

OTS MEETINGS: 2016 SEASON SUMMARY



Since the writing of my book, "*OTS Queen Rearing: A Survival Guide for Beekeepers Worldwide*," the demand for beekeepers to apprentice with me in my bee yards was overwhelming and unscheduled. The only way I could satisfy the demand was to have beekeepers come to one of my apiaries from May through August on Saturday from noon to 2 o'clock. This gave all OTS network beekeepers a hands-on opportunity to see how I carry out the OTS procedures with a small set of hives through the entire season (a copy of the OTS chart of procedures is at the back of this report).

The 2016 season was very successful. I started with the 4 (out of 5) July 2015 starts that had successfully overwintered in this apiary from 2015. I moved 2 of those starts to another yard and then made 19 starts out of the 2 remaining hives. Of the 19 new starts, 2 were lost to laying workers. This is normal as whenever you mate queens you are bound to have some failures. In fact, in the 2016 edition of the OTS book, I expanded the instructions for how to best deal with laying worker hives. This involves placing two foundation frames in a box on the original location that the laying worker orientated from and shaking all the bees into this box to confine her to that location. This reduces all risk of her entering another hive and killing the reigning queen. Remember, queens never attack workers but workers can attack queens. The queen does not have a chance because the laying worker is smaller and more physically fit to fight. After shaking the bees into the isolated hive, I distribute all the valuable drawn comb (without the bees) from that laying worker hive to strong hives to protect. Once the laying worker hive is isolated on foundation frames in the original location, I let it pollinate and draw comb until it fades out. This reduces the threat of Small Hive Beetle (SHB) destroying the comb.

OTS creates great increase and the math can quickly get away from you, especially if you have many yards. For example, to view my 2016 seasonal increase across all of my yards, I look at it like this: My fiscal year begins in July and as of July 1, 2015 I had 10 artificial swarms from which I made 40 starts. I overwintered 20 of those starts which is a 100% increase because I started with only 10 artificial swarms. From those 20 overwintered starts, I then made 80 starts of which 20 were artificial swarms in May. I then again made 80 starts going into winter in July 2016 making a total of 160 starts from what was originally 20 overwintered hives. If you can make \$100 profit on each start then this increase would equate to \$16,000 if I were to sell out.

As summer winded down and all of the July starts were mated and mite brood cycles successfully broken leaving fresh, new, mite-free colonies with which to overwinter for next year's stock, I looked to prepare for autumn. To protect my valuable July 2016 starts, I covered the hive entrances with robber screens, or what I like to call "Intruder Excluders". Intruder Excluders prevent drones from entering hives and re-infesting colonies with mites. This is now an important part of fall management as it is common for commercial beekeepers to leave for the south earlier than they did in the past because, understandably, they want to avoid the corn and soybean harvest. Many of them are under time pressure and not able to spend the time to use catcher hives to pick up all of their bees that are still out in the field. As a result, many of their bees and drones are left behind to drift and many of them are infested with mites. Since drones can enter

any hive uncontested, it's a worthwhile investment to cover hive entrances with robber screens starting in late summer ahead of the commercial migration south. These screens can be removed after the colonies expel their drones for the season at which point you can install your mouse and shrew guards.

Intruder Excluder



The OTS chart of procedures is just a guideline for me on the 43rd parallel. Wherever your apiary is located, the key date on which to notch in the spring is the day you see 6 frames of brood in your hive and live drones flying in your apiary. This means that the virgin queens that develop from your notching the 36-hour-or-younger larvae will become sexually mature at the same time as the drones in your congregational area become sexually mature.

Using the OTS procedures correctly, beekeepers can develop their queen stock free of charge. In fact, some beekeepers say that OTS can only produce increase but actually it can do a lot more. By uniting starts, OTS can be leveraged to create powerful honey hives. For example, if you unite the 3 May starts in July on the Michigan honey flow you will have 15-18 frames of brood and most queens will not have that much brood by July 1st. Therefore, this OTS hive is as powerful or more as any producing hive that commercial beekeepers have.

Like all farmers do, I am rearing healthy livestock for next year. All procedures for doing the OTS (on the spot) queen rearing are explained in my book. OTS saves and expands honeybee colonies and we need more honeybees than ever. I urge you to purchase a copy of my book so that you can not only save your bees but also keep them healthy, thriving, and growing. You will be amazed at the results.

A special thank you to the all of the beekeepers that attended, many traveling for long distances and from many different states. I appreciate the time and effort you all spent to learn how to keep honeybees alive and thriving. I enjoyed meeting and working bees with you and I wish you all a successful overwintering. May you come out strong in the spring with many honeybee starts with which to start the OTS cycle again.

Kindest regards and best wishes to all of you,

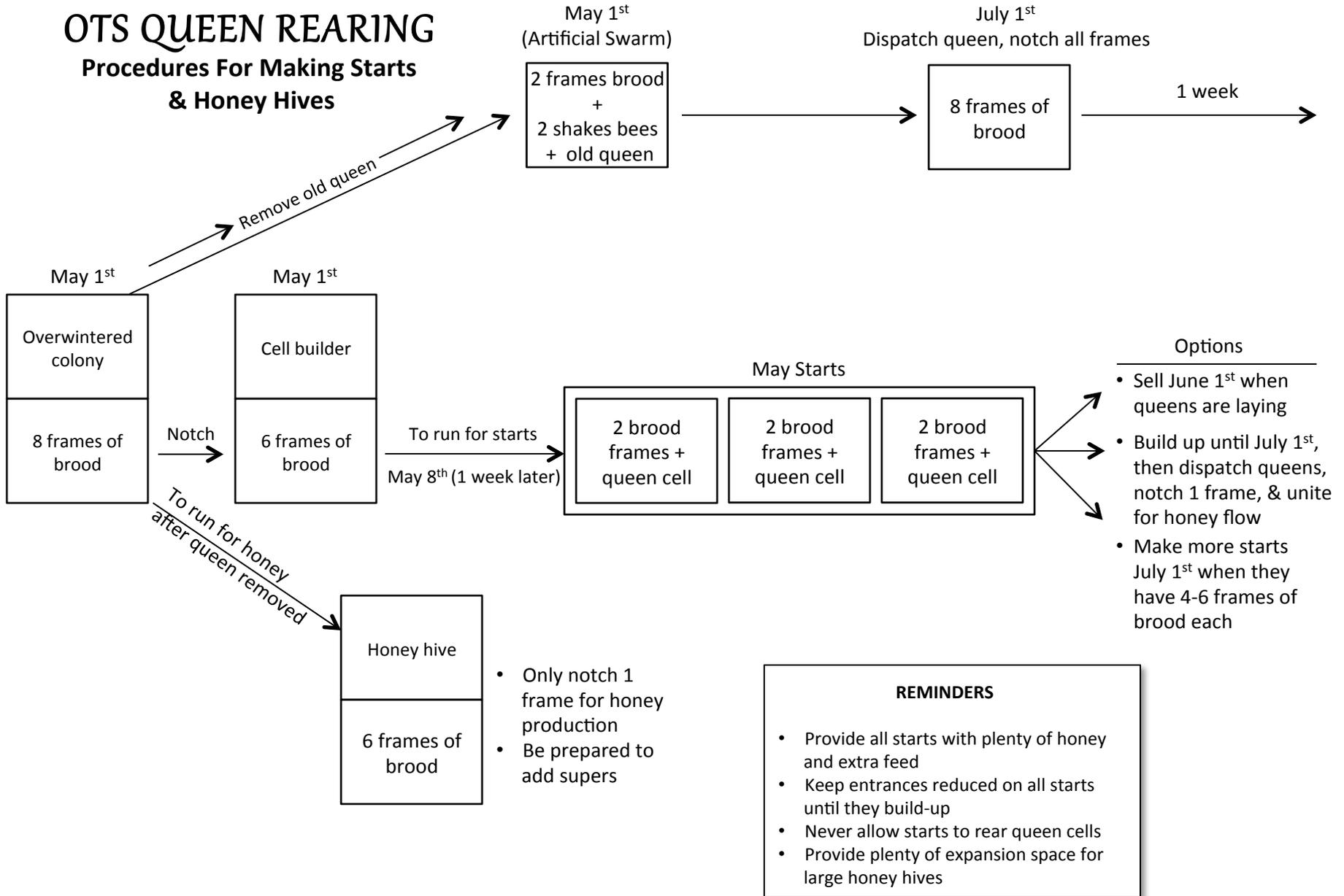
Mel

Autumn 2016



OTS QUEEN REARING

Procedures For Making Starts & Honey Hives



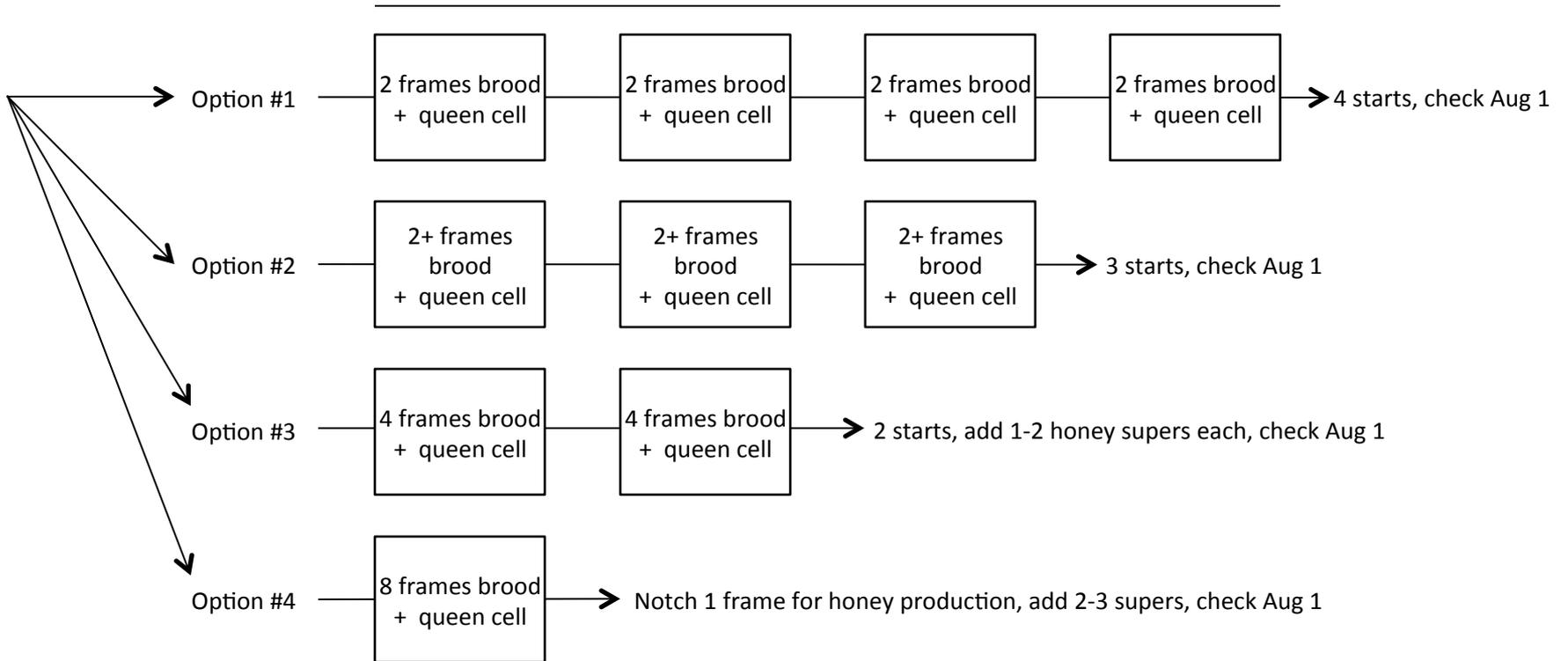
Options

- Sell June 1st when queens are laying
- Build up until July 1st, then dispatch queens, notch 1 frame, & unite for honey flow
- Make more starts July 1st when they have 4-6 frames of brood each

REMINDERS

- Provide all starts with plenty of honey and extra feed
- Keep entrances reduced on all starts until they build-up
- Never allow starts to rear queen cells
- Provide plenty of expansion space for large honey hives

Fiscal Year Starts July 1



One frame of brood should equate to 10+ lbs of honey in a good flow