



The Managed Mentoring Program on getting started in beekeeping.

# Managed Mentoring



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## Swarm Management

Lesson | Proactive Swarm Management



# What is Covered in this Module

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Management vs. Prevention

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Swarm Probability Assessment

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Proactive Measures

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Swarm Management Techniques and Tactics

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# Swarm Management vs Prevention

## □ Terminology

- *This is a touch of semantics. Let's talk management vs. prevention*
  - In the beekeeping industry these terms are often interchangeable
  - They both are used to describe management practices that keep your bees from swarming.
  - **In the context of these lessons**, we are going to be a little more descriptive with these terms so that the content is organized
- *Management > Things you do to keep swarming from happening*
- *Prevention > Things you do to stop swarming that is underway*



# This lesson vs. the next lesson

## □ This lesson is Management

- *In this lesson we are going to focus on the proactive things you can do to thwart your hive from swarming.*

## □ Next Lesson > Prevention

- *In the next lesson we will talk about what you do when the swarm triggers are in play and the bees are mustering to swarm.*
  - There we will tell you what to do to prevent a swarm that hasn't left yet from swarming away



# Swarm Management Window

## □ For a large colony...

- *Reminder that swarming typically comes some time after drones appear.*

## □ Consider drones being raised the first marker

- *Drones signify a time when queens could lay eggs for their replacement **because mating is possible.***
- ***This window when you have to pay attention because...Eggs in a queen cup are a turning point***
  - You have to consider that in window of 21 days queens could emerge to replace your queen – *more on this shortly*



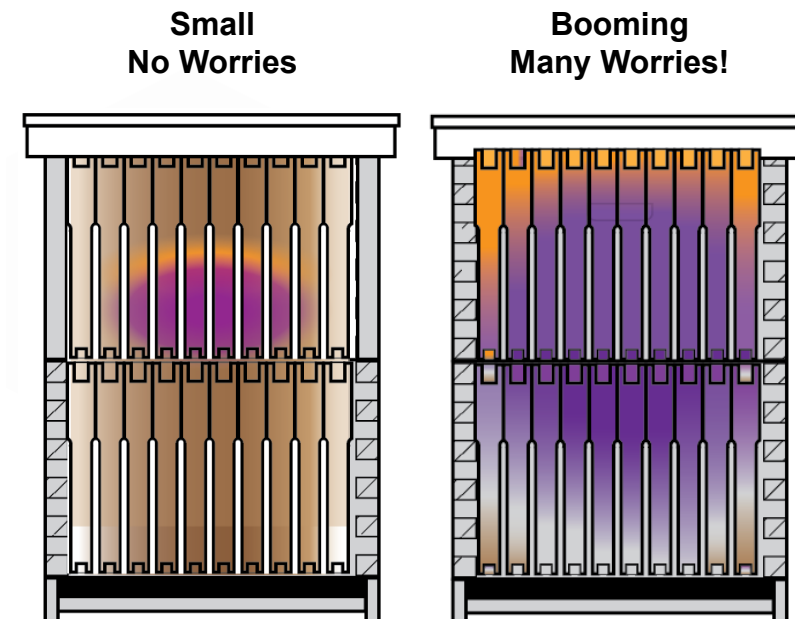
# Proactive Assessment

- **During the window you will want to take action if you are in jeopardy of your hive swarming**

- *Look at the colony profile*

- **For the hive on the right**

- *Provide more space*
- *Relieve Brood Nest Congestion*
- *Relieve Storage area Congestion*



# A programming note

## □ I am about to go through a lot of techniques

- *Inevitably when I give this talk, someone in the audience will tell of a technique that can be used*
  - For the sake of being thorough, and because someone will share, I will speak to many options. Please bear with me, I'll make it educational.
- *I will show you a lot of things, **and then tell you what to do.***
  - Do not be dismayed, just sit back, relax, think about the reasons that all of these methods exist, and the pros and cons of each.

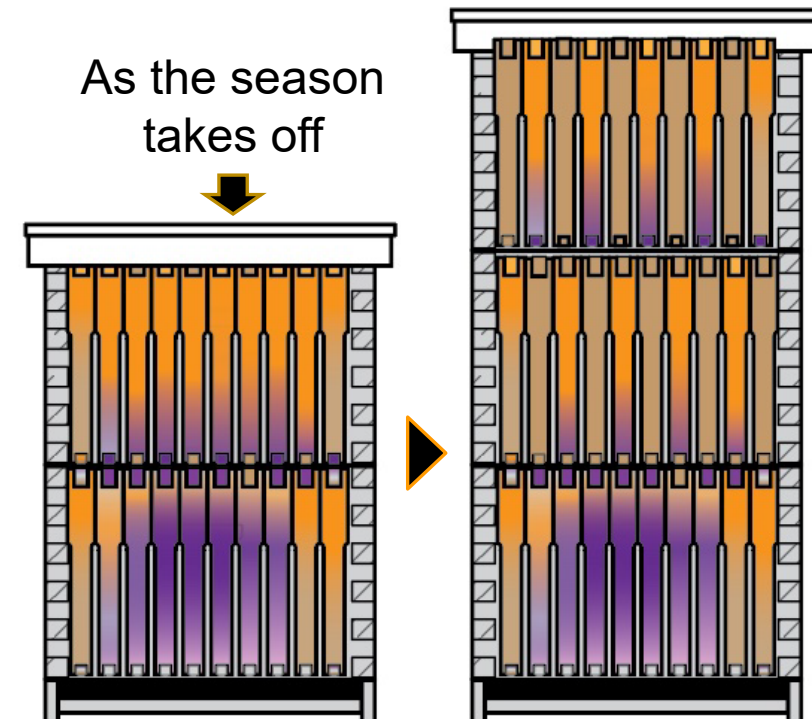


## Proactive Measure:

## Checkerboarding

### □ Relieve Congestion, in the storage area, Option 2

- Open up the **honey dome**
  - With the top box being mostly full, add another box (has to be a full)
  - Move every other honey frame up
  - This gives space for colony to store more food, and serves as enticement
    - Consider an upper entrance

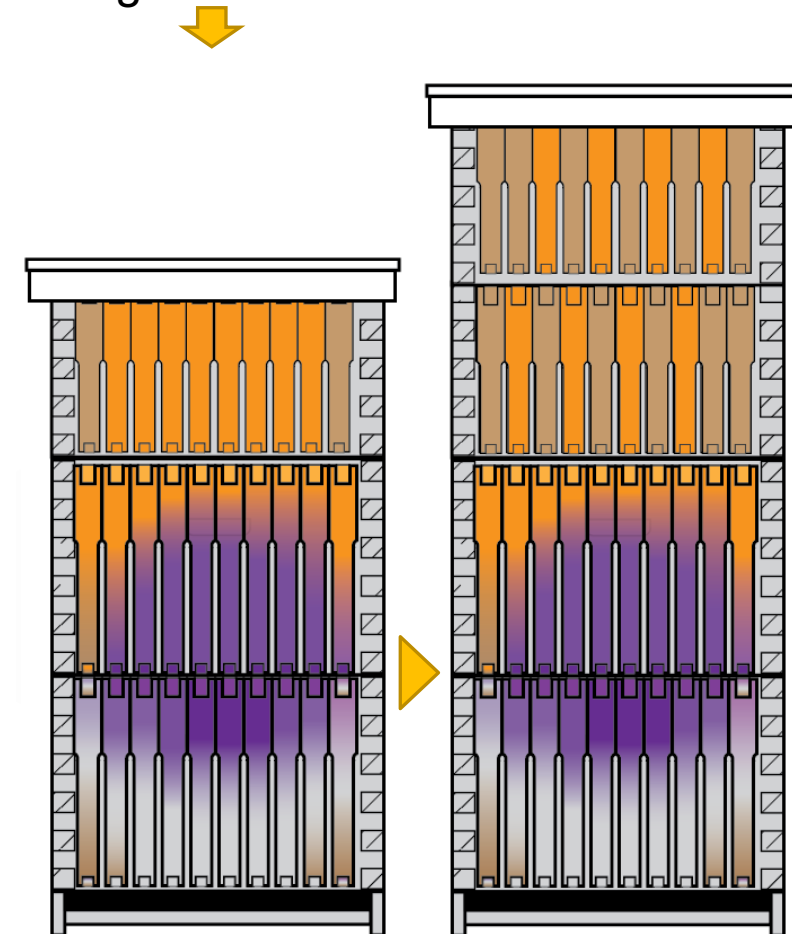


# Proactive Measure: Checkerboarding

## ❑ Relieve Congestion, in the storage area, Option 2

- *Do it again?*
  - Sometimes you can use the honey to draw bees up to another box.
  - The other option of course is to harvest the top box instead

This is part way through the season



# A word on Checkerboarding

Many get really confused about what the checkerboarding technique is

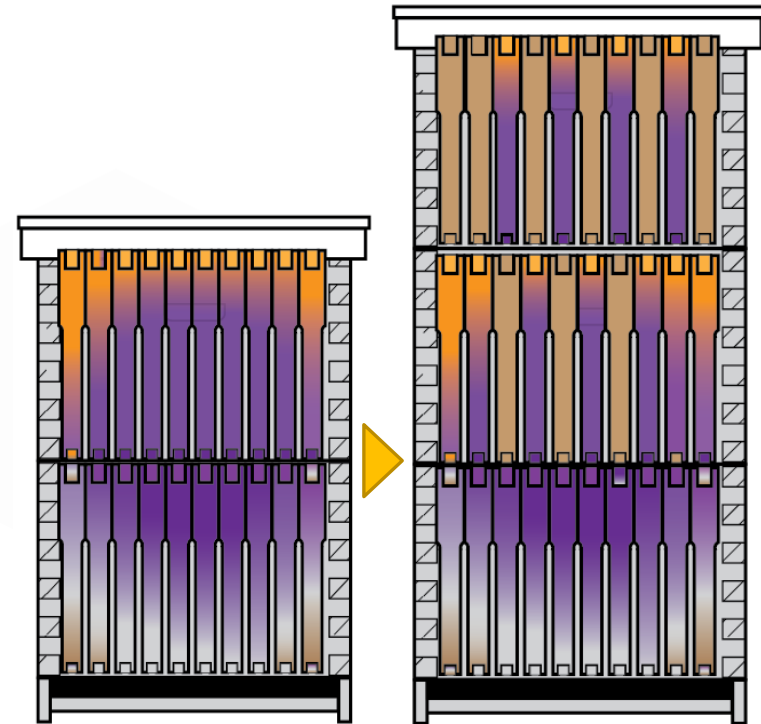
- **The late Walt Wright was a beekeeper from Elkton Tennessee who coined the phrase**
  - *He is the one who articulated that if you provide space in the **honey dome** and the bees will hold off on swarm preparations.*
  - *Provide extra hive bodies and intersperse fresh drawn comb frames between capped honey frames.*
    - Do this right over the brood chamber.
    - Do not make the mistake of using frames with plain foundation only, it will not work.
    - Do this before they start backfilling the brood chamber or you could be too late.



# Proactive Mgmt. > Expand

## □ Relieve Congestion in the nest, Option 2

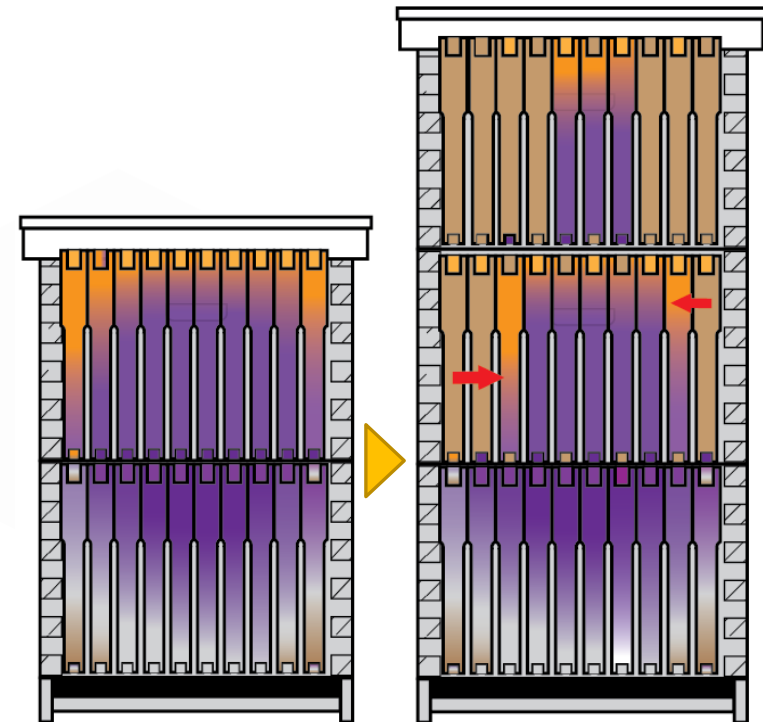
- *Another method to relieve congestion*
- *Move every other brood frame into the third box*
- *Provides a pathway for the bees to move up*
  - Use drawn comb if you have it



# Proactive Mgmt. > Pyramid Up = (NEST!)

## □ Relieve Congestion in the nest, Option 1

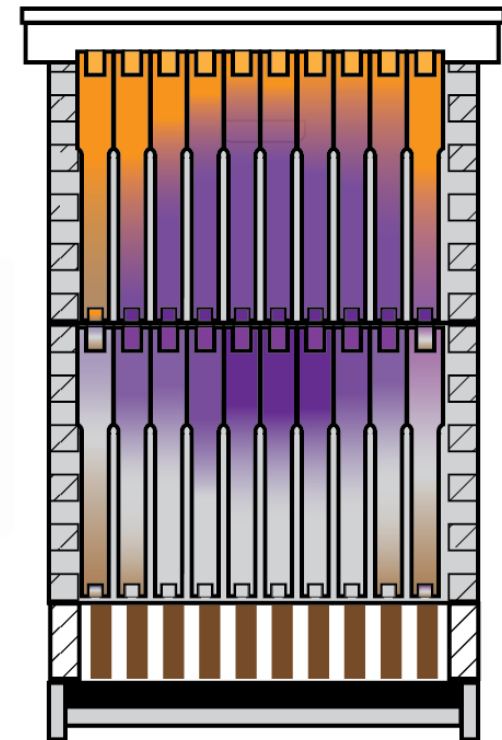
- Relieve congestion in the **nest** and give space for the queen to lay
- Add a box and move frames into a pyramid shape
- Room for colony expansion into three boxes



# Proactive Mgmt. > Slatted Rack

## ❑ Slatted Rack to relieve congestion

- *Not a commonly employed device*
- *Allows extra space in the hive for bees to accumulate and hang out, off of the frames*



# Proactive Mgmt. > Do not overfeed

- ❑ **Sometimes beekeepers want a good start**
  - *Overfeeding causes hoarding and backfilling of the brood area.*
  - *They get too good of a start and it can lead to massive populations*
  - *If you are stimulating the colony in the spring, you best have a plan to cope for success*



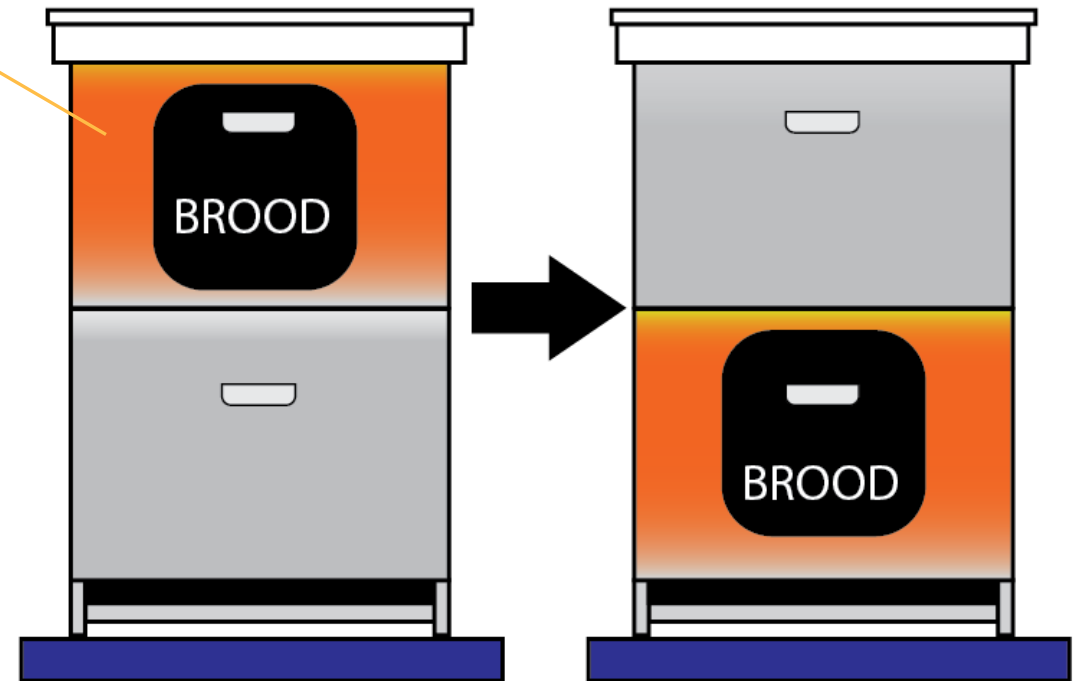
# Spring Colony Reversal

Hive coming out of winter

## □ “Bees build up”

- *There is a common impression that bees build up*
  - I think it has merit for describing new hive growth
  - And it gets applied to relieving congestion
  - Hence the technique to do a spring reversal. It aligns with expansion of resources above the brood nest

## Spring Colony Reversal Method



## By the way...

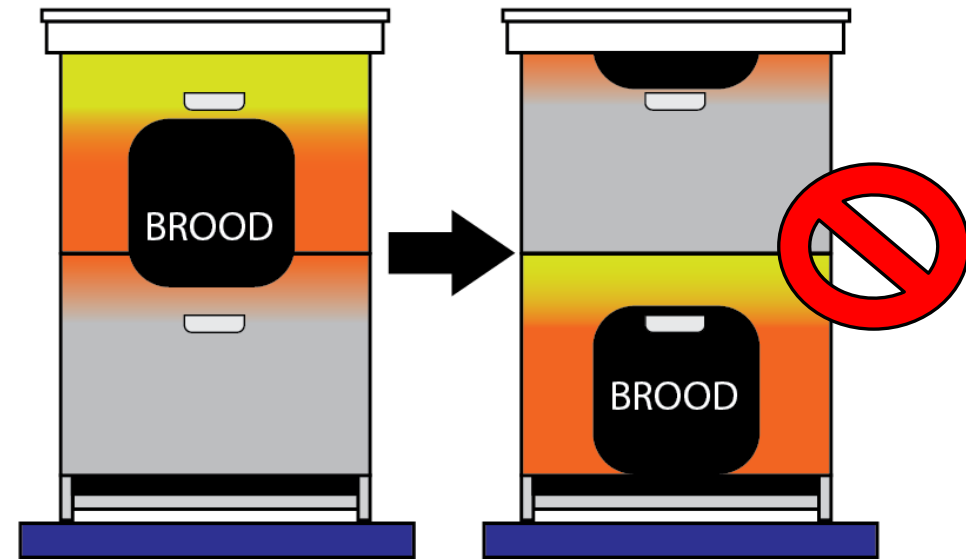
### ❑ Don't do this

- *You'll doom part of the brood*

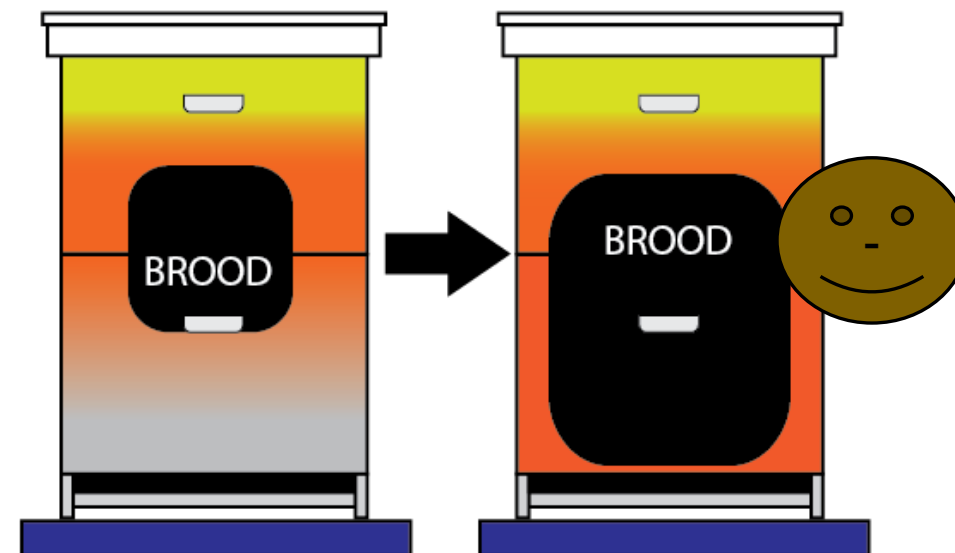
### ❑ Let this happen instead

- *Simply let the grow to occupy the space.*
  - Because, contrary to "bees build up", they will build up, down, sideways (think top bar), etc.

## Spring Colony Reversal Method



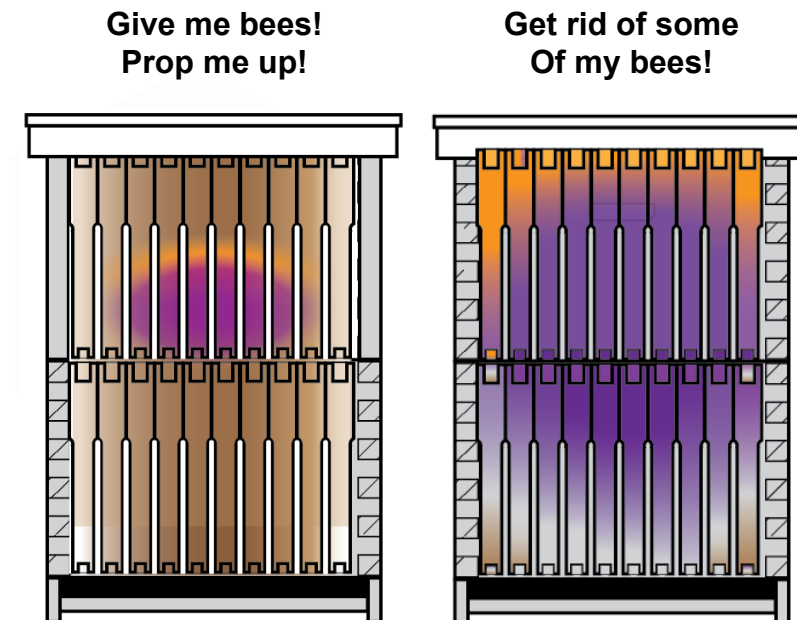
## Brood Growth



# Proactive Mgmt. > Equalization

- ❑ You could exchange frames between these two hives and prop up the small one while diffusing the big one.

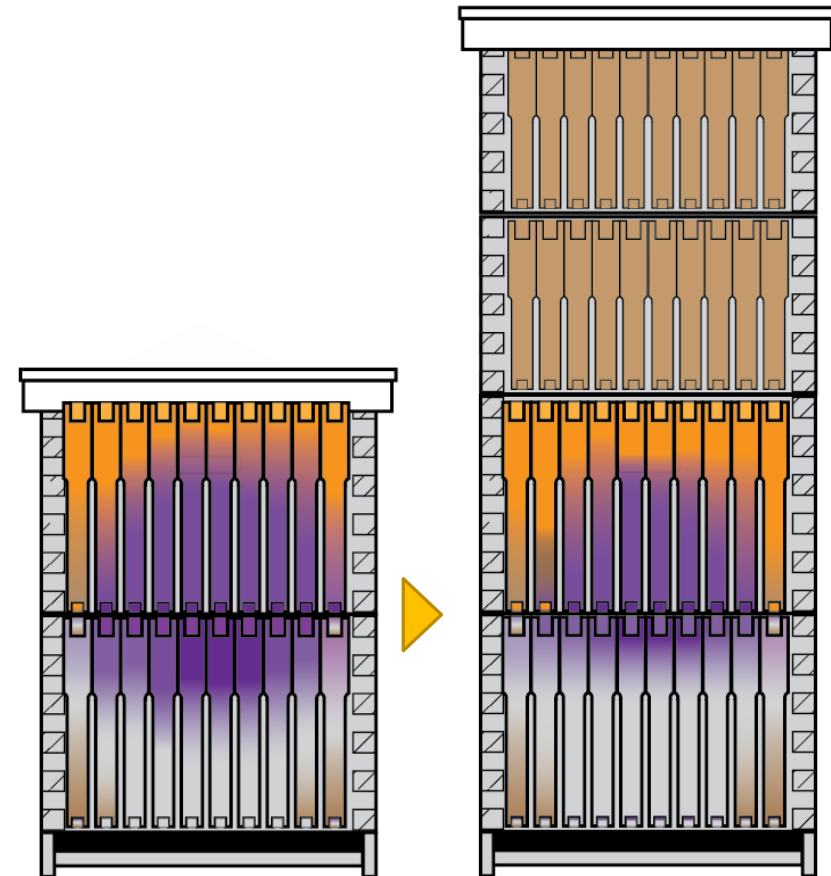
- *Simply swap frames of capped brood*
- *Don't take the queen!*



# Preventative Measure: More Boxes

## □ Relieve Congestion, in the storage area, Option 1

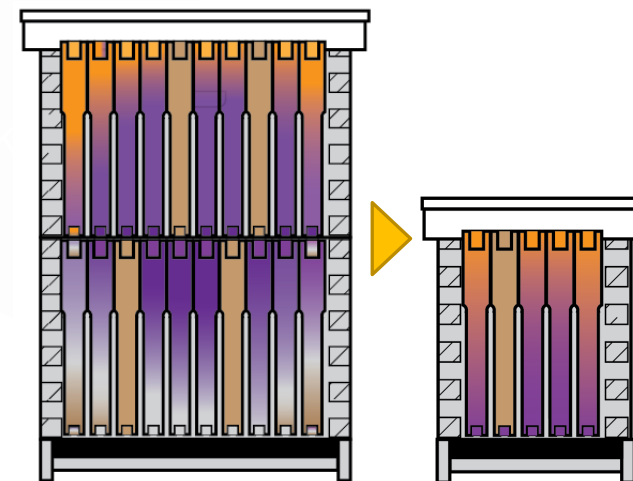
- *Give More Space*
  - The first common sense thing is to add honey supers **before the nectar flow**
    - Let the bees discover the extra space
    - Consider an upper entrance
- *Why 2 honey supers? One thought*
  - Bees will walk through the lower super to occupy the upper super.
  - The contact with the lower box entices them up to discover the space



# Proactive Mgmt. > A divide / split

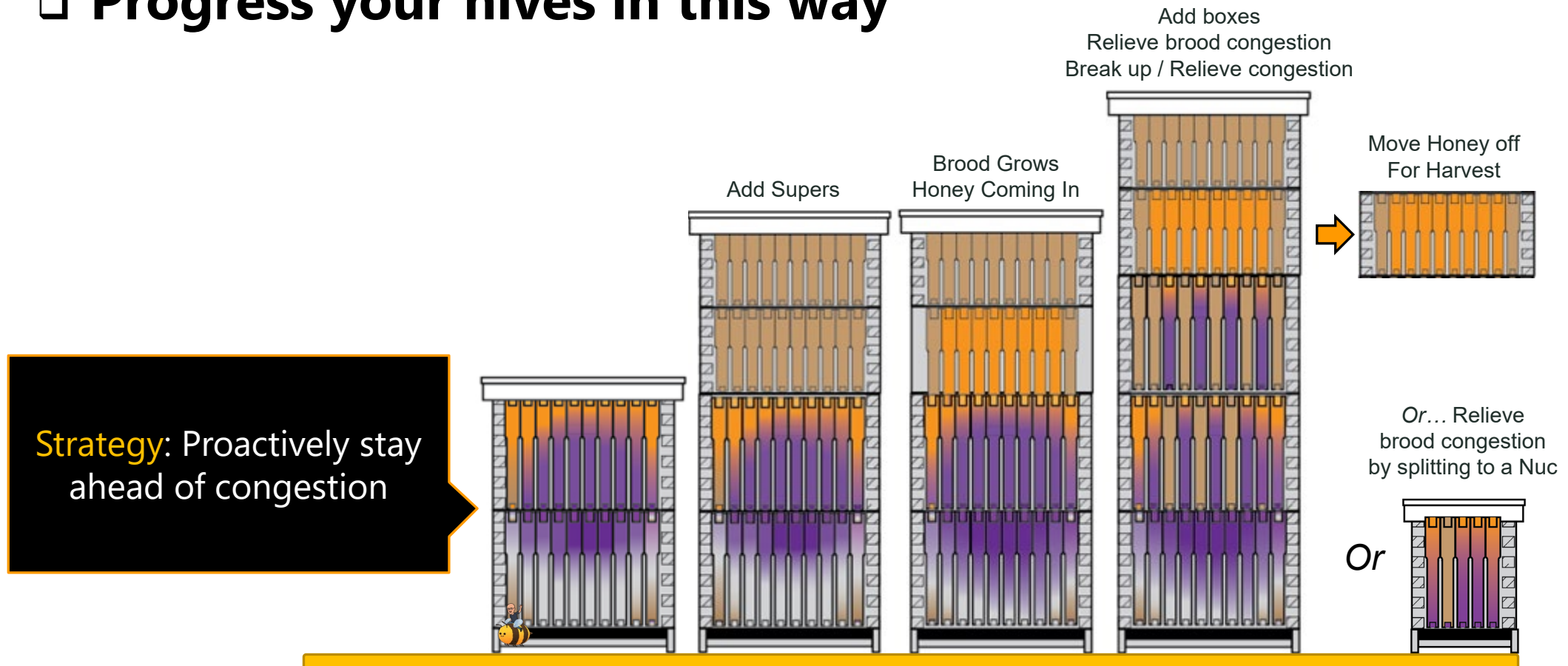
## □ Split (aka divide): Pull four (or 5) frames out

- *Make a separate Nucleus colony*
- *Replace frame removed from the origin colony with drawn comb*
  - No Drawn comb? Place all active comb toward the center of the origin hive, and put foundation to the outside.
  - Ok to put one or two foundation frames in the middle of the drawn frames to have the build comb for you and keep them occupied
- *Lessons on splits are upcoming!*



# Seasonal Progression for Congestion

□ Progress your hives in this way



# Closing Comments

## ■ Customary Close

- Where we stand, where we are going...
  - *As part of the swarm management series, this lesson closes the swarm management tactics.*
  - *Our next topic moves focuses on how to prevent swarms that are mustering from flying away.*
    - After swarm prevention we will host a series on making splits, the rationale of how to perform them, as well as various approaches.
    - Following splits we will return to swarming in a different light, we will provide a primer on collecting swarms



# Q&A

- **What Questions did we not anticipate?**
  - If you have feedback, you can leave a constructive comment; but be nice.
  - You could also send an email to [comments@managedmentoring.com](mailto:comments@managedmentoring.com)
    - *Please refer to this video in the subject so we know what the reference is.*

