



2025 Vol. 7
issue # 10

STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING NOTES FOR 2025

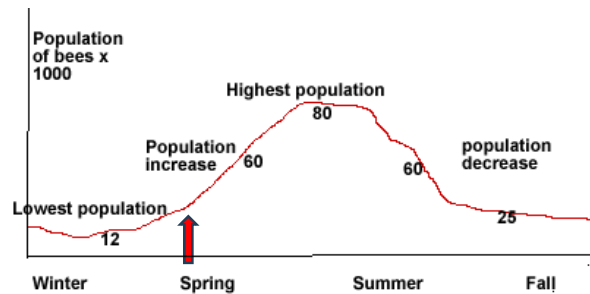
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Taking a Look at where we are in the 2025 Bee Season

- Years ending in 0 or 5
- Years ending in 1 or 6
- Years ending in 2 or 7
- Years ending in 3 or 8
- Years ending in 4 or 9

Blue is used for birth years ending in 0 & 5.



The year is still early and bees are building bee populations - Or they should be! Look around for plants blooming and that should give you a very good idea of management techniques beekeepers need to be considering. The appearance of dandelion and fruit trees in bloom should correspond with swarming season. It is time to start thinking about splits and hive increases. Keeping good records also plays an important roll in management. A strong colony of bees can be managed in a number of ways – depending on goals set early.

This is the time of the season we begin think about strong colonies and weak colonies.

Not all colonies if you have a few are going to be equal. There has been a long tradition in bee management for beekeepers to equalize colonies. Simply put, beekeepers took brood and honey from strong hives to give to weaker colonies – thus trying to make all colonies equal. As you should know, when asked by beekeepers for ideas and suggestions they will give you any number of different answers.

In my case, let me share my way. First identify colonies that are very weak.

The first question is how weak and how much honey is available to the colony. I have always been taught that weak hives are weak for a reason. The major reasons for a weak hive:

1. Hive management – this is the beekeeper’s responsibility. Good fall prep should have addressed any problems going into winter which includes food reserves. The condition of hive equipment, supplemental feeding, and large populations of bees are the major things before winter even begins.
2. Natural extreme weather conditions could contribute to weak hives and failing hives but honeybees have been known to survive below zero weather when food sources were stored in the area above the bees winter cluster. Heat rises and allows some movement upward for bees to move to honey. If the food is located beyond the distance bees can move to it, that could result in bee losses and maybe death to a colony.
3. Diseases are always a problem by cutting short the lives of bees in the winter cluster. Winter bees must have the energy to generate heat and live long enough for the new brood to build up a spring bee population.
4. I usually point the finger at queens. If a colony goes into the winter cluster with a large population of bees, food surplus, and a failing queen – bee populations diminish and eventually by spring, the bee population declines. When I was growing up, this was called spring dwindling. It is still a common problem.

What to look for:

Look for total bee populations in a hive. If the bee population is declining it most likely is a result of two possibilities – disease or the queen is failing.

What to do:

This is a weak colony of bees.



The weak colony It may have a queen or it might be queen-less but in my book it really doesn’t make any difference.

Compare the two photos

Would taking two frames from the strong hive help this weak hive? Not in my book. From experience and advice from C.C. Miller, adding brood to a colony with a poor queen **will not improve but will delay a colony’s demise-- At the expense of the strong colony.**

Strong colony



Can the weak hive be saved? My answer – One could move the few bees and a queen if she is present to a small nuc and **add bees** not brood. One easy way to add bees is to move the nuc into the location of a hive with a stronger population of flying bees. Moving the stronger hive would result in -- the stronger hive loses it’s foraging bees, not the house bees which are maintaining the future bee population. One then would find out for sure if the queen is able to lay eggs and bees enough to feed young larva into the coming bee season. **It would not take much time to determine if the queen was up to the job of producing more eggs – days not weeks.**

Now is the time – a critical time – to replace failing queens. The coming season to be successful depends entirely on a queens ability to produce some 50,000 to 75,000 worker bees at the time a honey flow arrives.

For new beekeepers [Not meant to discourage you but inform you about the realities of keeping bees]

I would like to borrow a statement from a 1970's beekeeper Ormond Aebi from a book written jointly with his father "The Art & Adventure of Beekeeping."

Bees are lovable little creatures but they are set in their ways and beekeepers must be able to quickly adjust his/her thoughts and actions to their changing moods and manners as the season progresses.

The Aebi's are world famous because they had bee fever! They held a world record for the most honey produced by a single hive of bees. Google "World Record for honey produced by a single hive of honeybees." The book is still a good read for a beginning beekeeper. It adds a great deal of understanding to anyone keeping bees.

They point out there are a number of **rules** for keeping bees. They concentrated on what they called the primary rule: **In all of our thinking and actions we must keep one step ahead of our bees.**

Keeping bees successfully depends upon the initial preparation and location of a hive. Bee school should prepare individuals to select equipment and teach the basic biology of the life cycle of the honeybees. However, the Aebi's were not all about equipment selection. They recognized even in the 1970's that **where bees were kept** determined the success one would have keeping bees. I took an economics course in college and learned something about the "law of diminishing returns".

Successful beekeeping is not only having the right equipment, following the prescribed methods of keeping bees, and spending the time plus labor, medication and everything else, it is based on where the bees are kept! Thus, beekeeping is based on having the knowledge to know where bees are placed. I am not talking about back yard locations. Lets think that gold is very valuable. Ask yourself – If you were located in the middle of a desert – which would be more valuable (water or gold)? What is **of value** to bees?

Keeping honeybees in a dense, highly populated area with limited nectar and pollen sources and other people keeping bees near by is challenging to your bees.

Why?

1. Diseases are spread quickly and practices by other beekeepers will in some cases result in your bees visiting their hives. This is called "robbing". Your bees will return to your hives with honey and possibly mites that hitch a ride. Or their bees might visit your hives!
2. All the bees within a fixed foraging area are competing with each other for pollen and nectar resources. Again "something called "the law of supply and demand" kicks in!

And add an irrate neighbor with a swimming pool, or one who insists on spraying pesticides or herbicides. Read **The Art & Adventure of Beekeeping** – check for it on line -- used books. The Aebi's have an interesting story in the book about a troublesome neighbor.