

BEE PASTURE

BAD WINTERING IN PACKING CASES

Mr. Leon C. Wheeler, of Michigan, Gives His Experience

Dr. C. C. Miller in the April number (page 125), makes a little correction on one of my illustrations in the article (page 92), where I spoke of the difference in the time of setting out of the colonies in his location and mine. Your correction is accepted, Doctor, but as to the blooming of the soft maples, they are so scarce an article in this neighborhood go by.

And now I shall have to admit that, although part of the bees I am working were wintered in the cellar, I have never wintered by own there. I wintered 62 colonies in chaff hives, etc., this winter. Well, now, I didn't intend when I started this to write more than a line or so, but I must tell you my experience this winter.

Twenty-eight colonies were wintered in chaff hives, with absorbant cushions; no sealed covers for me, E. R. Root's experiences notwithstanding. Of these twenty-eight colonies, every one is alive in spring. One, however, the mice got to and gave them such a bad racket that there are only bees enough to cover the frame or a little more. Of the rest nearly all cover from seven to ten frames (April 26).

Two colonies wintered in a large double-ended hive I was experimenting with last summer died. This hive did not have chaff packing. Thirty-two colonies in single-walled hives were wintered as follows:

I took enough lumber and made a box three feet wide; covered this with boards two inches deep, having first put a layer of building paper next the boards. The front, back and ends were next put on, lined on the inside with paper, and leaving a space of four or five inches between the sides and the hives, which were set on the straw, in the bottom. Entrances were cut in the front of each

hive, about three inches from the bottom. These entrances were made $\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ ", and there, I believe, is where I made a mistake, for I believe they were too small. The front side was made six inches higher than the back, and a cover was built over all and covered with roofing. These were well packed in straw, chaff, etc., and when spring came, and I saw the way those bees came tumbling out of those hives every warm day, I commenced to make my plans to drop the more troublesome chaff hive entirely and winter all my bees in these "tenement hives," as I call them. I decided to leave them in the packing till they were nearly ready for the honey flow, as they would probably do so much better with the protection. After a while I began to notice they were not making so much of a showing as my chaff hives, but laid it to the heavier packing, and that the sun therefore did not affect them so much. Lately they were so noticeably quiet I commenced to smell a rat, so I made an examination. What was my surprise and disappointment to discover several colonies dead entirely and the others rapidly running down. All had plenty of honey; straw, packing, etc., was dry and bright; their stores were fine sealed combs of white honey, and yet nearly every colony showed bad signs of dysentery. Thinking the entrances might have been clogged, I examined them, but found them all open. I shall probably be able to save about half of them.

I notice I didn't mention it, but, of course, entrances were bridged. Now, if some of our friends who winter out-of-doors can tell me wherein I made my mistake, I shall be very thankful.

The only place I can see where they did not have practically the same conditions as the chaff hives was the small entrances. Was this the trouble? I can hardly see any reason why it should be.

LEON C. WHEELER.

Barryton, Mich.

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