

# Woodlands Apiary



April 1, 2013

Oh dear all that promise of a good start to the 2013-14 season only to stumble now that the bees have been locked down in this cold bout of miserable weather which seems likely to continue for the next week or so until, that is, the Jet Stream decides to relocate to the North.

If the poor weather continues our colonies might start to run out of food – Terry and I opened up No 1 and 8 last week and food stores were low. If the queens have already started laying then the colonies could rapidly deplete what food stores remain very quickly.

The bees will not take to Sugar Syrup feeding in low temperatures so I suggest we make up some Fondant as an emergency feed. You can prepare Fondant as follows:

- Batch Ingredients:     4 units weight white sugar  
                                  1 unit weight water  
                                  One-half teaspoon per lb (~0.5kg) of white vinegar
- Preparation:             Bring to the boil and simmer stirring the mix, leave simmering with no pan lid until the froth turns to clear, larger bubbles. Transfer the pan into a sink full of cold water and continue to stir or whisk the cooling mix until it starts to solidify – if your brew has been successful this will occur quite quickly.
- Packaging:                Let the Fondant set as a cake and when cool cut into suitable lumps – I pour the solidifying mix into foil trays (ie Chinese takeaway containers) which can be used directly on the hive crown board.
- Precaution:                Wear gloves because a sugar burn can be serious – the mix simmers at about 112°C (234°F) and, beware, sugar mix doggedly sticks to skin.
- Application:                If necessary reposition the crown board so that the bee escape aperture is directly over the colony (check the bottom board to establish the colony position) – either invert the unlidded foil container over the escape or use a mini plastic bag (ie a supermarket polythene fruit bag) with holes – if the bees are not present in the uppermost super, quickly remove and set aside this super, so that the Fondant feed is located directly above the colony.

Depending on how long this poor weather persists, we should aim to provide about 1.5 to 2kg Fondant per hive.

I have made up enough 1kg Fondant batches to start the feed – weather permitting I will do this on Tuesday, 2 April – but more Fondant may be needed if this cold bout continues.

John Large