

Kentuckiana Beekeeper's Association  
A Beginner's Guide To Monthly Hive Maintenance  
January – June

This guide is a very simplified version of the things that are going on in the hive during each month. This is to help you start thinking about what is going on, what you should be doing each month either in preparation for the season or to maintain healthy and productive hives. There is a lot of reference material which will give you much more in depth explanations and you are encouraged to read and learn as much as possible. Bees are fascinating and with a little preparation and investment of time you will enjoy a successful honey harvest!

### **January**

January is a quiet time in the hive, but is a good time for beekeepers to start thinking about their goals for the upcoming year. If your hives are thriving then right now your queen will be surrounded by thousands of workers in their winter cluster. There are no drones in the hive at this time. Some worker brood will begin to appear in the hive. If there is a warm day the bees might venture out to take a cleansing flight. This typically happens when the weather is around 45-50 degrees. There is not much work to do at the hives. If you have a heavy snow, make certain that the entrance to the hive is clear so the hive will receive proper ventilation.

### **February**

February is another quiet month in the hive. The queen will begin to lay eggs. There are still no drones in the hive, so only the females are present. Workers will continue to take cleansing flights on warmer days. This is a good time for the beekeeper to start looking at equipment that may need repairs, replace tools, attend meetings, order packages or nucs and start planning for the new season.

### **March**

March is the month when your colonies can die of starvation. If they were fed plenty of sugar syrup in the fall then the hive should be okay. When the days start to grow longer the queen will increase the rate at which she lays her eggs. More food is being consumed as more brood is laid. Drones will start to be present in the hive and the bees will continue to consume their honey stores. This is the month when you can venture a quick look inside your hive. You will want it to be a warm day with no wind when the bees are out enjoying the weather. Take a look under the cover. If you do not see any sealed honey in the top frames, you may need to do some emergency feeding. Once you start you should not stop feeding them until they are bringing in their own food supplies.

## **April**

If you have a new hive this is the month to install your nucs or package bees. This month your bees will begin to bring pollen to the hive as the flowers and trees begin to bloom. The queen is laying eggs, and the population of the hive is growing fast. This is the month to do your first thorough inspection of the hive. Things to look for: can you identify the queen? Do you see plenty of eggs and brood? Is there a good pattern to the queens egg laying? This is also the time to begin feeding the hive medicated syrup. If you want to you can also reverse the hive deeps to allow for better distribution of brood and to stimulate the growth of the colony.

## **May**

May brings with it a lot of activity in the hive. Nectar and pollen should be coming into the hive very quickly. This is when the queen will reach her greatest rate of egg laying. The hive should be active and bursting with energy. Now is the time if you want to add a queen excluder, and to place supers on top of the top deep. Watch for swarming and inspect the hive weekly.

## **June**

June is a very busy month for your bees. If they have not swarmed then the hives should be full and active. The queen's egg laying rate may slow down slightly this month. The main honey flow should be this month. Make sure you are inspecting you hive weekly. You need to confirm that there is a queen present. Add honey supers as needed. Keep looking for swarming!