

STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

NOTES FOR 2023

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STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING
NOTES WILL BE SENT
OUT TWO TIMES A
MONTH DURING THE
WINTER SEASON

Winter feeding



There are times when feeding is required to prevent a hive from starving.



So it is time to share some thoughts about winter feeding. It is not too late to feed bees light on stored food reserves. Last week's issue covered the winter cluster. This is a winter cluster of dead bees. They starved! Note how dead bees occupy the cells under the top layer of bees.

This could have been prevented!

The lack of bees flying from a hive on a warm day many indicate that the bees are dead.



I consider winter feeding as emergency feeding. Bees need to be inspected during the winter just as they would be in the spring. Lifting a hive to determine it's weight is not always going to indicate everything is okay inside the hive.

It is important to determine the location of the winter cluster and the amount of food near it. Even a hive of bees with surplus honey can die of starvation.

- I would suggest anyone wanting to start keeping bees to begin now!
- Winter is a perfect time to check out bee schools – January and February are favorite times for bee clubs to offer classes. But if you are interested, much can be found on the web.
- Check with local bee equipment dealers for books and information.
- Join a beekeeping organization close to you. State, regional and local organizations are available. They can be of more help than the internet. Beekeepers in those organizations can share local conditions and where to buy.
- Subscribe to The American Bee Journal or Bee Culture Magazine.
- Giving bee equipment for Christmas gifts may help take care of those people hard to buy for.



Many years ago, I went to a grocery store to buy about a ton of sugar. I ended up on the TV news because someone thought I might be using the sugar for making booze. A reporter and camera man followed me to one of my beeyards to see me feeding my bees. It made the news.

This photo illustrates an open hive 30° F getting some of that sugar. Feeding bees with granulated sugar has long been done. If poured onto newspaper, the bees chew thru the paper to get to the sugar.

But this picture also illustrates something unique in those areas where snow builds up on the top cover of hives.



The arrows point out that the snow on these top covers has melted. That is a sign that the hive is alive. Heat from the cluster below has melted the snow.

It was my practice to place granulated sugar above all hives during mid winter and follow up inspections would determine if the bees were using the sugar and if more was required, the hive would get more.

I also used fondant (my own formula of powdered sugar, some mini marshmallows, a little vegetable oil and water) made into patties. Fondant is also sold in grocery stores as a cake frosting but it is expensive and often contains other ingredients.

A populated hive of bees can be opened on almost any day you can work comfortably. Bees below the inner cover clearly indicate where the winter cluster is located. It does not take long to feed a hive. Note that I used what is called non-syrup foods. This is a system that allowed me to manage about 600 hives with low winter loss. I treated all hives the same way.



Since coming to North Carolina, I have rarely seen snow. But feeding is still required despite the fact that bees fly frequently on warm days. I started hearing about something called the mountain camp feeding method. Its advantage I was told -- it is simple:

A **newspaper** is placed over the top bars, just above the brood nest. Next, you add a feeder rim, then you dump dry granulated sugar on top of the paper. Moisture from the bees' respiration condenses on the sugar and makes it palatable for the bees.

This was similar to what I had been doing except it allowed for more sugar to be used because it uses a rim over which the inner cover is placed.



This is a photo I took of my friend, Keith McLaurin, feeding his bees during mid winter. This method puts the food exactly where the bees can get to it.

Please note that this is not emergency feeding – it is insurance against a hive starving during the winter season!

However, there are other methods that can be used.

Sugar Brick



[How to Make Homemade Sugar Bricks \(betterbee.com\)](http://betterbee.com) this link will help in how to make a sugar brick.

This is very easy to make and use. Just keep in mind that feeding is done above and over the bee cluster. Avoid any that allow sugar to drip or slide down on the bees. Newspaper is often used to support sugar placed on top bars.

Candy boards are also suggested but require a bit more effort to make up.



Outside feeding can also be done on warm days when bees are flying. Granulated honey, old comb with some honey in them, and even sugar can be provided for bees.

Any type of feeding is helpful to a well populated colony of bees. Many beekeepers think only of feeding colonies on the verge of starvation. Often they are late! Maybe too late.

And for those of you that saved frames of honey to feed bees during the winter. If possible avoid as much disturbance to the colony as possible when they are added.