

COUNTRY BIRD & GARDEN



OLD STAGE HONEY

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Varroa Mite Checks Essential for Survival

As winter beings in Central Jersey, mites continue to be public enemy number one in the bee community, killing bees outright, vectoring disease and weakening bees so that they are susceptible to other diseases or adverse conditions. The trick is to have them in peak condition by September, to help insure they survive the winter.

Mite checks must be done in the late summer, early fall and spring. The alcohol wash is the most accurate, but if you are put off by killing half a cup of bees per hive, there are alternatives. There is the powdered sugar roll, but that can be time consuming, though it does not kill bees. Both of these methods are preferred by experts over the method I use; counting the mites that fall onto the sliding bottom board closure.

Tips for using a sliding closure in you screened bottom board:

- You need to scrape the slider clean on a regular basis. There is a screen above the sliding closure, and since this prevents the bees from getting to the slider underneath it, the bees cannot clean it.

- If this is the only method you are using to check for mites, you should be casually looking for mites on your slider every week or two in addition to your spring, summer and fall "official" mite check since mite drop can vary.

- Grease your slider with Vaseline, or your mites may blow away or ants may carry them off for snacks, leading you to believe you have fewer mites than you actually have.

There are upsides and down-

sides, to the sliding closure mite check method:

Downsides: An accurate mite check requires two visits to the hive, first on day one to scrape the slider clean, then return the next day for a mite count. If you see 5-10 or more mites on the bottom board over that 24 hour period, you should address the mite problem.

Upsides: You do not have to kill any bees as in the alcohol wash, and you do not have to risk accidentally dumping the queen in your alcohol or powdered sugar wash.

Also, checking the sliding bottom board for mites is faster and less invasive than opening the hive and scooping bees out for the wash.

Finally, you can remove the slider completely during the hot weather to take ad-



Oxalic Acid Vaporizer

vantage of this IPM method of reducing mite loads, and put the slider in during cold weather for increased weather protection.

Note: An exciting development in mite treatment is the Oxalic Acid Vaporizer, approved for use in bee hives by President Obama. In 3 minutes, when outdoor temperatures are at least 40F, you can kill all the mites not hidden in larvae. This makes it most effective when larvae are not present, in this area late Dec through Jan. ~

Tips for Using Honey at Home

You may have heard these tips, and if so, pass them along to your friends:

- Store honey in a warm area, like a kitchen cupboard. It is not necessary to refrigerate honey. Cool honey tends to crystallize.

- Over time, honey tends to crystallize, especially as the jar becomes less full, also known as more "headspace"

in the jar. If your honey does crystallize, place the glass jar in one or two inches of water in a pot on the stove on the lowest possible flame. Leave it there for about 30 minutes or until the honey assumes its natural consistency.

- Never microwave your jar of honey. Honey comes to a boil really fast in a microwave, destroying some of its

health properties.

- Honey jars get sticky no matter how hard you try. When wiping off the rim of a jar of honey, be careful to get no water in the jar, not even a drop. Water can ruin your honey.

- Always use a clean spoon when getting honey out of your jar. A dirty utensil can contaminate your honey and cause it to go bad.

- Never give honey, raw or

cooked, to an infant 1 year old or younger since a baby's immature digestive system may not tolerate it and may cause them to become ill.

- You can substitute honey for sugar in most recipes, but adjust the amount since honey is twice as sweet as sugar.

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