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SUMMER MANAGEMENT

By Eva Crane

Summer management centres round the problems of decreasing the number of swarms and increasing the yield of honey. Many methods of swarm control have been found successful by their sponsors. Taranov shakes the whole colony (before swarming takes place) on to a sloping board set up in front of the hive entrance but separated from it by 4 in.; the potential swarm clusters under the board and can be hived separately, while the non-swarming bees fly across the gap back into the hive. Frau Paschke describes how the building-frame can prevent swarming, and Blumenhagen recommends an elaboration with two building frames, in which comb can be built and cut out alternately. Shepherd uses a tube leading from the upper of two (separated) brood chambers which contains most of the brood, to just outside the hive entrance, so that the flying bees are continually drained from the upper chamber to the lower one. Mrs. Colthurst recommends the use of a nucleus by the side of each hive, which can later be united back to the parent colony if desired. In England a first attempt has been made to obtain an objective evaluation of selected methods of management, and crop reports give some information about current practice. In the counties studied only about half the bee-keepers reporting used any method of swarm control; the number using more than a single brood chamber for the brood nest of any of their colonies varied between 36 and 70 per cent.

One problem which puzzles most beginners who try to follow a recommended method of management is how to know when each operation should be carried out. Studies have been made in Czechoslovakia which enable the flowering dates of the hazel, cherry and false acacia to be used as guides; studies with similar aims have also been made in Scotland and France. The building-frame is another, more direct, guide to the timing of operations.

The use of larger units than the normal hive with one queen heading a colony is always attractive to some bee-keepers, but in general it seems to be profitable only under special circumstances. Given long hot summers and ample flows, the use of skyscraper hives can be very successful, but it can be disastrous in an unfavourable

season. In Canadian experiments, honey yields were consistently higher (over a nine-year period) from two-queen colonies than from those with only one queen, and in U.S.A. double packages gave higher yields than single ones. In France a system using a double horizontal hive has been recommended, and in Poland a doubling system with an officially sponsored hive. In Russia, systems allowing the use of a second queen, in either a double brood chamber or a long hive, are advocated, and multiple-queen colonies have been much studied recently.

Canadian experiments showed that putting fresh supers directly above the brood chamber instead of adding them at the top (which is easier) did not increase the honey yield, and the use of wire queen excluders was not detrimental to it; other experiments, in which different proportions of drawn comb and foundation were used, showed that a limited number of new combs could be drawn without seriously affecting the honey crop. In Minnesota package bees gave less honey than over-wintered colonies, but double packages (one above the other, each with a queen) gave high yields. Accounts have been published of methods claimed to be successful for requeening a laying-worker colony, for uniting colonies in a cold winter, for transporting bees in unventilated boxes, and for removing the honey crop with the aid of carboric acid; a large-scale investigation of drifting (on 1,000 colonies) leads to recommendations for preventing it.

Migratory bee-keeping is practised in many countries, but it reached its climax in Australia, where two bee-keepers moved 1,600 hives more than 2,400 miles for flows lasting six to nine months. In the Punjab (India) regular migration between the plains, foothills and higher hills has been found profitable; and in South Africa, migration to the aloes. In Germany migration to specific flows is common and profitable, and much thought is given to the design of movable bee-houses. In Denmark the clumsiness of the hives commonly used has discouraged migratory bee-keeping, but a special migratory hive has now been designed and should open up opportunities for gathering larger harvests. English experiments show how greatly the distance of the hive from the crop can affect the yield.

Methods of management have been described which aim not only at honey production (including comb honey), but also at the production of wax—in the Pyrenees using the sweet-chestnut flow, in Russia and in U.S.A.—and of bee venom in southern Germany. Specialisation is considered essential.

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