

### MAKING A SPLIT

Generally, when the phrase 'making splits' comes up, the image of increasing one's beekeeping holdings is featured. That is, making two or more colonies from a single parent. That is because splitting a colony is the easiest and least expensive way to increase the number of colonies owned. But there are other reasons to split a colony, and, there are nearly as many ways to split one as there are colonies to split.

The overall principle in making a split is to start with a large, healthy, populous colony (or colonies). The goal is to remove 'some' uncapped brood, 'some' honey and pollen resources to a new box, or two, to start a new colony. A new queen may, or may not be added. The question most often asked is "How much is 'some'?" Usually, you do not want to reduce the parent colony to less than half its resources so it can continue to keep pace with the season. You may need to take bees, brood or food from more than one parent to successfully build a new split. Splits, then, should have enough nurse bees to care for the brood, some foragers to gather resources, sealed brood for immediate colony expansion, younger brood for continued expansion and some resources for immediate consumption.

Splits can be made to 'make increase', or for other reasons. Popular swarm control/prevention measures include splitting a large colony to allow room for expansion, and to relieve brood nest congestion. Often the 'new' colony is rejoined to the parent when the swarming urge is over so the actual number of colonies does not increase. One technique used to reduce tracheal mite infestation is to divide a colony later in the season, dispatching the older, infested bees, and overwintering the younger, less infested bees. There are few things that are as fulfilling as creating a new colony, especially if it is 'free', and you are the one who made it happen. Splits enable both to occur.

