

Frequently Asked Beekeeping Questions & Answers

Question: I cannot find my queen. What should I do?

Answer: Look for newly laid eggs and/or developing brood; if you see newly laid eggs (one egg per cell) then she is in there. If no eggs, then re-queen as soon as possible. If it is late in the season (after August) it is too late to re-queen, so combine the hive with another.

Question: There is more than one egg in each cell. What is going on?

Answer: Either the queen is gone and you have workers laying, or your queen is laying just drones. Replace or get a new queen either way. If the workers are laying, you may need to move them to a new hive with a new queen.

Question: Yellow Jackets are robbing honey. What should I do?

Answer: If the queen is young and healthy, and mite levels are low, the hive will be able to keep most of the Yellow Jackets out of the hive. It may be time to re-queen, or the mite levels may be too high. It is usually an indication that the hive is in decline, or the queen is missing.

Question: When is the best time of the year to treat for varroa mites?

Answer: Some beekeepers treat for varroa mites in the spring and fall, but they must be treated for in the fall. Treatment options: Apiguard, ApiLife VAR, Mite-Away formic acid strips, etc.; miticides (Apistan, CheckMite) are not recommended because most mites have developed resistance.

Question: Early this spring I noticed a lot of dead bees on the ground near the entrance of my hive. What is going on?

Answer: Most likely the bees are cleaning house and removing the dead bees in the hive that have accumulated during the winter.

Questions: There is a large cluster of bees at the entrance to the hive. Are they getting ready to swarm?

Answer: The swarm season is usually from the middle of May to the first of July. Bees swarm because they run out of room. If a hive makes it through the winter in good health, they will need to be divided, so it could be a swarm, but most likely there is moisture in the hive or hot in the hive and they are working to vent the hive, may need to add an additional entrance. Every hive should have a bottom and top entrance.

Question: When should I extract the honey?

Answer: Most beekeepers in Montana extract their honey in August. It is important not to do it too late in the season. Make sure to leave the bees at least 60 lbs of honey to make it through the winter, unless you are going to feed them sugar water.

Question: There are yellow spots all over the exterior of my hive. What is it?

Answer: Most likely it is bee diarrhea, which is caused by a fungal disease – *Nosema*. There is mixed research on what to do if anything. Most resources recommend treating with Fumagilin-B in their sugar water in the spring as a preventative.