

September To Do List

Your colony is raising winter bees right now. These are the fat-bodied, long-living bees that are being fed the last good pollen of the year. These are the ones that have to get the hive from November to March. There are three deadlines that decide what shape they arrive in:

Deadline	What has to happen
Winter-bee brood window (now → early October)	Mites verified under control while winter bees are capped brood
Last syrup date (~50°F daytime)	Stores topped up while the bees can still take and cure 2:1 syrup
Verification date (10–14 days post-treatment)	A mite wash proving the treatment actually worked

HiveSense.com

September is your first pre-winter inspections. The next will be in six weeks, which is October. Use this time to gather information and make minor tweaks to your hives. When you inspect in six weeks, you can make last minute corrections, if needed.

Inspect and look for:

A laying queen.

Eggs or young larvae present. September is the last practical month to fix queenlessness — after this, a queenless colony's only good outcome is being combined with a queenright one.

A tight fall brood pattern.

Smaller than July's, and that is normal — but it should be solid, not shot through with empty cells. This brood is your winter workforce;

a spotty pattern plus a high mite count is the classic sign of a colony that will not make it without help now.

Weak hives

Colonies need to have bees over at least 5 frames to survive the winter. Weak colonies need to be either overwintered and fed in a nucleus box (well insulated and in a wind break) or combined with strong colonies.

How-To Combine Hives

- Get a sheet of newspaper and cut 3-4 slits in it.
- The newspaper will allow the hives to combine with less fighting. The slits allow pheromones to be exchanged between the hives. The theory goes that the bees chew through the newspaper and will be integrated without fighting.
 - Identify the strong colony
 - Smoke and open the weak colony
 - Manipulate the frames so that you end up with a single hive body containing your best ten or eleven frames of bees, brood, and honey
 - Smoke and open the strong hive
 - Remove the lid and any supers and put a single sheet of newspaper on the top bars. Make a few holes in the newspaper.
 - Take the brood box from the weak colony and place it directly on top of the strong colony so that only the sheet of newspaper separates the two colonies
 - Add a feeder and fill it with sugar syrup
 - Check the hive in a week
 - The newspaper should have partially been chewed away and the two colonies united into one strong colony
 - Consolidating the frames back into a single or double brood box combination selecting the best frames of honey, pollen, and brood. If you are using a double brood box, frames with mostly brood go into the bottom box, and frames with mostly honey go into the upper box
 - Shake the bees off the surplus frames into the hive

Another way of winterizing a nuc box

To winter a nuc box over a strong hive, place a double-screen board between the strong lower colony and the upper nuc box so the nuc can benefit from the bottom hive's rising heat while keeping the two colonies physically separated.

How-To

- Position the strong hive: Ensure the main colony at the bottom is healthy, treated for mites, and heavy with honey stores for winter.
- Add a double-screen board: Place a specialized double-screen (or inner conversion board) directly on top of the strong hive's upper box. This board has a fine mesh screen that lets the warmth and some scent rise from the big colony without letting the two queens or worker populations fight.
- Place the nuc box: Set your nuc box right on top of the double-screen board.
- Configure the nuc entrance: Point the nuc's entrance/ventilation in the desired direction (often facing the same way or to the rear/side depending on the screen board design) so the nuc bees have their own separate flight path.
- Add top insulation: Place rigid foam insulation board and an inner/outer cover on top of the nuc box. Small overwintering spaces need heavy top insulation to stop condensation from dripping onto the cluster.
- Monitor food stores: Check that the nuc has enough honey frames or provide emergency fondant or sugar cake over a feeding shim if needed during a break in winter.

Food stores

- You need at least 6 frames of honey for the winter.
 - Feed colonies if needed by using a thick sugar syrup (2:1 sugar:water)

Two pounds of sugar to one pound of water gives the bees a thick syrup they can cure quickly with less fanning, in a month when cool nights make curing slow.

- Don't overfeed – you are aiming for spring balance to record a weight of 50 lbs by the end of October. Allow for the bees bringing in nectar from golden rod.
- **If you can lift it easily with one hand, it is light.**
- For those of you who are weighing your hive.
 - [🌐 Winter Feed Calculator – HiveSense](#)

Mite treatment and control

Entrances, Mouse Guards, and Robbing Season

Tilt the hive slightly forward so autumn rain runs out, not in.

Clean equipment prior to storage.

Store and protect equipment

Honey Bee Suite, Talking With Bees, Google Gemini, Hive Sense, Beekeeping with The Bee Whisperer, David Burns, Connecticut Beekeepers Association, Black Mountain Honey