NUC INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO HANDLE YOUR NUC

Your bees: Your nuc contains a young, mated queen and worker bees of various ages. There is brood of all stages and some honey and pollen in reserve. The queen is not caged – transfer your frames with care. In general there are 2-3 frames of brood, 1 frame of honey/pollen, and 1 empty frame for growth.

Transport and storage: Your nucleus hive is sealed for transport with screened ventilation holes. If you can't install the nuc immediately, keep it somewhere cool, preferably between 50˚ and 60˚. Don't leave the bees in direct sunlight – they can overheat.

Preparation: You will need one deep brood box to start, a hive tool, protective clothing, and some sugar syrup made with 2 parts sugar to one part water (by weight or volume). Have your equipment ready before your bees arrive. The sugar syrup must be at room temperature. If you are going to open the cap on your nuc to let the bees fly for a while before you move them into the hive box, be sure to place the nuc in the exact spot where your hive box will be. Bees orient to a specific location, and foragers will return to the exact spot they exited the nuc box. These bees are valuable workers and you want to ensure they return to your colony.

NUC INSTALLATION AND CARE

It is best to install your nuc into a hive box as soon as possible. If installation will be delayed, locate your nuc box in the exact spot where your hive box will be and remove the cap so the bees can fly out for water and cleansing flights (see above).

When transferring the frames from your nuc to a hive box, it is important to keep the nuc frames together in the same order. Place these five frames in the center of your hive box, then add new frames to either side to fill the box (8 or 10 frames depending on your hive configuration). You can then brush or shake any remaining bees from the nuc box into the hive. Start your bees in a single deep brood box – you will need to add a second deep brood box when 70% of the frames in your box are drawn out with wax.

Feed your bees 2:1 sugar syrup until the frames in both of your brood boxes are drawn, or until the bees stop taking the syrup. Backfilling/storage of syrup in brood cells indicates the bees are being overfed. Unlike packages, nucs come with a small amount of honey and pollen in reserve. Despite this, they will benefit greatly from supplemental feeding of sugar syrup and protein until they are fully established in both brood boxes. This is especially true if they are installed before a stretch of rainy weather or if you are using new foundation. Always remove your feeders before adding honey supers.

Try not to disturb your new hive for a few days after transfer (other than to refill sugar syrup). You should inspect the hive after about a week to ensure the queen is alive and viable (look for eggs). You should see fresh comb and wax and brood of all stages. Once about 70% of the frames in your box are drawn and being used by the bees, it is time to add a second brood box. Continue to feed your bees while they work to draw out this box. Adding an entrance reducer while your bees are becoming established can be beneficial and will give them a smaller entrance to defend. After about a month it is a good idea to test your hive for mites. There are many methods for doing this *(see https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/resources/varroa-management/ to use their excellent "Varroa Management Decision Tool" which outlines ways in which to best manage mites*).

Some Quick Notes

- *There is inherent risk in transporting live bees. Be aware that you may have a few loose bees on the outside of your nuc box. Take care to secure the nuc in your car so it doesn't tip over. Keep the bees shaded and well ventilated during transport.*
- *Bees are stinging insects. Take care to protect yourself during handling and installation.*
- *A colony of bees is a living organism. As beekeepers we do our best to manage them in a way that encourages them to stay in the hive we provide for them. It is highly unlikely for a first year nuc colony to swarm, but there is no guarantee. Swarming and absconding are natural phenomena.*
- *Varroa mites are present in almost every bee colony, package, and nuc. It is a good idea to test your colony for mites after they are established to determine if treatment is warranted.*

An excellent recommended resource is "First Year Beekeeping" by Randy Oliver on www.scientificbeekeeping.com

We care about your success in beekeeping!

For questions about the general care of your nuc, management techniques, and general beekeeping advice, contact Camille at (541) 929-3524 or bees@shonnards.com