

Oxleas Wood APIARY

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The new colonies brought in from Honeybee Suppliers of Hook Norton are running short of honey reserves, first because last month's weather in Oxford deterred foraging so little in reserve stores on delivery to Oxleas Wood Apiary and, second, we have now run into a coldish spell locally which may be holding back the May nectar flow. The Hook Norton Queens are now laying at a high rate and there is plenty of sealed brood waiting to emerge so the colonies, with increasing brood and bee population, could rapidly deplete what food stores remain.

At this time of the season it is better to provide the bees with some Fondant as an emergency feed rather than liquid sugar syrup.

You can prepare your own Fondant as follows:

Batch: 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 inverted 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 over the colony (check the bottom monitoring board debris to establish the colony position) – either invert the unlidded foil container over the crown board vent 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.

Of course, you could purchase some ready made Fondant such as Neopoll or Candipolline both of which contain a pollen supplement, thus leaving your kitchen sticky-sugar free .



In reserve I have made up enough 1 kg Fondant batches to start the feed – weather permitting I will do this on Saturday or Sunday, 6-7 May – but more Fondant may be needed if this cold bout continues.

John Large