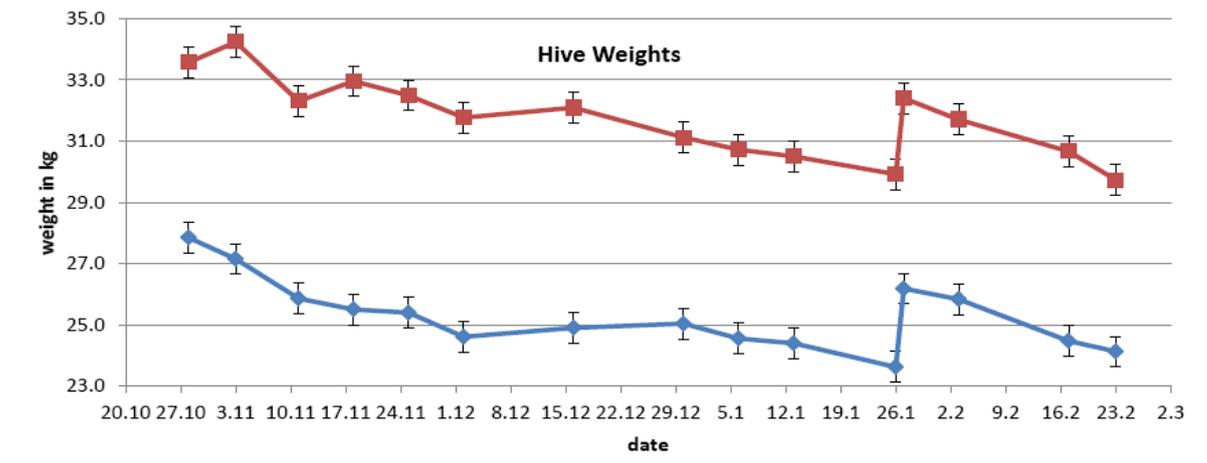


AUTUMN & WINTER FEEDING.

Autumn Feed - a strong colony will need 25 kg of stores to keep them going through the winter. If you have taken off honey in August and they are a strong colony, the bees will probably collect most of it themselves. But to check whether they need feeding the hive should be 'hefted' by using a spring balance on the LHS or RHS and doubling the weight. A National Hive floor, double brood box, frames, crown board & roof weighs about 22 kg, a brood & half 20 kg, so the total weight should be about 45/50kg.

A 50/50 syrup mixture, i.e. 1Kg sugar to 1 litre of water can be fed up to late September, maybe Mid October, only if the daytime temperatures are close to 20C, to allow the bees to evaporate the excess moisture.

Adrian Davis of Canterbury Beekeepers took these weight readings of his two hives over the winter of 2012/13.



You can see the increase in weight when he added 2.5Kg of fondant in late January. As you can see the weights are tracking quite well through the winter. He states that the colonies now seem to be losing about 600g/week. He expects this to increase quite markedly once the brood starts in earnest. Interestingly though, the colonies have lost 2 – 2.5Kg since feeding with fondant, but strangely they have barely touched the fondant.

The above shows how useful checking weights accurately can be.



Luggage spring scales, like the one shown, can be purchased for about £5 or less on Ebay and would certainly pay for themselves if they prevent the loss of a colony through lack of stores.

Winter Feed - surplus honey is ideal food for the bees in winter. Never feed any other honey than your own as it may contain disease. However a very good alternative is sugar candy.

A quick recipe is to boil 2 Kg of sugar with 0.5 litres water with a teaspoon of cream of tartar to prevent it setting too hard. Making candy is exactly like jam making in that you turn the heat down to achieve a gentle rolling boil for 10 minutes and test some on a cold surface and if sets then the candy is ready.

Let the mixture cool naturally to minimise the crystal size and when white streaks start to appear at the edges stir vigorously. Repeat this every 10 minutes until the candy is at room temperature. Ladle into plastic containers such as ice cream or margarine tubs and these can be inverted over the feed hole in the crown board in an empty super below the roof.

Emergency feeding - Sugar / Honey Feed in Re-sealable Freezer Bags:

If you have some honey left over, the bees love this 1 part honey to 3 parts sugar recipe.

I mixed the honey in first and very gradually added hot water to dissolve any remaining dry sugar, just sufficient to make a thick paste.

Click on: http://www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk/downloads/Ziploc_Sugar_Honey.pdf for full details.

John Farrow - April 2013