

A scenic landscape featuring a pond in the foreground with lily pads, surrounded by lush green trees and bushes. A beehive is visible on the right side, nestled among the trees. The background shows a dense forest under a clear sky.

BABYDOLL SPECIALTY HONEY:
BACK TO THE FUTURE OF HONEYBEES AND BABYDOLLS

by Mel Disselkoen
Vernal Equinox 2012

INTRODUCTION

This presentation explains a new/old concept of honey production which is inspired by what I have learned from G.M. Doolittle's honey production over 100 years ago along with my recent discovery of an ancient breed of sheep named Olde English Babydoll Southdown Sheep, or "Babydoll Sheep" for short. Like honeybees, this ancient breed goes back to the most ancient of times. Honeybees and babydolls have much in common as they both have sustained and enriched human beings in a variety of ways throughout history, the evidence of which we come upon here or there such as in old nursery rhymes:

Baa Baa Black Sheep

(Circa 13th or 14th Century)

Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!

One for the master, one for the dame,

And one for the little boy who lives down the lane.

Mary Had A Little Lamb

(Sarah Hale, Boston, 1830)

Mary had a little lamb its fleece was white as snow;

And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day, which was against the rule;

It made the children laugh and play, to see a lamb at school.

And so the teacher turned it out, but still it lingered near,

And waited patiently about till Mary did appear.

"Why does the lamb love Mary so?" the eager children cry;

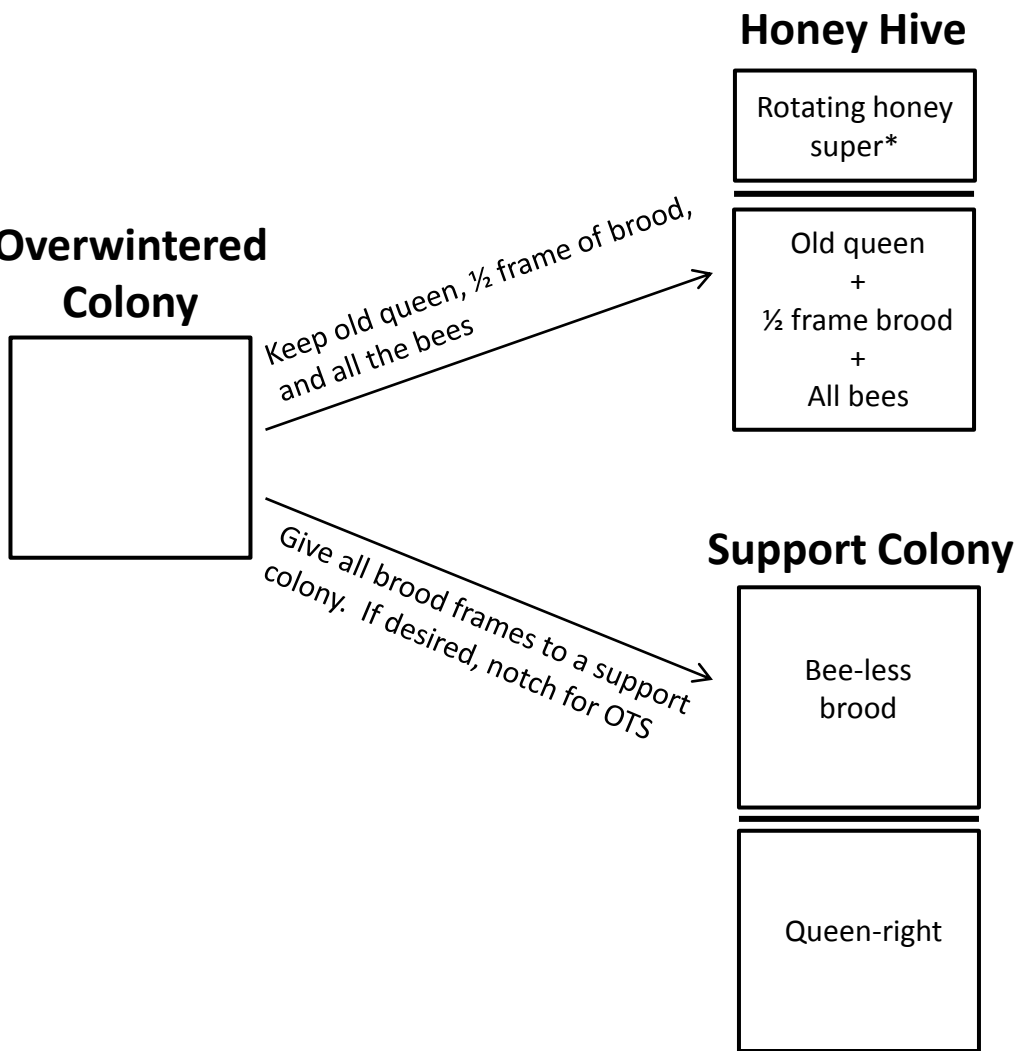
"Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know" the teacher did reply.

If you read up a little about Babydoll Sheep, you'll discover the wisdom of our ancestors in keeping this practical, sensible breed. They are small, friendly, easy to handle, healthy, hardy, tasty, and produce a very high quality of wool, among other fine attributes. You see, in the olden days, people did not have freezers so the small size of the babydoll enabled them to slaughter just the amount they needed with nothing left to waste. But technology advanced to bring us refrigeration so that larger animals could be preserved and the markets demanded larger and larger cuts of meat. Needless to say, the babydoll was phased out almost to extinction. It goes without saying that the honeybees have experienced similar challenges in a modernizing world. The good news is that the babydolls are making a comeback as people once again seek self-sufficiency on small, affordable parcels of land. The honeybees can also make a comeback as people learn hands-on, self-sufficient beekeeping and queen rearing methods that churn out a top-of-the-line specialty honey without all of the heavy lifting.

BABYDOLL SPECIALTY HONEY (I)

CAPTURE LOCAL HONEYFLOWS USING ONE OR TWO DEEPS

Lightweight, Less Dust, Selective, Easy, SHB Preventive



DOOLITTLE'S WAY (as illustrated)

Leave ½ frame of brood on original location with the old queen in one deep with a rotating honey super above the queen excluder. Then shake all the bees in front of this hive making an artificial swarm right during the selected honey flow. Doolittle taught me that bees can take care of more than twice as much brood as what they have, so you can give the bee-less brood to queen-right support colonies above an excluder. And I have discovered that you can notch some of these brood combs on well-fed bees by using the OTS method and make splits one week later. After the selected flow is over (~10 days) you can remove all the honey frames from the honey hive and extract. You should have 20 plus pounds of honey from the selected 10-day honey flow that you can sell at premium prices (\$7-\$10/lb)

MEL'S WAY (another option)

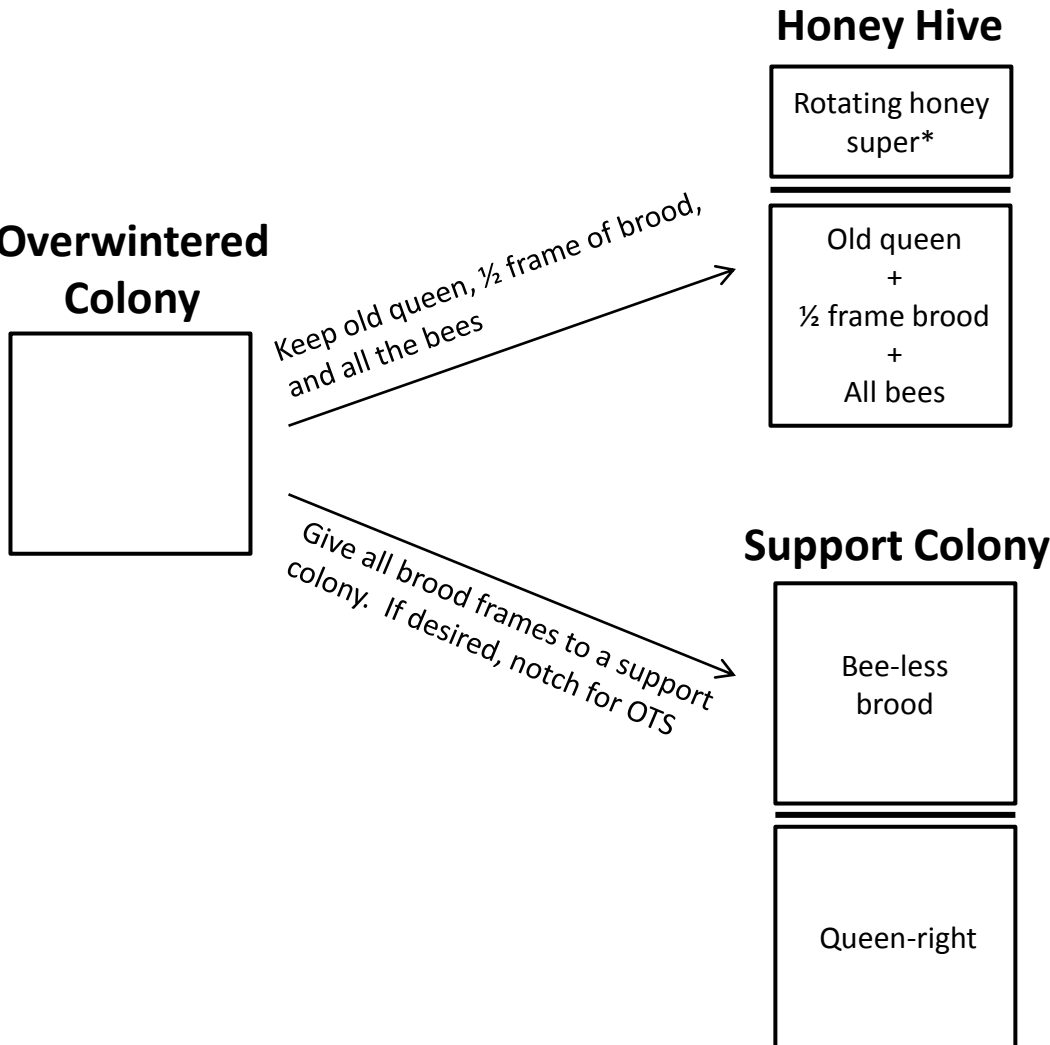
Make a Mel's May start by removing the old queen and two frames of brood. Then only notch one frame in the original hive. One week later break down all queen cells but two and alternate the brood frames with foundation frames. In one month, harvest all the honey but one frame. Since the hive was brood-less for the whole month and not using the 100 pounds to produce brood you will have that plus around 15 new drawn out frames. You will still have the old queen to make starts after June 21

*Use one honey super at a time. Remove, extract, and replace each time it becomes full. This is more labor intensive but ensures a higher quality and less draw to SHB

BABYDOLL SPECIALTY HONEY (II)

CAPTURE LOCAL HONEYFLOWS USING ONE OR TWO DEEPS

Lightweight, Less Dust, Selective, Easy, SHB Preventive



How to manage the support colony

The support colony can be managed in a few different ways:

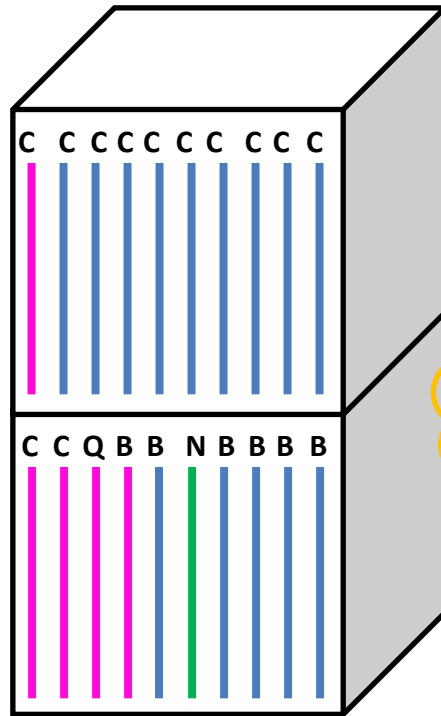
- 1—For increase, you can notch the extra brood frames that you position above the queen excluder. One week later, check those frames for cells and make starts. If 4 out of the 8 brood frames have queen cells, you can make 4 starts and leave them in the same yard
- 2—You can run the support colony for honey production. In this case, don't notch. One week later, check and destroy any queen cells and then place new foundation between all of the brood frames (add another super to provide room for the extra frames)

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HONEY FLOW

Don't Underestimate the Value of Drawn Comb

Legend	
B:	Brood
C:	Comb
F:	Foundation
N:	Notched
Q:	Queen

Overwintered hive with 20 drawn comb and 8 frames of brood 1 week before swarming starts in your area



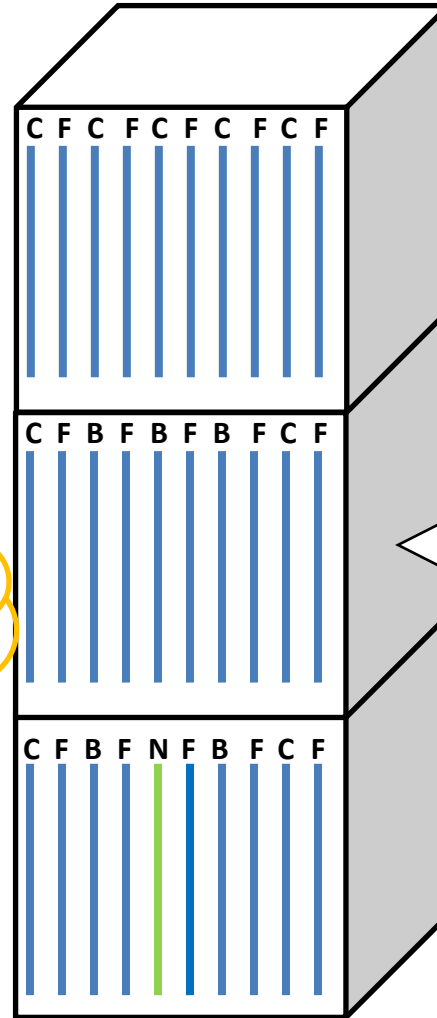
Remove and move 2+ miles away the over-wintered queen + 2 frames of brood + 3 extra frames (5 pink frames). Replace pink frames with foundation. This leaves the original hive with 15 drawn comb, 6 of which have brood. Notch one of these brood combs that has 36-hour-or-younger larvae (green frame in illustration)

Notch one comb

One week after notching, break down all queen cells except two



Now Drawing Comb + Honey



One week later, this is how the original hive is reassembled on the original location. (Note: the Queen cells are located on and count as a brood frame in this illustration)

Because bees have emerged in this past week and all the open brood is now sealed, the bees have extra capacity to draw comb to extend brood nest. Placing foundation between brood frames stimulates the bees to draw those combs in order to keep brood nest intact

Value of Drawn Comb

Value of Honey

Original price of frame: ~\$1.50

Selling price: \$5-6

Profit: \$3-4 or \$45-60/hive (15 frames)

Check hive in 35 days and because there are no brood to feed, the bees should store over 100 lbs of honey and you will have a newly-mated queen. If queen fails to mate, you still have the over-wintered queen as well as the surplus honey