

Warm Colors Apiary

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Introduction & Care of Your Package Bees

Before picking up your packages up from Warm Colors Apiary, have all equipment for a “one story” hive assembled, painted and on a hive stand. Locate your hive(s) using the following criteria;

- Wind break on North side to protect from winter wind.
- Water should be available (year round) within a 1/4 mile. Place a container near your hives to keep bees from using water in a neighbor’s yard.
- Leave an area around your hives to allow room to work on your hives.
- Allow for air drainage. Do not place hives at the bottom of a hill where cold & moisture can settle.
- Orient the hive entrance toward south or east. Early sun will encourage early foraging. Also sun during winter is critical to the health of your bees.
- Respect & protect the neighborhood. Do not place your colony where people walk, or may interfere with the bees flight path. Use fences and buildings to force bees to fly up and over high traffic areas. Place hive in an out of site location.
- Also have electric fences up before starting the colony to discourage bears. Fences should be at least three feet from the hive or bears can reach through the wires and knock the hive over. Keep hive stands at least 15 inches off the ground & out of the reach of skunks.

About the Package(s)

You have ordered quality bees from Hardeman Apiaries in Mount Vernon, Georgia. The bees have been inspected and certified as free from pests & disease by the Georgia State Bee Inspector. They have also been treated for any problems before the package season began. Although a 100% guarantee is never possible and no package supplier can promise mite free stock, You can install your packages without using medication, and should not need to treat until fall, when you prepare colonies for winter.

Your package includes a young, mated queen ready to begin laying eggs. A young Queen is less likely to swarm, and will lay considerably more eggs than a second year Queen. This ensures rapid buildup and a strong colony that will occupy two hive bodies within 4 – 6 weeks (4 if you have drawn comb).

*** A newly mated Queens can take longer to start laying. A new queen will sometimes require a week or two to reach full egg laying potential. Give your new queen time to settle down and do her job. The weather, the number of workers available to support the*

brood nest and having adequate food reserves can be limiting factors in how many eggs a queen is laying.

The Importance of Feeding

A queen will not lay to her full potential if the colony lacks pollen and honey. Keep feeding your new colony honey, or sugar syrup 1:1 and pollen substitute until they occupy two deep hive bodies. Even if plenty of natural pollen is available a new colony will not have a sufficient foraging force until newly emerging workers are at least three weeks old. It can take six weeks before the foraging bees can supply the food to meet the needs of a young, laying, queen. Lack of food is the main reason new colonies do not build up quickly. Keep your new bees well fed. My rule of thumb is that any colony with less than three frames of honey (or syrup) and three frames of pollen is starving during the spring buildup. Expect to feed a 5 gallon bucket of syrup per package, and at least two pollen substitute patties.

After Picking up Your Bees

If you cannot install your package bees immediately, keep them in a dark, cool location (50-70 F). Also spray or brush them with sugar syrup (1:1) every four to six hours. Use enough syrup to cover the screen, but not wet the bees (they can drown). Do not use syrup that is hot, it must be room temperature or it may harm the bees. If temperatures are above 80F spray with fresh water every few hours to keep bees hydrated. If they are running in the cage they are too warm.

Hiving a Package

Hive your bees as soon as possible. It is best to do this in the late afternoon or early morning to keep bees from flying and drifting to other hives. It is fine to hive bees on rainy or snowy days, although try not to leave them exposed for too long.

- 1) Do not use smoke on package bees.
- 2) Place entrance reducer using the smallest opening. If you are hiving your bees on a warm, sunny day, place some grass into the hole to keep bees inside until they settle.
- 3) Remove four frames from the center of the hive body.
- 4) Spray or brush the cage screen liberally with sugar syrup.
- 5) Pry the wooden cover off the top of the package with your hive tool. Remove feeder can and set it aside.
- 6) Remove the Queen cage and check to see if she is alive and healthy. *Call Dan immediately if the Queen has died.* Place in a safe place (your pocket). Keep her warm.
- 7) Spray bees with more syrup.
- 8) Remove cork from candy end of Queen cage, and place cage between center frames with screen side down and facing bees, not covered by foundation or comb.
- 9) Jar package sharply to knock bees to the bottom of the cage.
- 10) Pour bees into open area of hive body (without frames). Gently replace three of the four frames. Install a division board feeder at this time (if you are using one), and fill with syrup. If using an entrance feeder you can fill it and have it in place before pouring the bees into the hive body.

***** Russian Queens should be kept caged for 3 days before removing the cork on the candy end. This will increase the likely acceptance of the queen. Also feed bees continuously during the introduction period. Avoid any disturbance of the colony during this time.***

11) Add pollen substitute (Bee Pro) over center frames. Do not block inner cover hole. Use pollen substitute even if plenty of natural pollen is available. This is the time the bees will most benefit from feeding.

12) Replace inner cover; add pail feeder over center hole (if not using a division board feeder). Use 1:1 sugar syrup. Fumidil-B to prevent nosema can be added to first gallon of syrup.

13) Cover pail with an empty super and telescoping cover. Leave bees to settle in and start organizing the colony.

Management Schedule for Package Bees

After installing your bees, keep them well fed, and monitor the queen's egg laying and brood pattern. The following schedule should provide a guide for managing your new hives.

Day 1– Do not disturb the bees. Check to see that they are taking the syrup. Remove any grass or obstructions from the entrance reducer. Look for pollen on foraging bee's legs.

Day 4 – Use sugar syrup or some (very little) smoke to calm the bees. Check that the Queen has been released from the cage and if she has started laying eggs. Look for eggs on the center combs. You do not have to see the queen if eggs are present. Do not pull more frames than is necessary to confirm the Queen is out and laying eggs. Be quick and do not disturb your colony. Continue to feed with syrup. Typically you will use 20 to 25 pounds of granulated sugar (5-7 gallons of 1:1 syrup) per package to draw two supers of foundation.

- ***Russian Queens can take longer to begin laying eggs. I often back check at 14-16 days. Do not worry if no eggs are noticed after seven days. Check back every 5-7 days until eggs are found. I will replace if no eggs are found after two weeks.***

Every 7 to 10 Days - Do the following each week.

- 1) Check bees & brood. The number of bees will dwindle for the first 21 days, or until the first new workers emerge. Brood should have eggs, larvae, and capped brood in tight patterns. A few open cells is actually desirable and is an indication of multiple (many drones) matings and better brood viability.
- 2) Continue to feed syrup to supplement natural nectar supplies. Feed until foundation in two hive bodies has been drawn into comb. If the weather becomes hot and the syrup begins fermenting then stop feeding.
- 3) Switch foundation with drawn (without brood) comb. This will increase the bee's ability to draw the foundation into comb. Move the outside frames of foundation into the center of the bees, but do not place between brood frames.

- 4) Provide room for expansion. When the first hive body has 80% (eight frames) drawn comb add the second hive body (Approximately 4-6 weeks if using foundation, 1 week less when starting with drawn comb). I like to move a frame or two of brood & a frame of honey up into the second hive body to encourage young bees to move up.
- ***Russian Queens will swarm their first year if not given plenty of room to expand. I do not like to start Russians on foundation as it takes them longer to buildup. Use drawn comb.***
 - ***Check for queen cups & cells the third week. This may indicate early supercedure. Check after five days to verify that they are actually making queens cells. A colony with Russian workers will often have cups that will not necessarily be used. Russian colonies are less likely to swarm, supercede or reject a queen when the workers are related to her. With a new package this happens the fourth and fifth week after egg laying begins.***
 - ***Add a second hive body when 6-7 frames have drawn comb (if starting on foundation). If you have started with drawn comb add the second hive body four weeks after introducing the package.***
- 5) *Week 5 or 6.* Take one drawn comb from the first hive body and place in center of second hive body. This will encourage colony expansion.
- 6) Add honey super(s) when second hive body is 80% drawn comb.

Management is the same for packages and over wintered colonies once packages have two hive bodies filled with bees and drawn comb. Bees should be monitored for Varroa mites and treated for Nosema disease with Fumidil-B. Both are carriers of many viruses. Control & prevention of Varroa and Nosema also reduce the spread of viruses, greatly improving the health of the colony. – D.C.
