
EXERCISE 3 HANDLING AND EXAMINATION OF HONEYBEE COLONY

Structure

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

The growth and productivity of honeybee colonies vary with seasons. For enhancing the colony's growth and productivity, we may need to help the bees to perform better and maintain their colonies in the best suited conditions. For assessing the colony growth and planning for their management, we need to examine the bee colonies and note down the various development parameters, on which the management practices would be planned and undertaken. The examination of honeybee colonies should be undertaken following a set procedure and avoiding being stung. It will also save the bees as the bees after stinging die soon.

Objectives

Through this practical, you will be able to :

- open a honeybee colony and examining it;
- protect yourself from being stung and the bees from dying; and
- determine the status of honeybee colony growth, problems and productivity.

3.1 PROCEDURE

Let us read the principle first.

Principle

Proper handling of the bees is an essential step in the modern beekeeping. You have to provide comfort to the bees to harness their full potential. Intermittently, you need to examine the colony for any requirement and accordingly the required input is made available to the bee on-time.

Requirements

1. A honeybee colony
2. Bee veil
3. A pair of gloves

4. Smoker
5. Hive tool

Steps

1. Stand on the side of the colony.
2. Remove top cover and inner cover and make to stand these along the opposite rear corner of the hive.
3. Give a few puffs of smoke to the colonies.
4. Loosen second comb from your side and remove and examine it.
5. Look for the queen bee on this comb. If it is there, hold it gently and leave it on the last comb.
6. This second comb without the queen bee be made to stand length-wise along the inner cover lying with the opposite rear corner of the hive.
7. Then remove different combs in sequence, one by one and examine them.
8. After examining every comb, put it back into the colony.
9. At the end, put the comb lying outside, into the colony at the second comb place.
10. Cover the colony with inner cover and top cover.

3.3 PRECAUTIONS

In order to accomplish the exercise, you need to adhere to the following precautions:

- Follow all the precautions for colony examination *i.e.* wear protecting clothings including bee veil and gloves and give a few puffs of smoke using smoker.
- Hold the bee comb taken out of the colony over the bee hive while examining it.
- Examine the bee colony at the time of the day when bees are the most active and do not keep the colony open for long period.
- Colonies should be observed on some calm day.
- Second comb, which is removed and observed the first, should be looked for the presence of queen bee. If queen bee is spotted on it, it should be gently held in between thumb and index finger through its thorax and be left out on the last comb. This second comb then be kept outside length-wise tilting along the opposite rear corner of the hive.
- All the combs should be taken out just perpendicularly and be inserted back also just perpendicularly.
- The original sequence of combs in the bee colony must be maintained while inserting the combs back after examination.
- Avoid giving heavy smoke into the colonies.