

Hints for Beginners

R. F. HOLTERMANN

Bees should be packed by the 15th of October if they are to be left on their summer stands. How many neglect this work, bees are left to themselves and with consequent loss to their owner and positively cruelty to the bees. A society for the prevention of cruelty to animals will be quite active in prosecuting a man who ties up a horse, cow, dog or even cat, and lets it starve to death or otherwise abuses such a creature, but we hear of no case where a bee-keeper is brought to task for starving his bees or otherwise fails to provide in a reasonable way for these creatures who are in intelligence above them all.

The man or woman who would spurn to be unkind to any other creature neglects the bees and leaves them as helplessly to starve to death as if the horse were tied to the crib and no food given. Let us look at things as they are and not deceive ourselves. If we will not provide winter stores and protection let us butcher the bees or dispose of them. Feeding may yet during warm nights be given, and the bees will take it up. Let the food be warm, 90 degrees will do, or so our finger can be put into the syrup without actually burning.

Packing.

As to packing, the hive contents want to be kept warm and dry. Some predict a winter such as the last, it may prove so, but it is not likely any person really knows. The safe way

is to always provide for the worst. The packing box makes but little difference so long as it will contain enough packing between the hive proper and the packing box. Next it must keep out the moisture and also (a very important point) let out moisture which is given off by the bees. Forest leaves, cork dust, planer shavings, chaff, all dry, are preferred by me in the order of naming. Chaff draws mice and it is more likely to mould. Six inches below the hives, with six or eight inches at the sides and eight or ten inches at the top should be ample. Pack not too closely, and not too tight, just moderately firmly. The work of the top packing should be to retain heat in the hive, but to allow a little to pass through and carry with it the moisture from the bees, if the moisture escapes from the entrance in cold weather it is apt to condense and even freeze. This is dangerous. Passageways for communication between the clusters is natural, bees left to themselves so build their comb that the cluster can expand and contract without going around comb. In our modern system of bee-keeping with straight and even comb this advantage cannot be secured without cutting passage-ways in the comb. The next best thing is to lay sticks across the top of the frames to allow the bees to pass between the top quilt and the top bars of the frame. There should be small openings under the cover to allow moisture to escape from the case. The size of entrance is a disputed question. Jacob Alpaugh of Galt, who wintered outside with perfect success last year, gives a three-inch wide entrance then closes this all but one-half inch with cardboard, not very thick, the bees can then gnaw away the cardboard if they feel so inclined. So packed bees should winter well.

Brantford, Ont.

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