



29 July 2015

### SPACE FOR THE OVERWINTERING STORES

For the colonies started in 2015 (both overwintered 2014 **GREEN** and May-June 2015 **BLUE** Queen nuclei) there is unlikely to be sufficient honey stores accumulated for the colonies to successfully overwinter.

Early winter feeding (September) is made up of sugar syrup to supplement retained honey stores – for the stronger stocks about 10 to 15kg of syrup feed is required – because the bees will not take to sugar syrup in low ambient temperatures any late feeding should be with fondant – more details on from [FERA](#).

However, whatever the make-up of the feed the bees need somewhere to store their reserves. The honeycomb cells in outer frames in the brood chamber will usually hold 4 to 5kg stores, so you will need to add at least a super to provide storage for the total reserves required for overwintering. For the colonies that are in their first year of development, it may be that the bees have not fully drawn out the wax foundation – if so you will need to either:-

- a) Lavishly sugar syrup feed the bees during August: This is because although the honey flow may still be on during August, so by feeding you are sacrificing some natural nectar imports, the colony should have sufficient numbers of young bees to manufacture the wax needed to draw out the cells – as the Queen reduces her rate of laying in preparation for overwintering, the number of young, wax-making bees declines and hence a reduced capacity for cell construction. Also, be aware that early feeding when lots of foraging bees are on the wing can result in pillaging of the feed by other colonies so, if this occurs, fit the mouse excluder block to reduce the entrance area of the hive under attack.
- b) Or, install a super with fully drawn out frames: You can swap these around with other developed hives but do be cautious about spreading disease via the honeycomb and frames – there should be some spare drawn out supers following the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> August Honey Harvesting from the Oxleas Wood Apiary – you will need to reserve and make arrangements for these now.

Following feeding and before winter closes in all of the colonies should be treated with a varroacide. The established colonies in the Apiary have been previously dosed with Bayvarol for three seasons so, to avoid the build-up of mite resistance, for the forthcoming varroacide dose the intention is to switch to another treatment product – any hive remaining in the Apiary when this treatment commences will have to be dosed with the newly selected varroacide.

John Large