

Bee Behavior

By John Johnson

1. Bees respond to the natural conditions in the environment.
 - On a cold morning they are cross—so don't bother them then.
 - On a warm afternoon or evening —they are gentle and docile, so do your work with them then.
 - Bees flourish and work well when the weather is pleasant (70 to 90oF) and calm. They do little work and seem agitated by cool, rainy weather.
2. Bees vary greatly due primarily to inherited characteristics such as:
 - Aggressiveness.
 - Fast or slow buildup in the spring.
 - Use of winter stores.
 - So, find queens that have characteristics you want.
 - Some winter better than others.
 - Some produce workers that gather more nectar than others.
 - Some lay more eggs.
 - Some start work earlier in the morning and continue later into the evening.
 - Some have what is called hygienic behavior and thus show some resistance to disease and parasites.
 - Some more readily swarm than others.
 - Some require less feed during winter and thus survive winter better.
3. Bees remain essentially creatures of the wild. That means beekeepers can manipulate them only so much.
4. Bees respond best when they are bothered infrequently by beekeepers or other creatures.
5. The queen varies the number of eggs she lays. She will reduce the number of eggs or stop entirely if there is not enough feed to nurture the eggs, not enough worker bees to care for them, if the colony is preparing to swarm or if there are no open cells, etc.
6. Worker bees will protect their queen from other bees and creatures if they are able.

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