



DUNFERMLINE AND WEST FIFE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

FEEDING BEES.

In general feeding should be undertaken at any time when there is a dearth of forage. The feed is generally administered as some form of sugar for energy but on some occasions it may be necessary to consider the provision of pollen or a substitute if there is a shortage of protein for the brood.

Autumn Feeding.

Most beekeepers in our area (Mid-east Scotland) should be thinking about feeding from mid August onwards unless the bees are at the heather. The objective should be to ensure that a full size colony of our dark bees go into the winter with at least 30lb of honey stored (preferably more). As a quick check you can calculate the stores available by examination - A full B.S. deep frame holds about 5 to 5½lb and a shallow 2½ to 3lb. You can do the arithmetic!

Feeding with sugar syrup is the normal method used at this time and a strong syrup made up from clean white granulated sugar and water in the ratio 2:1 w/v. For practical purposes you may find that a slightly weaker solution is better as there is a tendency for crystallization to occur in the feeder at low temperatures. If you add a generous 2.5 litres of hot water to 4 Kg of sugar and stir till the sugar is dissolved this will give you the correct solution.

Feeding can be by the use of a contact feeder (a small bucket with mesh or perforations in the lid) inverted over an empty container to catch the leakage which occurs until a partial vacuum has formed. Then place the inverted feeder over the feed hole in the crown board, add an (empty) super and then replace the roof.

Alternatively a rapid feeder such as the 2 litre round plastic type can be placed on the top of the crown board as above. (Don't forget to allow a small quantity of syrup dribble down the central hole to let the bees know it is there).

If you are unable to get the bees to take down sufficient stores in the early autumn it is best to consider feeding additional stores in the form of baker's fondant as the bees do not need to expend so much energy evaporating excess moisture and inverting the sucrose for use. This can be cut into blocks, placed in a plastic bag with an aperture cut in one side and placed aperture down over the bees as above.

Winter 'top-up'.

If after all of the above you find the bees running short of food in late winter or early spring then it is possible to add additional stores in the form of baker's fondant as above or sugar bags. Sugar bags are prepared for use by perforating one large side of the bag with half a dozen holes (a screwdriver or the corner of your hive tool will do the job) plunging the bag in a bucket of water for a few seconds and then placing perforated side down **directly on the top of the frames above the bees.**

'Candy', produced by boiling sugar syrup to 'soft ball' stage and adding acid, as is sometimes suggested is not recommended.

Spring & Stimulative feeding.



In the early spring it is sometimes considered good policy to give a stimulative feed to the bees to 'get them going' i.e. building up ready for the early flow from e.g. oilseed rape. This is normally supplied to the bees in the form of a light syrup feed. Make this up as 1Kg sugar to 1 litre water and feed as above. This concentration can also be used at any time through the season when there is a dearth of forage to avoid the bees 'shutting down' just before a further flow.

Pollen Substitute Feeding.

This can be purchased from some suppliers or made up by the beekeeper as follows:

Make up a dry mix consisting of 3 parts soybean flour, 1 part dried brewer's yeast powder and 1 part skimmed milk powder (all by weight). Mix thoroughly and add 2 pts strong syrup per 1 lb of the dry mix.

This is fed in the form of 'patties' approx 4 oz weight flattened down to about ¼ inch thick on sheets of stiff paper oiled with vegetable cooking oil. For a more detailed description see [SBA Data Sheet No. 09.](#)

Last – but not least – Water.

Don't forget that bees need water. In hot dry weather local 'natural' water supplies may well dry out causing your bees to travel long distances and expend energy un-necessarily. Less honey for you! Put out a dish or bowl with a float in and keep it topped up with water. A little salt added will make it more attractive to the bees.