

Stahlman Beekeeping

Notes for 2022

Out Yards



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The bee season is advancing fast here in the Raleigh area. There are still a few bee schools being held and a few will continue into March. I have participated in two bee schools in 2022 and I can say a number of new beekeepers are ready to take the next step. A large number of new beekeepers have joined the readership of these weekly notes.

Those beekeeper that have live over wintered hives are dealing with a number of pressing issues.

- How to build up weak hives
- How and when to feed hives short of stores to build up hive populations
- How and when to do hive inspections
- How to decide when to make splits/hive increases
- How to treat Varroa mites
- How to move hives to better locations

These topics will all be addressed by these notes over the next month.

The topic with this article is Out Yards! I am not sure how you are handling dead out hives year after year? One cause for dead hives is almost never mentioned by bee school.

I am of the opinion that many hives die due to lack of ample food sources. Two clubs in the Raleigh area have added over 100 new beekeepers to the total number of individuals keeping hives. This has been going on for some time. At the same time, land values have gone up quickly in those urban and rural areas around cities. I was just told by a beekeeping friend that a 40 acre plot adjacent to his property in the Wake Forest area is being sold for \$72,000 per acre. There are two beekeepers living near this 40 acre plot of open field. The entire areas near large cities are under the same pressure – agriculture land disappearing.

The stress on hives of bees is coming from the over population of individuals keeping honeybees and the loss of habitat. We may include many other stress factors as well.

One sign that a location may not support a hive of honeybees is the need to feed bees to help them survive.

Feeding bees has always been a requirement to keep bees during certain seasons. Spring build-up is one of those. Fall is also a season when bees require additional food to over winter.

However, feeding should not be required during periods of normal honey flows unless the area is a poor nectar producing area. Commercial and side-line beekeepers have had to move bees to find areas that are able to support a number of bees and produce a honey crop.

Many beekeepers prefer to keep bees on their own property. Doing so often places various stress factors on a hive of bees. Due to increase competition for nectar sources, more exposure to diseases, and greater exposure to human habitation -- it might be that a beekeeper will want to locate hives to a better location.

Many individuals welcome honeybees placed on property they own. They will have various reasons for allowing bees on their property. It is important for the beekeeper to understand what the owner expects for use of the land.

Just because a site is offered, it is good to examine the site, talk to the owner and reach an understanding of what the owner expects in regard to hive inspections, getting to hives, and what the owner might want of you. It is appropriate to give the owner of the land some honey. I am aware that some individuals are paying to let a local beekeeper put bees on their property. That is a sweet deal if someone is willing to pay you to put bee hives in their backyard to "Save the Bees!"

How to find out-yards:

- Talk to friends
- If you have a number of contacts – work, church, clubs, etc., let the groups know you are looking for a site and share what you will need.
- Place a notice on bulletin boards offered at some business places. Restaurants, grocery stores, local hardware stores are just an example.
- A good source is the local state agricultural extension office.

Moving a hive of bees to a new location

Moving hives of bees by a person with a truck or trailer can be serious business. Trying to move hives without a truck or trailer is "really" serious business.

New bee equipment is likely to shift easily if the hive is moved because bees have not had time to propolize cracks and hive bodies together.

Any shifting of hive parts can result in bees escaping!

Let's look at a few examples:

I have been asked about how to move a hive of bees several times this past year.

The principles of moving a hive of bees:

- **Best time to move a hive of bees is early in the morning before bees begin to fly or late in the evening when bees have returned home to the hive.**
- **A hive should be well prepared for the move: hive staples to hold brood chamber to hive bottom board is highly recommended or ratchet straps securing the front as well as side of the hive.**
- **Have enough help to do lifting and moving to vehicle.**
- **Plan the route and new location well before moving the hive.**
- **Single hive bodies are easier to move than double deep hives. Added supers above the brood chamber create a challenge.**

Usually a single deep hive can be moved in the trunk of a car. The beekeeper should use some moving screen to allow ventilation for the bees in the hive. The moving screen does two things – it keeps the bees in the hive and allows fresh air to keep the interior of the hive from heating up which could kill the bees. Closing the entrance can be done for a short move but it is very harmful in hot weather.

Bees can be moved in cold weather! It is not good to give the bees a rough, jerky ride. The queen could be killed by getting pinched between frames and bees falling to the bottom board may be unable to climb back up to the cluster in cold weather.

I would like to share one move made late last year! It was being moved by professional engineers. I was consulted about the move and gave much the same directions you see listed above. But I also learned something watching the beekeeper move his hive. I had been told the hive had to be moved to a trailer. No problem if help is available even with a two story hive. A tractor would pull the trailer up a hill to the truck which would take the trailer to the new prepared bee yard. I followed in my truck and I was given permission to take photos of this move.

The beekeeper lived only 15 miles from my home. His name is T. Glenn Zeblo, PE. Our email message basically contained some of the following information.

- 1. What time the hive would be moved. It was decided the move would start at 5:45 p.m. The date was November 26, 2021. This would give some time to work in daylight before it really got dark.**
- 2. The air temperature was in the low 40's. The bees were not flying.**
- 3. He reported a good friend would be helping with the move.**

What I found: Glenn and Dave Bruno had already strapped this hive as securely as could be done. Note the clamps they used as well as the straps.

I have watched workmen move refrigerators and stoves from delivery trucks and never did I consider the straps they used to lift and carry appliances up steps as a help in moving a hive of bees.



This was Glenn's hive stand. I asked, "Why he was moving the hive".

He indicated a neighbor was dealing with a problem with bees visiting his hot tub. So he had located a new site for his hive further out in the country.

I might add, that this new hive site was beautiful with a nice lake and secluded woods blocking it from a nearby road. No near neighbors.



Note how the straps on their arms pass under the bottom board and the hive was moved step by step to the trailer waiting a few yards away from the old hive stand. There are many ways to pick up a hive like this. Bee supply catalogs carry items such as moving nets (which fit over a hive), Hive carriers (which fits around a hive and require two individuals to pick up the hive) and lift hand trucks.



A standard hand truck is commonly used to move hives. They work well if one has a trailer with a loading ramp. Again weight is a major factor in moving hives. It is sometimes better to take all honey supers off a hive being moved.



In this case the hive was set directly on the trailer. Note the support frame for the bottom board to fit in. Ratchet straps (green color) were added to keep the hive from shifting/moving while the trailer was on the road.

Below is a picture of the trailer.



It gets dark very fast if moving bees in the fall.

It was successful because:

The beekeeper planned the route and established a new location in an area with good possibilities of getting a honey crop.

There was no doubt that the hive was well supported on the trailer so it could not shift.

Remember when on the road, sudden stops might be required. If the load is not fastened to the trailer, that hive could become a flying object.

Note that the hive bodies were supported not only by straps but by two vertical wood supports at each corner of the hive.

These guys were pro's and provided me something I could share with you.