

HOME APIARY IMPROVEMENT AND HONEY PRODUCTION

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In our Association meetings much time is given to discussing the problems of the advanced bee-keeper, and they are many. This is justifiable and helpful but we wish to present a topic of importance in the interests of the home apiary and the small honey producer. We know that bees, as generally kept, are not as profitable as they might be, and many persons are missing the benefits of their excellent products. Some one may say that if every person kept bees there would be no sale for honey, and thus the expert bee-keeper would not be justified in continuing in the business. However, this is to be compared with the poultry industry, in which a great many persons are interested for the sake of producing enough eggs and poultry for their own home needs, and there is abundant opportunity for success by the extensive or commercial poultryman; yet we do not advocate the keeping of bees by all persons, as such a measure is impractical. We wish to say a few words that may help the ordinary small bee-keeper who may have a few colonies, and who may be obtaining only discouraging results from them.

To obtain better results one should first make a study of the causes of failure, or of poor results. Among such causes in the home apiary, we may enumerate the following:

1. Lack of modern hives, and the attendant loss from undetected, queenless condition of colonies, unchecked bee-moths, bee diseases, inability to introduce new queens, remove drone comb, etc.
2. Loss by absconding swarms.
3. Failure to provide winter stores by fall feeding.
4. Failure to make proper winter protection.
5. Failure to practice stimulative feeding in the spring.
6. Failure to keep individual hive records.
7. Failure to select queens and drones for propagation.
8. Failure to introduce really good queens.
9. Failure to give the bees prompt attention at the proper time.

10. Failure to keep up to present times and keep bees in modern methods by reading journals on bee-keeping, and by attending the meetings of bee-keepers.

Let us briefly discuss each of these in turn, as an indication of how the apiary may be improved in consideration of the respective topics:

1. Lack of modern hives.—If I were reduced to only two implements in successful bee-keeping, one should be a modern hive with moveable frames, and the other should be a smoker. Without the latter the bees cannot be controlled, any more than a horse can be managed without lines, and without a modern hive it is impossible to see what is taking place, and remedy an evil as soon as it occurs. For example, the colony may become queenless and finally perish from lack of a queen, and their condition may not be detected in the old box hive until it is quite too late. The larva of the bee moth may be doing considerable damage in a box hive, with no external evidence of such trouble, and consequently it will be unchecked, while in a modern hive its presence could be detected and it could be destroyed. Drone comb can be seen and destroyed, or inserted, as desired, in the proper hive. The evidences of disease of bees may be seen at once in a modern hive, and such treatment can be given that will effect a cure, while with an old-style box hive, nothing is to be recommended for a diseased colony of bees besides consuming it entirely by fire, or transferring and treating in a modern hive. Queen introduction is very easy with modern hives, as the undesired queen can be found and removed before introducing the new one, and, in fact, most successful apicultural practice is made possible only by the use of a modern hive.

2. Loss by Absconding Swarms.—We find in Pennsylvania that this is a serious source of loss to some bee-keepers. Not only does the owner lose the value of the bees, but also by permitting swarms and the reduction of the number of bees in the hive, he loses considerable honey that would otherwise be produced. This can be avoided by clipping the wings of the queen and providing a board, reaching to the ground, for her return to the hive in case she should leave it; or better, by the use of a modern queen cage. Also by