

May 6th, 2017 Field Day Report

In the fall of 2016 I went into winter with 13 July OTS-queen starts that were fed 24 pounds of sugar syrup from September 15th to October 1st. All 13 starts survived the winter on location. That is 100% survival.

On May 6th, 2017, I pulled the overwintered queen and 2 frames of brood (artificial swarm) from each of the 13 starts and moved them to a different yard. While I was working through each of those hives to find and pull the overwintered queen and brood frames, I notched the 36-hour-or-younger larvae on the brood frames that would remain, which resulted in 13 queen-less cell builders at that location.

Seven days later, 42 starts were made with the sealed queen cells from those cell builders. Because of the wet spring and low, 30F night-time temperatures, all of the starts were left on the same location and stacked in towers with each colony start separated by Snelgrove boards and all colony entrances facing different directions to prevent drift (see photo). Most of these starts have been sold but I kept the bottom one to show at the July 1, 2017 field day to demonstrate how to properly divide starts. I am not going to bring back any of the artificial swarms that were moved on May 6th as they are too strong. These strong colonies will be used to rear July starts for next spring's bees (see chart page 32).

Pictured: Mel with his spring starts stacked and separated by Snelgrove boards with each colony entrance facing a different direction



Continued . . .

The July meeting went very well with beekeepers visiting from many states. I left the hive at the far right intact but I killed all of the queens, notched one frame to run it as a honey hive, and removed all Snelgrove boards. This honey hive is now a powerhouse with over 20 frames of finishing brood. Since this colony cannot rear any new brood until the new queen is reared and mated, the full force of the colony is focused on harvesting the Michigan honey crop which should amount to over 300 pounds of honey. In the near future, I will have to remove frames of honey so that the hive won't get too tall.

A subject that we revisited during the July meeting is the ongoing challenge of keeping bees near agrichemical applications. Always remember that before we had Varroa, we beekeepers often experienced bee kill from insecticides and pesticides. Just because Varroa came on the scene does not mean that we do not have insecticide and pesticide kills anymore. The abiding agrichemical hazards are as challenging and harmful to honeybees as ever so don't let anyone program you into believing that all beekeeping problems are caused by Varroa. I have seen this messaging in the beekeeping journals and magazines and hope that you won't be misguided by this "fake news."

I would like to thank everyone for their participation and I wish you all the best for a very successful season and happy, healthy honeybees colonies!

Mel