

# Preparing bees for Winter



You need to start early. Winter bees are made before winter! They're made from August onwards.

## Hive condition

Hive must be waterproof, sound and able to keep the bees dry! Reduce entrance to protect from wasps. Mouseguards keep mice out and woodpecker cage guards keep green woodpeckers away.

## Queen

A healthy young queen is needed to provide sufficient bees for your colony to get through winter.



## Disease

Your colony needs to be disease free. Do a brood disease check, which involves shaking off the bees and looking at the brood.

You need to check for exotic pests too like Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps.

You also need to measure levels of Varroa and then treat for Varroa if needed.

Varroa damages brood and will result in less healthy adult bees which will weaken the colony.

## Start Early

Start early with planning varroa treatment and feeding.



Varroa &  
Disease  
Check



Treat  
then  
feed



Mouse  
guards  
on

# Get your bees through winter

## Food

### Plan ahead!

#### Things to think about

- Queen
- Disease check
- Intact hive
- Varroa
- Food

### Apiary site

Perfect location:

- Dry sunny apiary
- No frost pockets
- Safe from flooding
- Windbreaks
- Pollen sources even in late Autumn and Spring

### Mouseguards

Put these on before the first frosts. Remove Mid Feb so pollen isn't knocked off.

### Monitor all winter

Check the entrance is clear of dead bees. Use ratchet straps. Heft regularly.

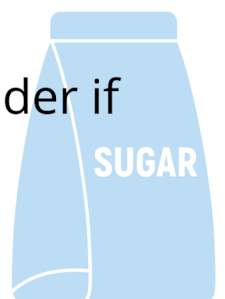
Very quick inspection if concerned will spot isolation starvation. Feed immediately with fondant next to the bees.

Your colony needs 20kg of stores to get through winter. You need to either leave enough of their own honey or feed the bees.

Emergency feeding is done with fondant!

#### Feeding bees

- 2.2kg on a standard brood comb, so you need many combs of capped stores!
- Feed 2:1
- 1kg sugar to 650ml water.
- Avoid robbing
- White sugar only
- Consider thymol in sugar syrup if large volumes to avoid black mould. (NBU leaflet feeding bees)
- Remove queen excluder if leaving supers on



# Checklist for wintering your bees

Timing is vital. Removal of last honey crop starts the process. Consider Late honey crops & timing of varroa treatment.

- Queen** Young healthy queen will have bigger brood nest than older queen. Less likely to become drone layer. Production of new bees ensures colony can get through winter.
- Disease free** Autumn brood check.  
Adult bee disease check (Nosema and Acarine)
- Pest free** Check for Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps
- Varroa** Varroa count and then treat as appropriate. Winter bees need to be long lived and healthy. Late Varroa treatment may impair quality of winter bees.
- Stores** Needs to be 20kg of honey for a standard national hive. Bigger colony may need more. Remove queen excluder.  
Feed sugar 1kg:650ml water Watch out for robbing
- Pollen** Needs pollen sources in Late Autumn and Early Spring
- Good hive** Watertight, intact hive essential. Suitable stands (ie: not on the ground). Hive strapped up.
- Apiary site** Good access in all weather, well drained, sunny, not in a frost pocket,
- Vermin proof** Mouseguards added & Woodpecker cage of chicken wire needed.
- Monitor** Heft at regular intervals. Feed if needed. Fondant.  
Check cluster location in relation to stores (open very quickly, 20s tops)
- Avoid isolation starvation** If bees become isolated then emergency feed directly on to the cluster. Either move frames of honey – scored for easier access, or place fondant on top bars above cluster.