thick. Then place patty and paper in the hive on top of the brood frames. Don't worry about the waxed paper; the bees will remove it. If you don't like the waxed paper, you can place the grease patty on a small piece of hardware cloth which will support the patty and allow the bees to work it from underneath.

Grease patties may be kept on the hive all year to protect against tracheal mites, but extender patties with terramycin should be used only when there are no honey supers on the hive.

Some tips - Super storage (Sep 1998/Dec 2002)

Honey supers must be carefully stored when they are not on hives to prevent damage by wax moths. Here are some tips.

Tip 1: The literature on beekeeping commonly recommends storing extracting supers by stacking them tightly and placing paradichlorobenzene crystals on cardboard or newspapers on the top super before sealing the stack with a hive top. Bee supply catalogs sell paradichlorobenzene under the trade name Para-Moth. Paradichlorobenzene is also sold in drugstores to prevent clothing moths, and it usually costs less than the stuff sold in bee catalogs. One brand is "Moth Ice Crystals." Just make sure the package says that the active ingredient is paradichlorobenzene and not something else like naphthalene.

Tip 2: Some beekeepers believe that if extracting supers, particularly those that have never had brood reared in the combs, are stored so that air and light circulates through the frames, it is not necessary to treat them with paradichlorobenzene. You might try that, but check regularly for signs of wax moths.

Tip 3: If treatment fails and you get wax moths, you can use the larvae for fish bait or, for something a little different, fry them and eat them. According to *The Beekeeper's Handbook*, "Wax moths are great as snack items. Fried in hot oil, they pop like popcorn and, if lightly salted, are reported to have as good or better flavor than potato chips or corn puffs." (Third edition, p. 168)

A Tip (Dec 98)

Need to paint some hive bodies or supers? If you are a resident of San Francisco, you can get a great deal on paint at the San Francisco Hazardous Waste Recycling Center. It's free. This paint has been dropped off at the center and is offered, as available, at no charge to city residents. The Recycling Center is located at 501 Tunnel Avenue and is open 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Thursday through Saturday. For more information, call 554-3400.

A tip (March 1999)

When using wax foundation, it is usually necessary to support it, either with tinned wire or with special support pins sold by beekeeping supply companies. In the BEE-LIST internet discussion of beekeeping, several beekeepers have mentioned an alternative that is easier than wire and cheaper than support pins. They say that bobby pins can be used to hold the foundation by sliding them in through the holes in the frames as is done with support pins. According to those who have used the bobby pins, the bees quickly cover them up as they build out the comb. Nor are bobby pins a problem during extraction: they hold the wax foundation securely, and because they are covered by the comb, they are not exposed. This is just opinion, of course, but bobby pins might be worth a try. (If you try it, though, make sure to buy bobby pins, not hair pins. Hair pins are U shaped, bobby pins are more like a clip.)

A Tip (June 1999)

One of the first things new beekeepers learn is the importance of not crushing bees. While it is impossible to completely avoid crushing bees, there are several ways to minimize the problem.

- ***Stacking supers and brood boxes removed from the hive***

Place a small piece of wood (say 3/4"x3/4"x6") across the corner of each brood box or super after you remove it from the hive. That way if you stack another on top of it, there will be more room between the two boxes than if the supers were just stacked with no wood spacer.

- **Removing frames**

Remove the second frame in from the side rather than one against the wall of the box or one in the middle. There is often burr comb between the sidewall and frame and this can roll or crush bees. Frames in the middle are more likely to have the queen on them, which the prudent beekeeper definitely doesn't want to crush.

- **Reinstalling supers and brood boxes**

First, gently smoke the bees on the upper box already on the hive to cause the bees to retreat down between the frames. Then hold the box to be installed just above this box and either (1) move it gently back and forth as you slowly lower it into position, or (2) turn it slightly and slowly lower in while gently turning it back to the original position. The key words here are gently and slowly. Give the bees time to get out of the way. You and they will all benefit.

A Tip (~Oct 1999)

Two tips again this month.

Tip 1. If you are interested in buying some woodenware this winter to get ready for next spring, you might consider the October Special from Western Bee Supplies. They are selling budget-grade hive bodies and medium supers for \$6.75 and \$4.25 respectively. Their "Hobbyist Special" might also be of interest to some. It includes a commercial grade hive body, ten frames, Plasticell foundation, bottom board, telescoping top, and inner cover, unassembled, all for \$55.00. The club has ordered from Western Bee several times and has generally been happy with the quality, though occasionally there has been a mix-up in what was sent versus what was ordered. If you're interested, look for their ad in the October issue of *American Bee Journal* or visit their web site at <http://www.ptinet.net/~stinger/>

Tip 2. Need to paint some hives? In an earlier issue we mentioned that you could get free paint from the SF Recycling Center. Here's another alternative that is almost as cheap. Most paint stores will give deep discounts on paint that has been tinted to the incorrect color. For example, Kelly-Moore on Oak and Divisadero, sells this paint for \$4.00 a gallon.

Tip of the Month - A New Method to Test for Varroa (Mar 2000)

Here is a new technique to test for varroa mites using powdered sugar. It allows a beekeeper to estimate the varroa level in a colony without having to kill the bees, as is the case with the ether roll test. This information is adapted from "Apis-Apicultural Information and Issues", the Florida Extension Beekeeping Newsletter Volume 18, Number 2, February 2000, prepared by Malcom T. (Tom) Sanford. The newsletter appears at <http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~mts/apishtm/apis.htm>

To use the powdered sugar technique one needs the following:

1. A wide-mouth canning jar with two-piece lid.
2. #8 mesh hardware cloth (or any other mesh that will retain the bees while letting Varroa pass through).

3. Window screen or any other fine mesh hardware cloth that will let the sugar pass through but retain the Varroa.

Cut the #8 mesh screen to replace the circular, center portion of the lid. Collect 200-300 bees in the jar. A funnel can be used to facilitate the process. Replace the modified lid and add about a tablespoon of powdered sugar through the screen. Roll the jar to distribute the sugar. Wait a few minutes, swirl the jar again, and pour the sugar and mites through the screen into another container. The mites can be separated from the mites sugar by pouring the mixture through the window screen. The bees can be returned to the colony where their hive mates will lick them clean.

This technique works well according to the article. It is superior to the ether roll, separating up to 90 percent of the mites from the bees. The Florida bee inspection service has found this to be the case and is shifting over to its use.

Tip of the Month - Using natural comb (summer 2000)

If you are hiving a feral colony that has drawn out comb, you can put the natural comb into empty frames and avoid loss of the brood it contains. The bees will soon attach the comb to the frame and repair any damage done during the conversion.

Beekeeping literature suggest that you can use string or rubber bands to secure the comb into the frames. Ray Hicks uses 1" by 1" hardware cloth secured to both sides of a frame. He attaches the hardware cloth on one side in a hinged arrangement so that it can be swung open to receive the comb and then closed again.

Tip of the Month - Cleaning your smoker (summer 2000)

If your smoker gets gummed up from burning resinous fuels you can clean it fairly easily using oven cleaner. Use the type that works on cold surfaces and follow the directions of spraying it on and letting it sit a couple of hours before washing it off.

Here's another idea I haven't tried but I would be interested if anyone else has. I have a self-cleaning oven. I've been tempted to put my smoker in it (after having removed the bellows, of course) when it is due for a cleaning. I figure that if the oven can clean itself it should be able to clean the smoker as well. I haven't tried it because I do not know if there might be some unexpected (and bad) consequences, either on the smoker or due to the heating of the creosote. Anyone willing to try?

As a way to avoid the problem entirely, here is a tip from "Queen Rearing and Bee Breeding" by Laidlaw and Page. (A fine book by the way and worth having.)
"...the smoker is extinguished by a wad of newspaper in the nozzle. Before the smoker cools, lift the firebox lid by prying with the hive tool until the back edge clears the fire chamber; otherwise it may be permanently stuck!"

Tip of the Month - Smoker fuel and safety (summer 2000)

Here are some ideas for fuel for your smoker:
Burlap coffee bags from coffee shops that do on-site roasting
Wood pellets that are used for fuel in pellet stoves (you can buy them in feed and seed stores when you're on your Sunday drives in the country).

Old blue jeans. Denim is splendid fuel.
Wood chips (pine or cedar) from a pet supply store
Wood scraps from a lumberyard.
Pine needles, of course.
Some folks use eucalyptus leaves.

In the summer when vegetation is dry and winds are often high, lighting and using a smoker can be dangerous. Here are some ideas to reduce the danger.

1. Use a barbecue grill lighter that barrel long enough to place the flame at the bottom of your smoker.
2. After the smoker is lit, place some green grass or leaves over the top of the dry fuel to cool the smoke and reduce the chance of sparks.
3. Carry a deep container (e.g., a nuc) with you to work you bees and set the smoker inside when you are not using it. That will prevent the smoker falling over or igniting nearby dry grass.
4. Carry water to douse any sparks.
5. Suffocate the smoker when you're done by placing a plug of wet newspaper in the spout.
6. If conditions are dry and windy avoid using a smoker altogether. Instead try the liquid smoke mixture which the club has or try spraying sugar water on the bees.

Dec 2000 (I think)

Winter is the slow time for us beekeepers. Most of us have taken off honey from our hives, stored the honey supers, and medicated the bees. This is a good time to read about bees. Too often new beekeepers depend solely on what they learned in their beekeeping class and what they can glean from other beekeepers. That approach just doesn't work. The class gives the bare information necessary to get started, and information from others is sometimes of questionable accuracy. The best approach is to study for yourself from the many publications on the subject.

The bee magazines are a good source of information, as are the books in the club's library. Another source is the San Francisco Public Library, which has a large collection of books on beekeeping. Most are in the Main Library and are filed under the call number 638.1. Here is the first part of the list of the library's collection. It is taken from the on-line catalog:

Call number 638.1:

- Adams, John Festus Beekeeping: the gentle craft, 1972.
- Aebi, Ormond. The art & adventure of beekeeping, 1975.
- Bailey, Leslie. Honey bee pathology, 1981.
- Beekeeping questions and answers/edited by Dadant & Sons, c1978
- Bonney, Richard E. Hive management, a seasonal guide for beekeepers, c1990.
- Campion, Alan. Bees at the bottom of the garden
- Carrier, Franklin H. Keeping bees, a handbook for the hobbyist beekeeper, c1984.
- Crane, Eva. The archaeology of beekeeping, 1983.
- Crane, Eva. Bees and beekeeping, science, practice, and world resources, 1990.
- Crane, Eva E., ed. Dictionary of beekeeping terms, with allied scientific terms
- Dines, Arthur M. Honeybees from close up, 1968
- Eckert, John Edward. Beekeeping. Successor to Beekeeping by Everett F. Phillips, 1960.
- Frisch, Karl von. The dance language and orientation of bees, 1967.
- Walter L. Bees, Beekeeping, honey, and pollination, c1980.

- Hanson, Louise G. Beekeeping for fun and profit, c1980.
- Hanson, Louise G. The basic beekeeping and honey book, c1977
- Honey bee pests, predators, and diseases/edited by Roger A. Morse, 1978.
- Hubbell, Sue. A book of bees—and how to keep them, c1988.
- Jaycox, Elbert R. Beekeeping in the Midwest, c1976.

Tip of the Month (Jan 2001)

The Internet has much information on beekeeping, with many sites and web pages devoted to apiculture. One of the most informative and useful sources of information on the Internet, however, is not a site but rather a formal, continuing discussion that takes place by e-mail. It is called BEE-L and is described by its moderators as the “oldest, continuously running LISTSERV (Internet e-mail) discussion list dealing with the ‘Informed Discussion of Beekeeping Issues and Bee Biology.’”

There are several hundred subscribers to BEE-L. Each subscriber may send an e-mail message to BEE-L on some aspect related to beekeeping. The message and any responses are sent to each member of the list. The result is an on-going discussion that touches on many aspects of apiculture. Not every topic is relevant, or even interesting, but this is to be expected in a discussion by a group that includes amateurs, professionals, scientists, newbies, and maybe a crazy or two. Still, there is much of interest to ponder.

Here is a list of subjects covered in the 23 messages that came from the list on a recent day. It is typical.

1. Honey Bee Consciousness
2. New and improved Ent Event Calendar
3. Honey Prices Up? (3)
4. Apidictor, source of bee-sounds (2)
5. Screen bottom boards (2)
6. Swarm lures & traps? bee hunting (2)
7. Managing the Russians
8. Honey consumption (2)
9. Swarm Lures
10. Explorer Bee Skins
11. Coumaphos cleared for use in Georgia
12. Apidictor v. computer
13. A Cocktail Party in the hive.
14. Treated lumber
15. Worldwide Honey Auction
16. Browser Skins
17. Short Course in Memphis, Tennessee

Receiving this many messages every day might be too much for many readers. There are options available help deal with the volume. For example, it is possible to receive a full day of messages in a single digest once a day. Also, there is a “Best of Bee” option that includes only the messages that the moderators feel are most relevant.

To subscribe, go to this URL and follow the directions.
<http://www.beekeeping.co.nz/beel.htm>

Tip of the Month (Jan 2001)

It is handy to have an extra deep super or two around. You can take one along when you visit your hive, and it can be used to set frames on when you are doing an inspection. That avoids the problem of kicking over or stepping on frames leaned against the side of a hive. Also a deep super is useful for covering a bottle of sugar water feed sitting on top of the frames of a hive.

If you also have an extra bottom board and cover, and ten frames of foundation to go with the deep box, you will be prepared to receive any swarm that might come your way or to make a split, either for increase or as a swarm control measure.

Finally, a deep with a bottom board nailed on is a good place to store your beekeeping equipment, either in your garage or in the trunk of your car.

The club has deep supers for sale, as well as frames and foundation, covers, and bottom boards. If you wish to purchase any of this equipment, call Joe at 431-1468.

Tip of the Month (Sep 2001)

by Tom Chester

Local bee clubs are one of the best deals in beekeeping. Their dues are almost always inexpensive, and they offer useful information and the chance to socialize with other beekeepers. Here in the Bay Area, each county has its own beeclub, ours being the best, of course.

In addition to the local clubs, there are state, regional, and national associations. Generally the state and national associations are oriented toward commercial beekeepers, particularly so in California. There is one exception in our area, the Western Apicultural Society of North America. WAS was founded in 1978 to "provide a central organization located in the western United States for the education of beekeepers and...the public concerning matters relating to the field of apiculture." While state and national associations tend to be oriented toward large commercial operators, WAS is directed primarily toward the hobbyist and sideliner.

Each year WAS holds an annual meeting somewhere in the western United States or Canada. This year's conference was August 16-17 in Corvallis, OR, on the campus of Oregon State University. The program was typical, with interesting presentations on the status of beekeeping by some of the leaders in the field. Here are some of the program highlights from this year's meeting:

- Bees in Development - Dr. Nicola Bradbear, Cardiff, United Kingdom
- One Dozen Challenges Facing Beekeepers - Dr. Jim Tew, Ohio State University
- Drug Resistance in American Foulbrood - Dr. Eric Mussen, UC Davis
- East and West Coast Beekeeping - Kim Flottam, Editor, Bee Culture Magazine
- Russian Queens - Dr. Lynn Royce, Oregon State University

In addition to the presentations, there was a salmon bake, a banquet, and the opportunity to receive a bee beard. I took advantage of the opportunity, and my photo made the front page of the Corvallis daily newspaper.

WAS members also receive a quarterly newsletter with timely information on beekeeping issues in the West.

I am the California representative to the Board of Directors, and I highly recommend WAS as a useful, fun, informative regional association for us hobbyists and sideliners. Annual dues are only \$10 individual, \$15 couple. I highly recommend the organization. To join, send your dues payment to
George Steffense, Treasurer
PO Box 956
Grants Pass, OR 97528-0956

This is a particularly good time to join WAS because next year's meeting will be in close by—at North Lake Tahoe, August 12-15. Eric Mussen is the new WAS president and he has arranged a special discount for lodging at the meeting hotel for members.

A Tip (Dec 2001)

The Walter T. Kelley Company is a well-known manufacturer and supplier of beekeeping equipment. The company's catalog is among the most interesting in the field and contains many items not found elsewhere. One useful item is their plastic telescoping cover. It works well enough protecting a beehive, but its usefulness extends beyond that. It's the perfect size to serve as a drip tray under supers of honey. Being made of plastic, it's tough enough to stand up to being banged around. At \$12.00 (plus shipping), the cover is a good investment to protect your car trunk or garage floor from honey drips. You can reach the Walter T. Kelley Company at 800-233-2899.

March 2002

I have two tips this month, the extra to celebrate the beginning of the high season for us beekeepers.

Tip 1: Take a beekeeping class

Beekeeping is a subtle and complex craft, and becoming good at it takes patience, experience, and information. We can get information from many sources: bee magazines, club meetings, books, working with other beekeepers. One of the most effective sources of useful information is a beekeeping class. Spring is when most of the classes are taught, and there are several being offered in the area over the next couple of months. Most are beginner classes, but consider taking one anyhow, even if you already keep bees.

Here are some classes to consider:

Our club presented a beginner's class in association with the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners on March 2-3, and possibly will be holding a second in early April. We'll let you know the details as they develop.

The Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo County is offering an intermediate level beekeeping class on Saturday, March 23, in Belmont. The class is taught by Randy Oliver, a well-respected beekeeper and teacher. If you keep bees, you will find this class worth your time and money. Cost is \$50. For more information or to register, call Sue Michaels at (510) 489-4952.

The Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association is holding two beginning classes, also taught by Randy Oliver. One will be Saturday, April 6, and the other Saturday, May 4. For

more information or to register, call the Sacramento Beekeepers Supply at (916) 451-2337.

Tip 2: Set up a record-keeping system for your hives.

An important aspect of beekeeping is keeping track of how each hive varies over the year and from year to year. For example, sometimes a queen's rate of egg laying will suddenly drop off, and the number of frames of brood will drop. Without a record of the history of the hive, it might be hard to note changes like this until it is too late for remedial action. Similarly, hive conditions vary from year to year depending on such factors as rainfall, nectar flows, and type of bee. All of these variables make it difficult to recall past years' conditions or how a hive in the past reacted to changes in key factors.

There are many ways to set up a record-keeping system. Right now, I make notes in pencil on the top cover of each hive as to its condition, what I did on each visit, and any recommendations for future action. In the past I numbered my hives and kept a notebook. Some beekeepers use a brick on top of each hive, with its position indicating hive status. I recently came across a record-keeping form that looks quite useful. You can find it at this URL:

<http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/hiveinsp.pdf>

You might want to print it out and give it a try. At least it would provide a general outline of what to look for as you open a hive.

Good luck with spring buildup, and may you keep those swarms in check.

April 2002

One of the challenges of beekeeping is finding the queen when it is time to replace her. Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin the search.

First some points about the queen:

- The queen differs from workers physically in that she has a longer abdomen and a shiny thorax. She also has longer legs and will stand slightly higher on the frame.
- She is often surrounded by attendants that form a circle facing her.
- If she hasn't been disturbed, she is likely to be found in an area of the brood nest where there are eggs and patches of empty cells. She is not likely to be on frames of sealed brood or frames with honey unless she has been driven there by fright.
- She prefers darkness to light.

Here are some searching techniques:

- Too much smoke will disturb the bees and cause them to run all around the comb. Therefore if you are specifically searching for the queen, use as little smoke as possible.
- When you look down on a brood box between the frames, the queen is likely to be where there is the heaviest concentration of bees.
- To search for the queen, take out two frames on one side of the brood box. After making sure that the queen is not on either frame, place them in a spare box or nuc. Now go through the remaining frames, one at a time. As you lift out a frame for inspection, before you inspect that frame, look at the face of the next frame remaining in the hive to see if she is there. If not, carefully search the frame you have just removed.

If you don't find her, place this frame back in the brood box against the side in the space occupied by the two frames you removed initially.

Continue working through the remaining frames using the same process. As you return the inspected frames to the brood box hang them in pairs with a space between each pair. (This is why you removed two frames in the first place, to allow extra room to maintain space between the pairs of frames.)

If you don't find the queen on the first pass, go back to the pairs of frames, paying particular attention to the faces on the inside of each pair where there is comparative darkness.

- If this doesn't work, you can search the frames again or just close the hive up and try again another day.

May 2002

This month's tip was one I found recently in *Bee Chats, Tips, and Gadgets* by Roy Thurber, published by the Washington State Beekeepers Association Master Beekeepers Certification Committee (whew, what a name). I included it in the January edition of the newsletter of the San Mateo Beekeepers Guild. This idea is so clever and useful, though, that I thought it deserves repeating in our newsletter.

From page 126 (this item originally appeared in the June 1981 edition of *The Speedy Bee*):

For years, beekeepers wanting to move their bees have waited until dark when all their bees are in the hives to load them up for the move. What's wrong with this system? Nothing, if you are an owl or have no home life. And there are always bees left behind, the "sleep-outs," the foragers who decided to sleep outside the hive instead of flying home late the previous evening.

Now a certain commercial beekeeper came up with a way to load bees in the daytime and lose less bees than night moving. You won't believe it works from this and will probably have to try it yourself.

He covers the entrances with a coarse fabric—burlap, old mosquito netting, anything that restricts the bees while allowing air to pass through for ventilation. When all the bees out in the field have had time to return to the hive and are milling around near the hives or have parked on the hive cover and nearby vegetation, the fabric is removed.

The colony is calmed with a puff of smoke and the field force rushes in. A dipper of water is thrown in the entrance if the move is in hot weather. After another puff of smoke the hives are loaded netted and secured. The waiting period for the bees to return can be as long as 40 minutes; that's when you eat your lunch or just goof off.

My own system is a bit different. I don't use nets. First I put on the top screen [a screen covering the top to allow for ventilation] and pour a quart of water over the hive's end bars. I lay a two-foot square of burlap over the top screen. After installing the entrance screen, I go sit down to rest for a half an hour.

When all of the foragers have returned, I remove the entrance screen for a few minutes. After the field bees rush in, I put the entrance screens back on, fold up the burlap, load the hives and take off.

I do think it important to cover the top screen. Otherwise, the bees will cover the top, defeating the purpose of the screen, and some will want to hitchhike there, instead of going into the hive.

Bee Chats, Tips, and Gadgets is a splendid compendium of innovation and wisdom related to keeping bees. I bought my copy at last year's Western Apicultural Society meeting. According to a February 2001 item on BEE-L, the beekeeping discussion list, the book is available from Bob Stump, 5417 99th Ave. N.W., Gig Harbor, WA 98335, (253) 265-2304, for \$20 plus shipping and handling.

June 2002

The tip this month has two parts.

Part 1. In inspecting a hive, we usually need to find out whether the colony is queenright. Finding the queen can be difficult and is a skill that comes after several seasons of keeping bees. There is another way to be reasonably sure that a colony is queenright without having to find the queen: find some eggs.

Here's why. Since an egg hatches just three days after it has been laid by the queen, the presence of eggs in a hive indicates that the hive has had a queen within that time.

Part 2. Seeing eggs can often be difficult, too. First, they are tiny, a little over a millimeter long and about twice the diameter of a hair. Second, the problem is compounded because one can't see as well through a veil as with the naked eye and because cells in the frames are often covered with bees. If you have trouble seeing eggs, go to a drugstore and buy a pair of magnifying reading glasses. Get the strongest magnification you can. They cost about ten bucks. You can rest the glasses on your forehead or use a string to tie them around your neck before you put on your veil. Then, if you need to look for eggs, you can slip on the glasses without having to remove your veil. Hold the frame with the sun over your shoulder so it shines into the cells. With the good light and glasses you should be able to see eggs without much trouble. Once you know what they look like and where to look for them, you'll be able to see them without the reading glasses.

Aug 2002

Honey extraction

This is extraction time, so here are some suggestions on "sticky control."

Remember, extracting honey produces more sticky mess than you can imagine. So, the paramount rule of extraction is **DO NOT EXTRACT IN YOUR KITCHEN**. If you do extract in your kitchen, and you live with someone else who is not a beekeeper, you will either not be living with that person afterward or you will not be living.

Here are some other suggestions:

1. Keep a bucket with warm, soapy water available at all times to wipe up sticky drips and drops and to clean your hands.
2. Put newspaper on the floor all around the area where you're doing the uncapping and extracting. Replace the paper as it becomes covered with drips.
3. Wear old rubber boots or slip-on shoes while you're extracting and then take them off whenever you step outside of the "sticky control area."

4. To clean extraction equipment, begin by rinsing it thoroughly in COLD water to remove all of the wax. Then you can complete the cleaning with a hot water rinse. If you begin by rinsing with hot water you will melt any wax in the equipment creating a much more difficult problem.
5. Similarly, to clean the nylon filter bags or metal filters, use COLD water to solidify the wax so that it can be removed before a second rinsing with hot water.
6. Remember that honey is a food product and that proper cleanliness and hygiene are important. Make sure that anything that touches the honey—filters, buckets, bottles, lids—is spotlessly clean.

SAN MATEO TIPS

A tip (June 2000)

Another Bay Area bee club newsletter suggests that fireplace or barbecue ashes placed at the foot of your hive will repel ants. Has anyone tried this to know if it really works? Give it a go and let us know.

Pierco plastic foundation (June 2000)

For those who are interested in trying Pierco Plastic Frame/Foundation, here are some tips from the manufacturer.

Do the following before installing frames/foundations:

1. dip plastic foundation area into sugar-water or honey-water solution and fully coat foundation
2. once coated, keep foundation clean and try to install frames/foundations within 10 days of dipping
3. you can also place sugar-water or honey-water mix in plastic squeeze/spray container. Take to bee yards, spray new Pierco foundation area as you install the Piercos in your hives.

The following are two successful methods of introducing Pierco Plastic Frames/Foundation:

1. New Pierco frames/foundation can be inter-spaced with drawn comb.
For best results, run 10 frames/foundations in your standard 9 frame super. Insert three new Piercos in the 3, 5, & 7 positions, (you can go as many as 5 and 5). The reasons for going with 3, 5, & 7 positions is that sometimes the bees will be slow to draw foundation on the outside of the super. We recommend feeding the bees heavily until the flows begin so they start drawing new comb immediately.
Note: If after using the above inter-spacing method the bees seem to ignore the new Piercos while pulling the drawn comb further, do not panic, use the alternate method explained as follows.
2. Replace the drawn comb with new Pierco so that you are now running 100 percent (10) new undrawn Pierco frames/foundations. Any undrawn Piercos with brace or burr comb can be scraped clean with a hive tool and returned to the super. The approach gives the bees no choice but to go to work and draw out the Pierco foundation. It is wise to feed heavily with sugar water or syrup at this time to stimulate comb building. Some people place a drawn comb on each end of the super as bait comb. We are finding more and more beekeepers from hobbyists to commercial operators are having excellent results through the above method of introducing a full super of up to 10 new undrawn Piercos instead of alternating with drawn comb.

Do not be disappointed if at first you have a little trouble getting your bees to accept and draw new Pierco frames/foundations. Try variations of the above methods, be creative and

remember colonies should be strong and healthy. It is difficult to get bees to draw new comb if they are under any stress, also, colonies must be in some type of flow, be it a natural nectar flow or artificial (sugar or syrup). They cannot produce wax without having some type of carbohydrate coming in.

Note:

1. Do not leave Pierco frames/foundations in direct sunlight for a prolonged period of time
2. Do not put Pierco frames/foundations in solar wax melters
3. Do not place Pierco frames/foundations in boiling water.

Any questions, call the manufacturer at 1-800-233-2662

An idea from the Web (April 2001)

This is from BEE-L, the internet discussion of beekeeping and bee biology.

Date: Sun, 25 Feb 2001 11:31:44 -0500
From: Dave and Judy <dublgully@FUSE.NET>
Subject: The Perrenial Question: Getting Stains Out of Bee Suits

Hello beekeeper friends.

Dave's supposedly 'white' bee suit really needed a cleaning before we made a school presentation. I bought about every stain remover product on the grocery store shelves. Most of them guaranteed to remove certain types of stains. (Apparently none of these manufacturers had bees in their backyards!). Of course, none of them worked. But the Tub and Tile Spray did take out some of the stains.

I was determined that this problem would not get the best of me. So, I turned to the Automotive section! There is a product called Super Clean, a liquid spray or pour, that is used to get off bug and tar spots from the autos. Well, bugs, tar, hmmm -- propolis? It worked! Any stains that were left from the laundry aisle cleaners, well they are history. And it did not eat any holes in the coveralls! I admit that I had already washed the suit at least twice, so what was left looked permanent. The end result could have been the combination of 14 different products, but maybe not. (I have no monetary interest in this product, except for the 2 quart jugs I bought at retail from WalMart. I have since used it on other stuff around the house. Great stuff.)

Judy in Kentucky USA