

July Starts In Progress: What To Expect Come Fall

By Mel Disselkoen

September 21, 2010

Successful Post-Solstice, OTS Queen Rearing

OTS queens mated after June 21 lay rigorously well into the Fall unlike pre-solstice queens which slow down after the change of days. It is this built-in survival mechanism that enables a July start to endure and grow over the winter into a full-strength colony by early Spring while breaking the mites breeding cycle to boot. You will find many a plush brood pattern inside these starter colonies well into October and November that resembles that which you would see during Spring build-up.

Going into winter, your July starts should have 4-6 seams of bees or more inside one brood box. It is beneficial to install another super beneath the brood box to keep the cluster high and dry and then it will already be in place for Spring build-up.

Feeding Schedules

There are many ways to feed July starts and much depends upon whether you have quality honey reserves and drawn comb. To keep it simple, you can feed two ways:

I. Fall: August, September, and October

I use damp sugar in a tray. The ratio is 3 cups water to 16 pounds sugar mixed into a patty.

II. Winter: November thru Spring

I put on sugar bricks around Thanksgiving or Christmas when I am wrapping them for winter. Sugar bricks are a sugar and water solution that has been carefully heated up to 242 degrees, without scalding, which dehydrates the sugar into a hard form. These bricks are a drier feed made to withstand condensation inside the hive. Pollen or pollen patties can be put on the hive in middle February when brood rearing starts again.

The pictures show the size of the cluster and what to expect.



1-Fall cluster feeding on damp sugar



2-Winter cluster



3-Propane turkey fryer, shown by fellow beekeeper, Bob R.



4-Large stirring paddle designed and welded by Cajuns (originally used for seafood gumbo)



5-Boiling sugar and water to 242 °F



**6-Mixture ladled into molds
(these are wax-paper-lined, paper-plate bowls)**



**7-Hardened and removed from molds,
sugar bricks are ready for hives or storage**