

RE-QUEENING COLONIES DURING SUMMER

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The re-queening of colonies, or replacing of queens by younger ones has been much discussed. Some of our large producers have advocated the replacing of queens every two years. One of our western leading bee-keepers has even advised and practiced re-queening, that is, removing the queen to compel the bees to rear another, and thus making an interruption in the breeding. When this method was recommended, I wondered if it was possible to follow such a method and succeed. My view is that bees need their queen at all seasons. It is true that they need her less in the summer, after the crop is over, than in the Spring, before the crop begins, but the depletion of bees by colonies in the summer is so prompt, that there is need of constant refilling of the ranks by new additions, though they need not be so numerous. So I felt that this was a move in the wrong direction.

Later, I had occasion to meet the person in question and to inquire as to the success of his idea, and he acknowledged that it was not satisfactory, though in his opinion this lack of success was due to the conditions of the crop and dates of the harvest of honey. But I doubt very much if any conditions can be found that will justify a killing of queens to compel the bees to rear others, thereby losing some 20 odd days of breeding. In addition to this loss there is also a risk of the loss of some of the young queens. In fact we can safely calculate on losing about ten per cent. that will either be lost in their wedding flight or that will prove worthless. To eliminate good queens that may prove still

good for another year, and run the risk of having a part of them, at least, repaced by worthless ones, is a mistake.

It is also a mistake to re-queen hives that have good prolific queens, just because they are two years old. If the bees did not usually change their queens by rearing another as soon as they notice that she is failing in her laying, there would be good excuse, for such an action, but there is no doubt that the bees do change their queens whenever they lessen their breeding, and it is only in exceptional cases that a colony allows itself to run down because its queen has entirely lost her fecundity. Those who clip their queens' wings have noticed how often these queens are replaced without the knowledge of the apiarist. If this were not the case, an apiary in which no queens were replaced artificially would soon dwindle down to nothing.

But it is advisable and even necessary to replace queens when there are evident signs of lack of prolificness. In my experience extending over nearly 40 years, with several apiaries, I have noticed that the bees are less likely to replace a queen that is only of very moderate prolificness, but whose capacity is unchanged; that is a queen that from the first has been of but little value, than to change a queen which has been all her life vigorous and begins to fail. Our attention must therefore be directed to the naturally inferior queens—to those colonies that have given but little crop. It matters but little whether the queen looks bright, if she has not filled her combs with eggs she should be condemned, and looks should not be considered. Not only must those queens be changed, but the bees must not be allowed to rear others of same blood. Too often our bee-keepers have paid attention to the looks of the bees rather than to their working qualities.