

Hints For Beginners

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QUEENS—HOW TO FIND THEM—HOW TO INTRODUCE

To the beginner inexperienced in bee-keeping, yes, and to many bee-keepers of long experience, the task of looking for and finding the queen is looked forward to with dread. Many give up the attempt in despair and others avoid any manipulation which would entail the finding of the old queen. This is particularly true if the bees have a strong dash of the common black bee in them. A few plain rules carefully followed will lighten this work very much.

This season we went through some 350 stocks of bees, some crowded colonies on twelve combs and clipped every queen requiring clipping and saw the queen in every hive. Some of the work was done after fruit bloom was over and at a time when the bees were strongly inclined to rob. Only in two cases was the process of "combing" the bees resorted to and in one of these the queen was not seen, was in some way lost in the handling. To emphasize the way in which a queen should be looked for, it may be well to state how it is sometimes done. The bee-keeper gets the smoker well charged early in the morning or late in the evening when the bees are all in the hive, he gives several strong puffs of smoke in the entrance, then roughly removes the cover perhaps accidentally giving the hive or stand a knock with his foot and then removes the honey board or quilt, again applying heavy doses of smoke, a frame is then taken out and frame by frame

carefully examined making sure (?) that the queen is not on the first comb before passing to the next. If the bees become active sharp quick puffs are given until with a roar the bees disappear from the scene down between the combs. Well, this is an excellent way to not find a queen. The system we adopt is to try as far as we can to hunt queens when most of the bees are in the fields but having found and clipped eighty queens in a day we of course could not confine ourselves to the middle of the day. The operators walk up to the hive in which the queen is to be found the cover is removed very quietly, next the quilt little by little gently smoking the bees and never giving sharp and violent puffs to drive the bees. Especially is this true with black and hybrids, one strong puff and one roar of fright and the entire stock is disorganized. Our object is to examine the stock with the least amount of disturbance and to, if possible, only let the bees down in the hive know the hive is being manipulated as we come to them. So done, every comb is in order with bees spread over the comb as we come to them. We remove the comb the nearest to one side which can readily be taken out, preferably an outside comb. I have two students, I sit on one side, they on the other, the comb is withdrawn they examine one side I the other, instead of spending a long time over one comb, we cast a rapid and sweeping glance over the comb and then turn the comb over so each party gets a look at both sides; the comb is then left out of the hive and the next taken and so on until two or three combs have been left out of the hive when there is room enough for the operator sitting at the side of the hive having the opening to glance down into the hive to see if the queen is on the side of the comb which has

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