

Provision of Storage Space in Hives

Seasonal Notes for the Domestic Beekeeper

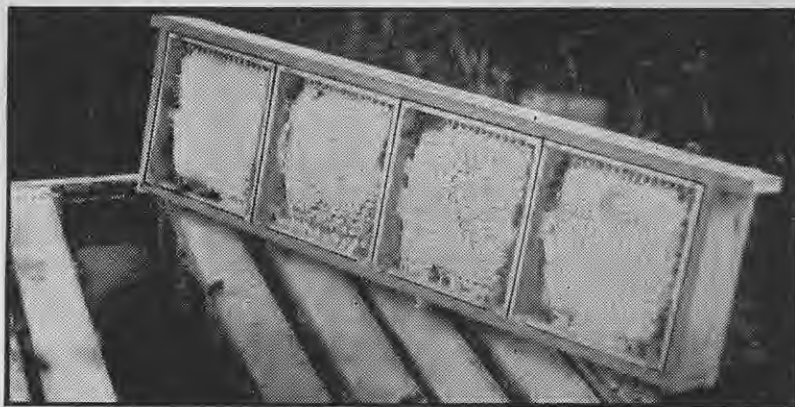
SUMMER, with its long, warm, sunny days carrying the promise of a bountiful honey harvest, is a most interesting season for the beekeeper. The yield of honey will, apart from weather conditions, be largely governed by the skill and attention expended earlier, but the bees still require further care if they are to give of their best. In this article D. Roberts, Apiary Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, discusses the provision of adequate storage space in hives to meet and encourage the bees' gathering of nectar.

WITH the onset of a summer nectar flow the seasonal activities of the bee colony become greatly intensified. The whole available force of worker bees is devoted to the collection and ripening of nectar and the building of comb. Colonies used for observation purposes have been known to register a gain of as much as 25lb. of fresh nectar per day during a heavy flow. The intake of honey at such a rapid rate may quickly use up a colony's available storage space, and unless further room is given, congestion may soon become unbearable and the bees prepare to swarm.

Extracted Honey

The main essentials of management for extracted honey at this period are the provision of adequate room sufficiently in advance of the bees' requirements to prevent congestion but not extending the colony unnecessarily, and good ventilation. The latter is essential at all times but more particularly so in honey flows.

During the earlier part of a flow the bees will be found to build comb readily, but as the flow progresses comb building may diminish and then cease. The provision of extra room by the addition of frames of comb foundation can be practised safely while comb building is in progress, but foundation should not be used if the bees show reluctance to build further comb. If spare drawn combs



Sections of honey ready for removal.

are not available, it is a good plan to remove any combs of honey that have been filled and capped over, extract the honey, and return the empty combs to the bees. The use of an extractor is, of course, necessary if the combs are to be returned in a condition fit for the immediate storage of more honey. Combs from which the honey has been removed by scraping or pressing will be of little more value than foundation at this time.

In some districts the honey gathered before the main flow commences will be dark and of poor flavour. If it is desired to keep this separate from the later, better-flavoured crop, immediately the main flow is established any combs containing such honey should be removed as soon as they are fully capped over. If not required for winter stores, the honey can be extracted and the combs returned to the bees. The ability to secure drawn comb at critical times is one of the great advantages of the use of an extractor. When combs wet with honey are returned to the bees considerable excitement is caused, and it is generally advisable to carry out this work in the evening when the daily flight has ceased. To assist in the prevention of spread of brood disease,

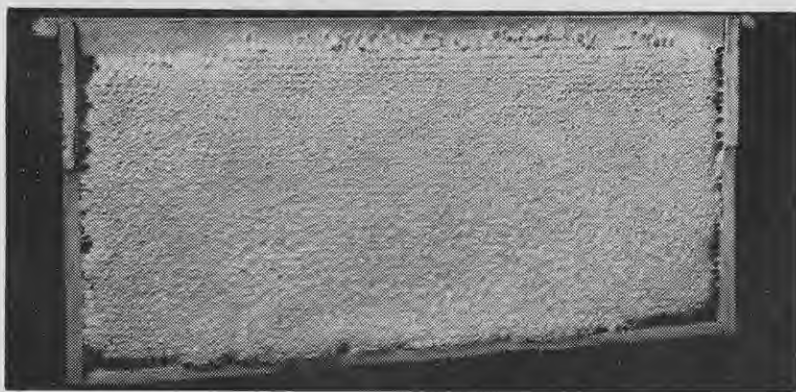
combs should be returned wherever possible to the hive from which they were taken.

When it becomes evident that the nectar flow is approaching its close the hives should be checked and any honey supers containing little or no honey removed. The remaining supers should be examined and any completed or nearly completed combs should be moved to the outer edge and the balance placed to the centre. This will encourage the bees to complete as many combs as possible. If too much comb space is left with the bees when the flow is diminishing, the honey will be stored in patches over a large number of combs rather than in a smaller number of filled ones.

Comb Honey

Though colonies being worked for comb honey production will, like those being managed for extracted honey, require additional room from time to time, much greater care must be taken in the provision of extra comb space and the amount provided should always be substantially less than that provided for extraction. When the bees are found to be working vigorously in the first super of sections or half frames and the combs have been well built out and are nearly filled with honey another super of sections or half frames may be added on top. This should not be given unless the flow is heavy and it is obvious that the bees will be pressed for room. If some of the sections are partially capped at the time of examination and others are only lightly filled or in the process of being drawn, no more room should be given at this time.

The colony should be examined again in 2 or 3 days and any completed sections or frames removed and replaced with others fitted with foundation. Sections and other forms of comb honey destined for sale should be removed from the hive immediately they are fully capped over. If they are left for more than a few days after capping is completed, the freshness of the cappings is lost and the combs become darkened and travel



An extracting comb well capped and filled.