



QUESTIONS FROM A CUSTOMER

Preparing for Winter: Q&A

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This Q&A comes from an email to bee-commerce from a customer. The questions were so astute and had such strong bearing on all beekeepers, that they are repeated here for everyone's benefit. Hats off to a smart beekeeper! The answers from bee-commerce are in **BLUE CAPS**:

Q: Sugar water mix with Fumidil and Terramycin - every time I mix up a batch of sugar water do I add the Fumidil and Terramycin or just my first batch (which has been done already). Do I keep feeding them the solution through the winter or do they stop taking it in at some point? Or at what point should I stop?

WE USUALLY FEED ONLY MEDICATED SYRUP AS THE FIRST GALLON, PROVIDED WE FEED IT DURING AUGUST 25 TO SEPTEMBER 30 AS THIS IS THE PERIOD WHEN THE WINTER BEES ARE EMERGING, AND THEY ARE THE ONES WHO NEED THE PROTECTION. KEEP FEEDING UNTIL THEY QUIT TAKING IT

Q: Crisco, confectioners sugar patties are done all winter. How often should I inspect in the winter months to make certain that there is always something there? At what point in the spring do I stop with these patties? If one patty is getting low is it okay to put on another patty so that I am not stopping at the hive every week which is a bit difficult but not impossible as the hive is at a friend's home and I try to go only in the day time, naturally.

PLAIN CRISCO AND SUGAR CAN BE GIVEN YEAR ROUND AS IT DOES HELP KEEP THE TRACHEAL MITE COUNT DOWN. IT HAS NO EFFECT ON THE HONEY. ONE GOOD PATTY (ABOUT 3" DIAM.) IS OK FOR THE WINTER UP TO THE FEB THAW DAY; THEN RENEW WHEN YOU DO OTHER THINGS ANYWAY

Q: *Do I do the menthol paper towels throughout the winter? At what point do I stop?*

YES. DON'T STOP. ABOUT THREE TO FOUR WEEKS, HAVE A REPLACEMENT HANDY AND MAKE A QUICK RENEWAL TO A NEW SERVING OF TOWEL. VERY LITTLE HEAT LOST IF YOU PREPARE AND POP IT ON. ONLY REMOVE THE OUTER AND RAISE THE INNER COVER ENOUGH TO PLACE THE TOWEL.

Q: *I have the Apistan strips between the recommended frames. They are on the UPPER deep only -- is that the correct deep?*

SORRY TO SAY IT ISN'T, UNLESS THE BROOD IS THERE - AND I HOPE THEY ARE NOT THERE! THE BROOD SHOULD BE IN THE LOWER DEEP AT THIS TIME AND THE UPPER FILLED WITH HONEY AND YOUR FEEDING OF SYRUP. THE STRIPS ARE A CONTACT MATERIAL AND THE BROOD AND BEES MUST MAKE THE CONTACT WITH THE STRIPS, PASSING IT ON TO EACH OTHER AS THEY RUB AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. YOU REALLY SHOULD PUT THE STRIPS DOWN.

THOUGH NOT AN ECONOMY, I WOULD SUGGEST LEAVING THOSE ALREADY IN, AND PLACE TWO MORE BELOW CLOSE TO THE BROOD NEST. USE PLENTY OF SMOKE TO PROTECT YOURSELF.

Q: When I add the additional Apistan strips, going on the bottom deep -- do I take them off when I take off the original two on the TOP deep? Or wait the usual number of days to remove the new strips.

NO, I BELIEVE I WOULD ADD THE NEW ONES AND LEAVE THE OLD ONES TO REMOVE ALL FOUR WHEN THE 42 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED ON THE SECOND PAIR. THIS WOULD RESULT IN LESS STRESS ON THE BEES (no need to open the hive twice).

Last Ditch Activity Before Winter. If you have only one colony of bees, this bit of information will not prove helpful. However, if you have two or more colonies, and the situation exists, read on. If you have found a truly small colony of bees, not enough food, and really not enough bees to create the warmth required for winter, but with a Queen... then think seriously about placing that colony on top of a strong colony. It truly is not a really difficult undertaking, and can actually save a colony. Frequently, a captured late swarm does not accumulate enough honey, when it is so late in the season and nectar flows are not plentiful. Consolidate all the bees and frames of honey and pollen into one deep hive body. Place that deep hive body on top of your strong colony. Use a double screen board between the two colonies. You will only use one inner and one outer cover. The heat from the strong lower colony will minimize the upper weak colony's requirements to produce its own. This in turn, may reduce the overall food needs of the weaker and under-supplied colony. If possible, feed the top colony thick sugar syrup in a hive-top feeder until they no longer take it down. Remember; the weak colony goes on top of the strong colony. Never place a weak colony on another weak colony.

For more information on any of these topics, or for best quality beekeeping equipment and supplies, be sure to visit www.bee-commerce.com.

Happy beekeeping!