

# It is still Winter

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**We have had a very mild winter to this point. Swarming has already begun in Florida.**

**This presentation is for those individuals who currently have bees but new beekeepers can also get some insight into what one will do when they get bees to manage.**

**For the most part, winter is a time to study, read, and keep out of the hives.  
However, the 2022 bee season has begun!**

**This presentation was put together as a guide to late winter issue for beekeepers by Dana Stahlman of Raleigh, North Carolina. My email address is: [stahlmanapiaries@aol.com](mailto:stahlmanapiaries@aol.com) I publish a weekly newsletter called Stahlman Beekeeping Notes. It is free and all one needs to do to get on my mailing list is contact me at my email address and ask to be added.**



**Spring is just around the corner. I do not recommend putting package bees into hives until apple trees are close to blooming!  
If you need equipment or bees now is the time to get them ordered.**





**If you have hives of bees -- Are they alive?**



**This is a very nice  
hive! Snow has  
covered the entrance  
and no signs are  
present that it is  
alive!**

## Heat is generated by a hive that is alive.

It is possible to detect heat in a number of different ways.

1. Place your hand over the inner cover hole.
2. Check to see if you see live bees around the inner cover hole. Remove only the top cover.
3. Lightly knock on the side of the hive and listen for a hum which would indicate there are bees in the hive.
4. Look for any bee activity within the hive or outside the hive – bees in the snow.
5. Temperature devices – Laser temperature gun – Temperature sensors of various kinds.

An infrared camera image of a beehive. The beehive is a wooden box with a dark, textured surface. It is surrounded by a layer of snow. The beehive itself is glowing with a bright yellow and orange light, indicating it is warm. The surrounding area is dark and cold, with some snow visible. The image is taken from a slightly elevated angle, showing the top and side of the beehive.

Infrared Camera



**It is common to see dead honey bees on the snow in front of a hive.**

**If the bees are generating a lot of heat, or a day warms up in early afternoon, the bees in the hive are tempted to leave the hive in search of pollen.**

**When the bees hit the cold air outside the hive, they freeze up and drop to the ground. This is a sign that the hive is alive. Also note that the entrance reducer opening is not blocked by dead bees.**



**Colonies grow rapidly in late winter, fueled  
by winter stores.**



**What do we see in the two pictures?**





**Strong over-wintered colonies begin brood rearing in late December. The bees begin consuming honey stores which stimulates the queen to increase egg laying.**



# **All living things need something to eat in order to survive!**

**If a hive needs food, you as the beekeeper must supply the food needed by the bees.**

**The best winter food has little moisture content!**

**The food must be placed where the bees can reach it!**

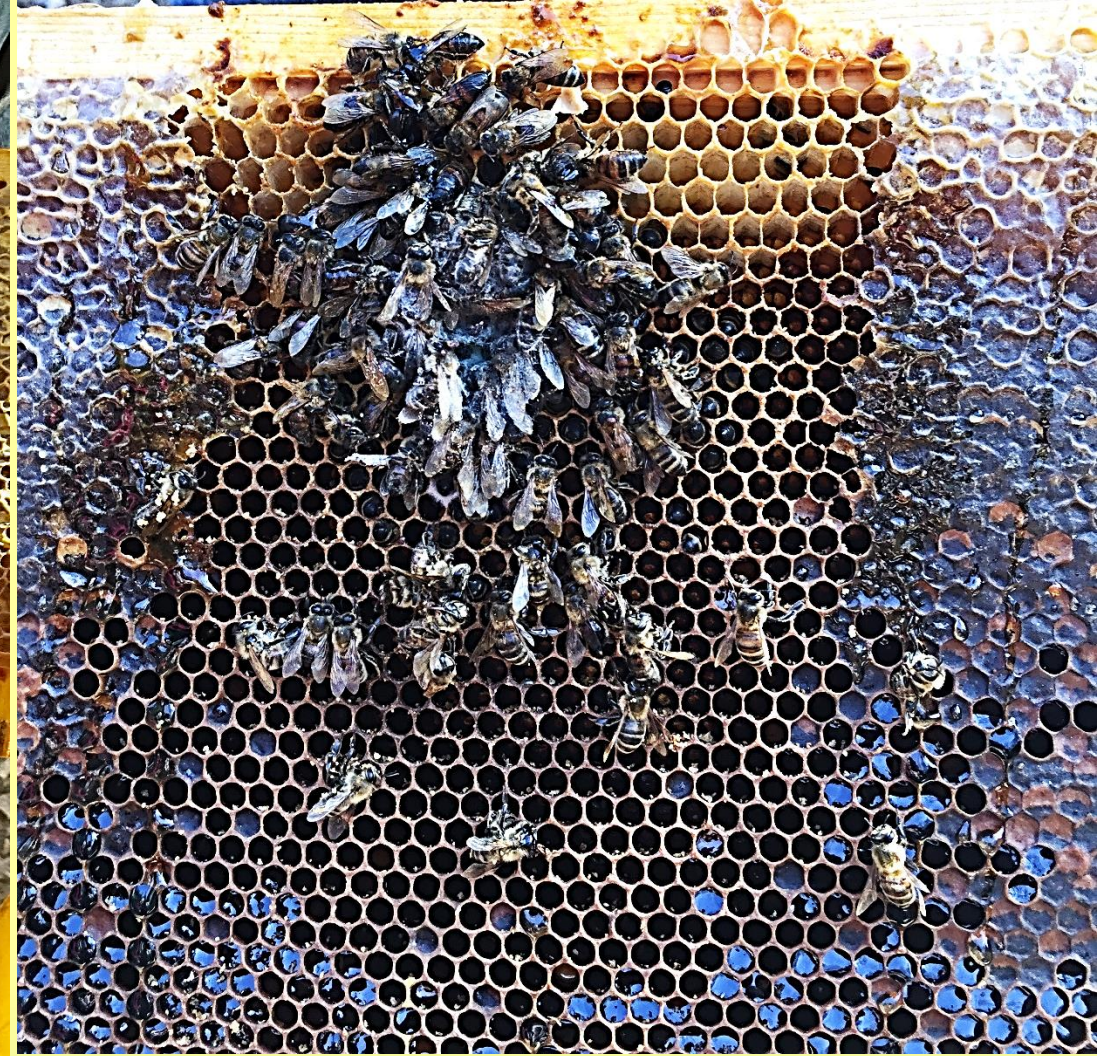
**Winter patties made with fondant are good when placed over the winter cluster.**

**When bees can fly, they will also gather granulated sugar placed in either a bucket or tray such as shown.**





# Some honeybees die during the winter!





**Sometimes the cause is not starvation!**



**Varroa Mites**

**Small hive  
beetles**



**These bees  
also died!**





**This hive died  
because its  
owner did not  
feed it! It would  
have been a good  
hive with a  
chance to make a  
lot of honey.**























## **When should you inspect a hive?**

**Bees will fly when the temperature is in the low 50 F range.**

**Frames should not be removed from the center of the hive as shown here!**

**If bees are clustered between frames, do not remove a frame. Wait until the cluster of bees break cluster. A safe temperature is in the mid 60's when bees are returning to the hive with pollen**



**This slide illustrates what is meant by a broken cluster.**

**If I were to work this hive, I would start removing frames on the side that has the least number of bees and work toward the center. I would expect a hive like this to have brood on frames.**

**If there are no eggs, larva, or capped brood, I would combine this hive with another hive if new queens were not available.**

**I would not take a frame from a good hive with eggs or larva to put into this hive. WHY?**

**This picture is of a hive March 1**





# **What are you looking for when you inspect a hive this time of the year?**

- 1. Does the hive have a queen? If brood is not present by March 1, a new queen should be ordered.**
- 2. Does the hive have food stores. If not, feed the bees. Top feeders, or division board (inside feeders) are best. The outside glass jar feeder (Boardman feeder) has several drawbacks when using it in cold weather conditions.**
- 3. How much debris is on the bottom board. It is time to clean the bottom board and level the hive.**
- 4. If the bottom box of a two chamber hive has no bees in it, reverse the hive bodies. Put the hive body with no honey or brood above for the bees to expand the nest upward. This is one method to avoid swarms.**
- 5. Most likely it is not time to remove the entrance reducer on a hive. But make sure the bees can get into the hive. Dead bees that drop to the bottom board may block the entrance.**
- 6. Determine equipment needs! I generally have two medium honey supers to put on each hive I have.**
- 7. Put down weed barriers. I visit new house building sites. I like roofing material in particular to place at the entrance of a hive because if no barrier for weeds to grow will be much harder to control later in the season.**



## **Late winter/early spring**

- 1. Should be installing package bees into dead-out hives.**
- 2. Checking equipment – cull out old comb, time to check frames that might need attention.**
- 3. Should be checking on Varroa mite populations. (Early treatment highly advised).**
- 4. Should be thinking about making splits for increasing hive numbers.**
- 5. Swarm prevention**
- 6. Placing supers on hives to give the colony more expansion room and honey flows.**
- 7. If you need equipment, it should be built before it is needed.**











