



The Managed Mentoring Program on getting started in beekeeping.

Managed Mentoring



Managed Mentoring

The Value of Nucleus Colonies

Lesson | Utility of NucS



What is Covered in this Lesson

Benefits of nucleus colonies in the apiary

Some attention required to Manage

Exploring the utility Nuc colonies in your operation

Overwintering Nucs

Nucs as insurance



The Utility of Nucleus Colonies

□ They can be a large benefit in so many ways

- *Nuc colonies an extremely valuable resource for:*
 - Keeping colonies for reserve resources and as a back to any failing queens
 - Learning about beekeeping
 - Use in splitting off colonies for a multitude of reasons:
 - Swarm control, Making more hives, Preserving good genetics, Queen breeding...
 - Introduction of new stock into your operation
 - As a resource to replace losses in the operation
 - Housing captured swarms
 - Queen Castles (hives dedicated to rearing newly reared queens)



Nucs are a pleasure to work with

□ So many desirable attributes:

- *Nucleus colonies are fun to work with:*
 - Compact: easy to move and easy to work with the downsized equipment
 - Ease of inspection: only five frames so it is easy to move through
 - Gentle: Smaller clusters tend to be less defensive
 - Prolific Producers: They are resources building machines
 - No Drone Brood: They make little to no drone brood



Potential Watch Items

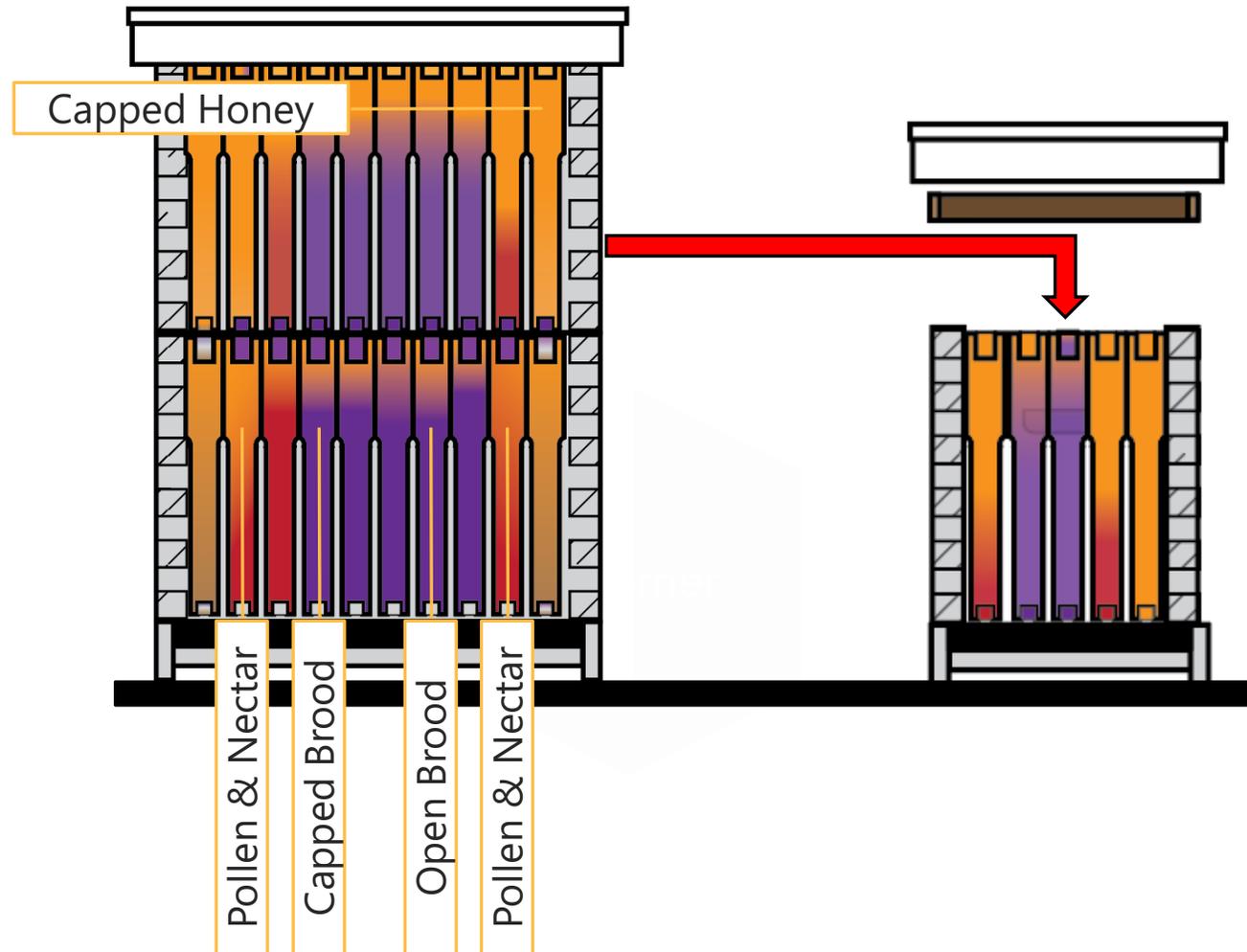
□ There are some differences

- *They do require attention to some details*
 - Swarming: You have to stay ahead of them as they can swarm if restricted
 - Overwintering: They can be overwintered; they should be **well provisioned** to get them through
 - Robbing: Smaller in size, they could be overcome by larger hives in the vicinity
 - Prolific: They grow fast and require you to oversee their maintenance more often



Making Nucleus Colonies

- ❑ **Spring is the perfect time**
 - *When colonies are in abundance, make Nucs*
 - *See our instructions in the Traditional Splits lesson*



Utility Run Through: Resources

□ Resources in Reserve

- *Nucs build resources throughout the season*
- ***If you need honeycomb***, you can let nucs build it out for you
 - Nucs are very prolific at drawing honeycomb
- *If you need frames of pollen or nectar, you can take it from the nucs and supply them with foundation – they will build and recover quickly*
- *If your queen fails and you need another – just combine the Nuc with the failed colony*



Utility: Queen Cells in Reserve

□ Split and house queen cells

- *Taking advantage of opportunity when you find queen cells in progress*
 - If you find colonies with queen cells; make a split and supply the split with the queen cells; Let them produce a new queen and colony for you on the side.
- *You could move the queen and some frames out of an operational Nuc into another – make two Nucs*
 - What you leave behind can be supplied with queen cells and you can start a new colony. If it doesn't work –just recombine...



Utility: Learning Nucs

□ Use them to accelerate your learning

- *If you split off a colony to a Nuc, it provides a perfect learning platform*
 - You can leave your main hive alone, and work in the Nuc to observe the operation. If you make a mistake – no harm as the full colony is still intact
 - It is easy to follow the progress of the bees in a Nuc – the resources, how the queen works, and more
 - You could learn how to pick up queens and mark them
 - You can learn how they build the nest structures and how long it takes to build comb
 - All without impacting the origin hive which can produce honey for you



Utility: New Stock / New Practices

□ Attempt different management practices

- *Maybe try a new race of bees...*
 - Perhaps you want to try a new race of bees to learn what they are like
 - Setup a Russian Nuc, Carniolian, or perhaps install a certain hygienic queen
- *Nucs provide the perfect opportunity to experiment on the side with whatever you wish to try*
 - Maybe you want to learn to use a new hive tool, or a frame hanger or other management practices – different foundation, etc.
 - With a Nuc you can learn on the side



Utility: Backup Plan and/or Succession

□ A smart plan to have bees in reserve

- *If your situation allows, having nucs on the side is good insurance*
- *You can use these bees to resolve issues with your main hives*
 - If something goes wrong, you will be self-sustaining. You will not have to buy bees or be in a situation where you do not have a manner to recover from a problem
- *Use Nucs in a queen succession plan*
 - Make a split and use it to raise a new proven queen for succession
 - Once proven viable, you can use the new to replace an older queen



Utility: Housing Capture Swarms

□ Homing captures swarms

- *Nuc boxes often are a good option for housing a captured swarm*
- *When called for a captured swarm – often having Nuc equipment is a go to strategy for holding the swarm after capture*
 - They are often the right size to hold a swarm
 - Nucs are quite portable and easier to keep in storage for these type of opportunities
 - Nucs provide a good succession path to full sized colonies as Nucs develop; graduating from a two-box stack to a single deep is just about right



Overwintering

❑ Overwintering viability in the Mid-Atlantic

- *It is feasible to overwinter Nucleus Colony*
 - Overwinter in a 5-frame over 5-frame
 - Overwinter two or more Nucs
 - ❑ Place them side-by-side on a hive stand
 - Physically touching, and preferably insulated. Some beekeepers come to calling this setup a "Nuc Condo"
 - ❑ They share heat between the walls that touch
- *Overwintered Nucs*
 - Provides a good insurance plan for any possible recovery that surfaces in the spring



A Fellowship Option

□ Make Friends in Beekeeping

- *Support your beekeeping network*
 - We are fans of encouraging you to make 'friends in beekeeping'.
 - When you do, you might consider support another friend's operation and they can support yours
- *If you have a bad year – or if they have a bad year*
 - Either one holding bees in reserve can help the other out
 - This makes is so both beekeepers have a fallback if one has a bad year and no one has to buy bees



Nucs: A fun way to keep bees

□ They are often a favorite side pursuit

- *If you ask beekeepers that keep Nucs about how they like them, they will almost universally tell you that they are a great way to keep bees*
 - Gentle, useful, easy to care for, and great learning tools
 - most beekeepers really like keeping Nucleus hives

Give it a try and see if you see it the same way



Closing Comments

- **Customary Close**
 - Where we stand, where we are going...
 - *This lesson extolled the virtues of keeping nucleus hives*
 - *Our next series of lessons focus on honey harvesting*
 - Getting honey off the hive stack – clearing honey boxes
 - Uncapping Process
 - Using Extraction Equipment
 - Bottling Honey



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
 - *Please refer to this video in the subject so we know what the reference is.*

