

Merrimack Valley Beekeepers Calendar

Perform hive inspection every Month April - October

January

- Attend the January MVBA meeting
- Keep entrances clear of ice and snow
- Heft hives for stores
- Feed candy or granulated sugar if needed
- Repair and assemble equipment

February

- Attend the February MVBA meeting.
- Check the status of your hive. It's okay to remove the top cover and inner cover to inspect. You'll be able to tell where the bees are clustered. You can move frames around so the frames with honey are near the cluster. But NEVER physically disturb the cluster. (The bees may come out to say Hi!) Once your inspection is complete, button the hive back up.
- The queen has begun, or will shortly, to lay eggs. Make sure there is enough food available for the hive, especially newly hatched bees. They are very hungry and will go through food quickly.
- Check the hives for weight of stores. If they are light add granulated sugar or fondant on inner cover and watch to see if the bees are taking it in. If they are not, remove the inner cover, find the cluster, install a super spacer and put some fondant right over the cluster.
- Order package bees for April or May delivery
- Redistribute remaining stores if needed
- Clean hive entrance and surroundings

March

- Attend the March MVBA meeting
- Feed dry sugar or fondant (bee candy) if stores are low
- When weather warms up feed 1:1 Sugar Syrup
- May feed pollen substitute (pollen patties) to increase brood production
- Queen is starting to lay eggs, double-check there is food for the new brood!
- Confirm that the entrance is clear. Clear away any dead-bee accumulation.
- Check for dead-outs.
- Final check for clean and repaired equipment for the coming season.

April

- Attend the April MVBA meeting
- Remove hive wrap
- Prepare hives for new bees
- Install package bees
- At dandelion bloom, reverse brood supers and flip inner cover

May

- Attend the May MVBA meeting
- Check brood pattern for diseases and swarm cells
- Divide strong colonies -- watch for swarms

June

- Attend fabulous summer MVBA meeting
- Add supers as needed for nectar flow
- Continue to watch for swarming
- Do a mite count

July

- If there is capped honey in supers to extract, extract! When the super or supers you have are full, add another super for the bees to work. Replacing “wet” supers back onto the hive will allow the bees time to repair and refill them.
- Inspect for diseases and mites
- Check stored equipment for wax moths
- Check colonies for your queen’s production signs and re-queen if queenless or if she is laying a poor pattern.

August

- Place extracted supers on hives for “licking”
- Requeen, if planned or necessary, during nectar flow

September

- Attend the September MVBA meeting
- Install mouse guards and use entrance reducers to keep out mice
- Flip inner covers to “winter mode”
- Continue checking hives for diseases. If found, treat immediately, PER INSTRUCTIONS ON BOX. **Remember:** NEVER TREAT A HIVE WHEN IT HAS HONEY SUPERS. ALWAYS REMOVE HONEY SUPERS FIRST, AND THEN TREAT. (2012 Addendum – There is only one exception to this rule – Mite-Away Quick Strips (MAQS))
- Check stored equipment/wax for wax moth. If evidence of wax moth is found, exposing the frames to air and sunshine will eradicate the problem.
- Store empty supers and hive bodies which have drawn comb with Para dichlorobenzene (moth balls without naphtha). **Remember:** No Naphtha). The Para repels the wax moths.
- Check honey stores in brood and honey chambers. If the hive is light (Lift/ back side of hive. 80# for 2 deeps or 3 mediums are good weights), you’ll want to plan to feed with sugar/water mixture. BUT feed after fall flowers have passed. There will be some late-season harvesting by the bees; thistle, asters, golden rod are coming in. After the late season flowers have passed, add the feed.
- If there is honey to extract in supers, extract! Make sure all cells are capped. When the supers are full, remove and if there are proper stores, consider adding another super for the bees to work.
- Don’t tempt robber bees with exposed honey. When you remove your honey supers from the hive, keep them covered as you collect them. Once bees start robbing, it is very difficult to stop them from robbing from other hives. Plus, it will keep the yellow jackets at bay a little easier.

October

- Attend the October MVBA meeting.
- Install mouse guards if you didn’t last month.
- Add grease patties – recipe on website mvbee.org “links” tab
- Feed 2:1 Sugar Syrup

November - December

- Attend the November & December MVBA meetings.
- Tilt the back-end of the hive up / front-end down to assist water drainage from bottom board.
- Consider wrapping the hive with tarpaper. This will help keep the hive warm and reduce wind infiltration.
- Consider adding a top insulation board. Make sure the slot is facing the frames, and the outlet is facing the front of the hive. Ensure the top extension cover is pulled forward to allow the bees to enter/exit.
- Put weights on the top cover to weigh it down.
- Make needed equipment repairs
- Leave the bees alone.

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