

JULY TO-DO LIST



1. Harvest Honey

- **Pull supers:** Remove and extract your honey supers once the main nectar flow ends.
- **Do not over-harvest:** Leave at least one full super of honey on the hive so your bees have food to eat during the late summer lull.

2. Check for Varroa Mites

- **Test:** Mite levels peak in late summer. Use a powdered sugar roll or an **alcohol wash** to count your mites.
- **Treat:** If mites exceed safe levels, treat your hive immediately. You must treat before winter bees are raised so your colony stays healthy.

Why July Counts Matter

- **Winter Bee Protection:** In late summer, bees begin raising the generation that must survive all winter. Mites feed on these baby bees, weakening them. A high mite count in July means your winter bees will be born sick or have a shorter lifespan.
- **Exponential Growth:** Mite populations grow much faster than bee populations. A small mite count in July can easily explode into a deadly infestation by September.
- **Viral Spread:** Varroa mites spread dangerous viruses (like Deformed Wing Virus) from bee to bee. The more mites, the faster sickness spreads in the hive.

3. Beat the Heat

- **Provide water:** Bees get thirsty in the heat. Provide a water source (like a birdbath) and add rocks or sticks so the bees don't drown.
- **Monitor Sugar Levels:** If they are short on nectar, they may need sugar syrup (a 1:1 ratio) to survive the lean summer months.
- **Ventilate:** Ensure your hive has good airflow. You can crack the outer cover slightly if needed.

When to Feed Summer Pollen

You should **ONLY** supplement pollen in July if specific conditions are met:

- **Hot, Dry Weather:** High temperatures and drought can cause flowers to stop producing pollen.

- **Low Stored Pollen:** Open the hive and look at the brood frames. If less than half a frame contains multicolored stored pollen, your bees might need help.
- **No Foraging:** If you see very few bees carrying bright-colored pollen pellets back into the hive, natural sources are low.

Signs to Watch For

- **Empty Pollen Stores:** Look at the frames around the brood nest. If you see less than half a frame of multi-colored pollen, they are running low.
- **Ditching Drones:** Stressed, starving bees will force male bees (drones) out of the hive to save food.
- **Dragging Larvae:** You might see dead white bee larvae on the ground near the hive entrance.

Why New Hives Are at Risk

- **High Growth Demands:** New packages or nucleus colonies are growing fast and need a lot of protein to build comb and raise brood (baby bees).
- **No Stored Reserves:** Unlike established hives, new colonies have not had months to save up "bee bread" (stored pollen).
- **Brood Cannibalism:** If a hive runs out of protein, the nurse bees will stop feeding the larvae and may even eat them to save energy.

How to Feed Safely

If your hive **TRULY** lacks pollen, follow these steps to avoid pest problems:

- **Use Small Amounts:** Give the bees a small, soft pollen patty (about ½ to 1 pound) placed directly on the top bars of the frames.
- **Monitor Consumption:** Only give them what they can eat in 7 to 10 days.
- **Remove Leftovers:** If the bees do not eat the patty quickly, remove the rest. Old patties sitting in a hive are a breeding ground for hive beetles.

4. Prevent Robbing

- **Reduce entrances:** Late summer is a dry spell. Strong hives will raid weaker hives for honey. Use an **entrance reducer** to protect weak hives.
- **Avoid spilling:** Do not leave syrup or honey sitting out.
- **DO NOT DO OPEN FEEDING or front feeders.**

The Damp Sheet Method

Throw a lightweight wet towel or sheet over the entire hive.

- **Why it works:** The water evaporates to cool the hive and masks the sweet aroma of honey. It confuses the robbers but lets your resident bees come and go from underneath.
- **Action:** Leave the sheet on overnight, and re-wet it as needed.

Use a Robber Screen

- A robber screen places a mesh barrier over the main entrance, forcing the resident bees to exit through a hidden "back door" at the top.
- **Why it works:** Robber bees fly to the front of the hive where they smell the honey, but they cannot get in. They eventually give up and fly away.
- **Tool:** You can purchase pre-made screens or build your own using hardware cloth.

Block Cracks and Gaps

Inspect your hive for any cracks, broken seals, or loose lids.

- **Action:** Seal up all holes with tape, grass, or shims so the sweet smell does not leak out.

Create a Water "Rainstorm"

- Set up a lawn sprinkler near the hive being robbed to simulate rain.
- **Why it works:** Bees will not fly in heavy rain. This forces the robbers to return home and washes away spilled nectar or syrup.

Mask with Strong Smells

- Rub a strong-smelling, minty product (like Vicks VapoRub) on and around the entrance of the hive being attacked.
- **Why it works:** The camphor and menthol in the rub will temporarily destroy the robber bees' sense of smell, throwing them off the scent.

5. Check the Queen

- **Look for brood:** Check the hive to ensure your queen is still laying well. A strong pattern of eggs ensures your hive has enough young workers to get through the winter.
- **Requeen:** If the brood pattern is weak, it is the perfect time to buy and install a new queen.

Key Reasons to Requeen in July

- **Raises Strong Winter Bees:** After the summer solstice, a newly introduced queen lays heavily. This boosts the population with strong bees to survive the winter.
- **Replaces Aging Queens:** A queen older than two years may run out of stored sperm and lay unfertilized eggs.
- **Restores Hive Balance:** Older queens produce less pheromone, which can cause the colony to swarm or fail.
- **Better Availability:** Queens are easily purchased in the summer, often at better prices than in the crowded spring season

