

Forced or Artificial Swarming

I notice that of late there is considerable interest in shook, brushed, or what is my opinion, more properly speaking, artificial swarming. I think it was 8 or 9 years ago that I stated in this journal how I practiced artificial swarming by removing all the brood; and that this was the only method that would stop natural swarming, if the swarming fever had been contracted; or in other words, if a colony had started queen cells with the intention of swarming. In such cases I found that if a single comb of brood was left, that they would often swarm just as soon as they could construct or start new cells.

I had practiced artificial swarming for some years before mentioning the matter in print, and, each year since, I have artificially "swarmed" from one to two hundred colonies. I state this simply that it will be known that I have had a good deal of experience in the matter, and this method, that I have practiced so many years, is practical and identically the same so far as results is concerned as the brushed or shook method that is attracting attention of late. For, of course, it can make no difference, so far as results are concerned, whether the bees are shook, brushed or jarred of the combs. There are, however, a good many things about this method and perhaps I should say about any method, of artificial swarming that do make a very big difference in results so far as the crop is concerned, and if there is any difference about our pursuit that requires skill and judgment, as well as a thorough understanding of one's locality in respect to the time and length of its honey-flow, it is artificial swarming

practiced in such a way that as good a crop will be secured as would be had if natural swarming were allowed.

One that practices artificial swarming should thoroughly understand queen-rearing, for, with artificial swarming artificial queen-rearing must be practiced; and unless good queens are reared, the apiary will very soon degenerate. I know that as many have described the method in print the whole matter of artificial swarming is so simple that it may be successfully practiced by a novice. But one who has had a large, actual and long extended experience in the matter can see by reading between the lines of much that has been written on this subject, that the writers have had but limited experience in the matter. In saying this I do not wish to be understood as questioning the veracity of any one who has written about this. What I mean is, that they might practice the same method the next season with entirely different results.

I am also aware of the fact that many who have had a large experience in the matter have given us much that is of great value on the subject. I would like, though, to call attention to the very important fact that in this matter of artificial swarming, locality is one of, if not the most important, things to be considered. For instance, one prominent writer, some time ago, in one of our bee journals (I do not remember which) advocated giving the artificial swarms full sets of drawn combs instead of empty frames. Now, let me briefly describe how that works in my locality:

The first surplus flow here is from white clover. This usually commences to yield about the first of June, but, of course, more or less according to the season. Very few colonies swarm naturally or are strong enough to swarm artificially until the flow