

Common Beekeeping Mistakes to Avoid

By John Johnson

Mistake	Consequences	What to do
Allowing bees to starve or run low on feed	Colony dies	Ensure colony has sufficient feed at all times. Don't let bees get close to starvation. Times when bees are most likely to starve include when they are small startup colonies and do not have significant stores of feed, especially in late winter and early spring.
Failing to recognize the colony is queenless	Colony gradually dies out	Introduce another queen. Unite with a queenright colony. Give queenless colony a frame of newly laid eggs from a queenright colony.
Being slow to give colonies room when needed. Such as second hive body or supers when needed.	Swarming	Place a second hive body on top of the first one before it gets crowded. That means when about half the frames in the lower hive body have bees and/or brood covering them. Put first super on upper hive body when half of the combs in upper hive body are covered with bees and brood.
Failing to check for <i>Varroa</i> mite infestation and not employing control measures as needed.	Colony weakened or crashes from <i>Varroa</i> overload	Check bees in spring and early fall to determine mite levels. Use current <i>Varroa</i> treatment, if required.
Insufficient preparation and protections to allow colonies to survive winter	Colony dies out during winter	In September and October provide protection against disease, mites and predators as needed. Ensure colony has 65 to 75 pounds of honey and provide winter wrapping. Only winter colonies with large clusters of bees (approximately enough bees to cover 5 full depth combs on both sides).
When outside temperature is approximately 40°F and above, bees can overheat quickly when all openings to the hive are blocked with solid objects	Bees smother and die	When necessary to confine bees to a hive, do so with a screen rather than a solid object. In addition, ensure they have air flow.