



STAHLMAN

BEEKEEPING NOTES FOR

2025

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Making Up Strong Splits

There are many ways to make up hive increases. Through-out my beekeeping days, I have always made-up splits to replace dead-out colonies. I must say I have been keeping bees for a long time and was influenced by being brought up in a commercial beekeeping family. Weak hives were of no value at all if one wanted to earn an income from keeping bees. C.C. Miller was a great influence on my grandfather E.J. Stahlman who was born shortly after the Civil War. Being the oldest born and a son, I was introduced to beekeeping very early in life. When growing up my role models were my father, and my uncle. I don't remember much about my grandfather – he died when I was 7. I was not asked if I wanted to be a beekeeper. I learned beekeeping by doing what I was told to do.

The lessons I learned were based on sound beekeeping principles. The idea that bees produced money was the key to survival for my family. Family history goes back to Jefferson County, Pennsylvania near the little village of Ringgold. There my great grandfather sired 8 children – four boys became beekeepers. By the late 1890's three of the four sons and a daughter who married a beekeeper scattered out to become commercial beekeepers. First moving to New York near West Berne where one of the boys (Wallace) went to work for Frank Boomhower of Gallupville, N.Y. My grandfather the youngest of the boys followed a few years later and by the early 1900's decided with his brother Dan to seek better foraging possibilities for their bees. My grandfather settled in Western Ohio while his brother Dan moved on to Idaho. Wallace stayed in New York near Gallupville.

I can remember always making up splits. More bees make more money! Thus, this is the way I was taught to grow hives and make money. As I grew older, I could see that C.C. Miller who died in 1920 had a great influence on how bees were managed.

First: Weak colonies were combined with stronger colonies early in the season. Once strong hives were identified the process to make splits began. The goal was to produce honey because pollination as we know it today was not profitable.

The steps are quite simple:

1. Strong hives with large foraging populations were identified. The reason behind the method we used – Strong hives can lose their foraging bees and recover their loss quickly in several weeks. No frames of brood or hive bees were removed from these strong hives. It was also not necessary to find the queens. A colony of young worker bees and a queen with a lot of brood can easily be moved to a new location.
2. The location of that strong hive is important because all of its foraging bees will return to that exact location.
3. A bottom board and an empty deep super are then placed on the exact spot. Returning bees quickly enter the hive.
4. The frames to be put into the box will be taken from other colonies of bees in the bee yard.
5. Rather than splitting colonies, this method takes only one frame of brood with bees (frames need to be checked so queens are not moved) from a colony of bees and does not reduce its ability to gather nectar because its foraging bees remain with the colony. One other advantage is it helps relieve congestion in hives that could swarm.
6. The hives that give up one frame of brood are called donor/feeder hives.
7. Miller used a 9-day rotation to make up new hives. Every 9 days he could make up a new hive as long as he had 9 feeder hives and a strong hive that could be moved.

On a smaller scale one could make up strong nucleus hives from 4 strong colonies every nine days using only four frames in each cycle. Usually, in making up nucleus hives or colonies, a frame with foundation is added to give the bees something to work.

A hive body set up is needed to receive frames from the feeder hives! Each colony gives up only one frame.



Let me warn that when hive numbers are increased, the labor to manage bees is also increased. One needs equipment and once under way, supers will be needed as well.

The major issue is queens. As explained in last week's issue, it takes time for bees to raise a new queen and replace older bees that die. That is the reason many new nucleus colonies are sold in late May and early June.

Using this method could result in increasing 9 colonies of bees to 56 as was accomplished by C.C. Miller in one season and described in his book *50 Years Among the Bees*. The method used by my grandfather was not as complicated as Miller describes his method. Miller was concerned about building queen cells at one location from eggs laid by his best queen.

Note: 9 frames of brood from 9 separate individual queens results in the possibility that there will be a lot of diversity among the queens raised by each colony. The best way to solve that problem would be to buy queens from an established breeder with a good line of stock and introduce them at the time a new colony is established.

Two weeks ago, I published a list of items I called trouble. I notice this week that I was seeing wax moths in stored honey comb – no evidence of worms or tunnels in the comb yet.

Robbing is also an issue since bees are having a hard time finding nectar in our area (Raleigh, North Carolina). I am adding robbing screens to my hives. Strong hives defend themselves well against bees looking for a hand-out. Weak hives on the other hand need protection. Reduce entrances in very weak hives to a space that allows no more than several bees at a time to enter the hive. Standard entrance reducers usually allow an inch or just little larger which stronger colonies need. Watch for yellow jackets and bald-faced hornets trying to get into your hives. And a new pest – the Yellow-Legged Hornet is going to be a big problem in those states where they will eat and kill honeybees.



The material is direct from the USDA web site. Report any sighting to your state department of Agriculture. This is a new pest that has appeared in Georgia and is spreading to other states.

[Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Yellow-Legged Hornet

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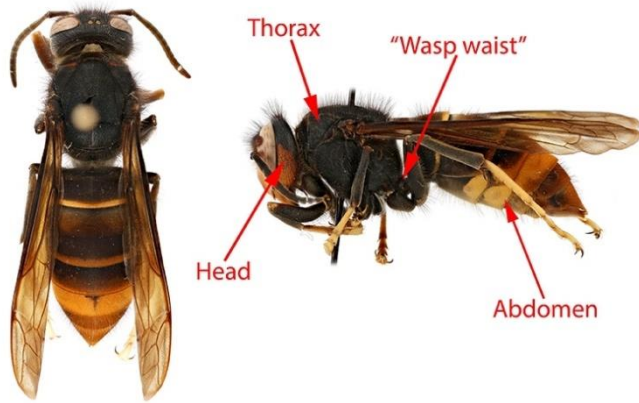
*The yellow-legged hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is a social wasp species that constructs nests above ground made from paper-like materials. These nests can be found hanging in trees and on structures such as barns, garages and sheds. Nests can be large and contain up to 6,000 workers.*

Yellow-legged hornets feed on a variety of insects, including honeybees. If allowed to establish in the United States, these invasive pests could threaten populations of domestic and feral honey bees – some of which are already

endangered – and other native pollinators. Their presence could also disrupt the pollination of many crops.

What To Look For

The yellow-legged hornet is not native to the United States, but it can be mistaken for a few domestic species. Take a look below at its distinctive markings. Then review images of the look-alike species side by side with the yellow-legged hornet in the "Yellow-Legged Hornet Look-Alikes" section. These other species are more likely to be found in the United States and do not pose a significant environmental or agricultural threat. In fact, some of these look-alikes can be beneficial pollinators.



Body length

- From 0.7 to 1 inch long

Coloration

- **Head:** Mostly black with some front-facing yellow or orange and black eyes
- **Thorax:** Mostly solid dark brown or black
- **Abdomen:** Alternating bands of dark brown or black and yellow or orange
- **Legs:** Brown or black near the body, ending in yellow segments

Yellow-legged hornets have a "wasp waist" between the thorax and abdomen.

Report Plant Pests and Diseases

Have you seen this pest or signs of pest damage? Immediately report your findings.

[Find your State plant regulatory official](#)