

Requeening a honey bee colony

Requeening is important in improving the health and increasing the productivity of colonies.

This is practised annually by commercial bee keepers to obtain the benefits from increased pheromone production and egg laying capabilities of young queens resulting in increased production. Recreational bee keepers are more likely to requeen every 2 years. When requeening, the old queen should be located and killed or thrown away. Healthy and well reared queen bees of good genetic stock along with good worker brood combs are main factors in increasing honey yields.

Requeening process

Requeening is best done when the colonies are not swarming and when there is a lot of nectar flow and pollen flow. If you requeen when the bees are swarming, there is a possibility of losing the new queen together with the swarm.

When bought, the mated queens are sent in queen cages of different designs with 4 or 5 escort bees.

Select queens whose progeny are productive, disease resistant and docile. The queen cage with the new queen and the escort is placed between 2 brood combs in the centre of the brood nest. Check after 10 days to ascertain if the new queen has been accepted into the colony.

When requeening using queen cells, it is advisable to dequeen the hive the previous day and insert the queen cells a day before they hatch.

As with most management practices, it is important to keep a high degree of hygiene and safety when requeening.

Six to eight weeks after requeening, all worker bees will

change ie it is possible to introduce superior genetic stock in a relatively short time.