

DIVIDING, UNITING AND SHIFTING OF BEE COLONIES

During different seasons as described earlier, different manipulations are done. These manipulations have been described separately under miscellaneous management since these may or may not be season specific.

Colony multiplication/dividing of colonies

- Catching of swarms is an old method to increase the number of colonies but this method should not be encouraged since the colonies raised from swarms will have the swarming instincts. Moreover, this is a time consuming method
- Spring is the best season for increasing number of colonies by dividing the colonies which are not as strong as others and sparing these colonies from honey production. Such colonies can be divided into nuclei with two to three frames of bees and each nucleus is given a queen cell or new queen. These nuclei should be fed with 50% sugar syrup
- Another method to increase the colonies is before the honey flow when colonies are having peak population. Remove 2-3 combs of brood and bees from strong colonies to make nuclei. This will not affect the strength of the strong colonies and these can avail honey flow well due to strong condition. This also reduces the chance of swarming. The nuclei are given new queen or queen cells.

Uniting of bee colonies

The colonies to be united should be brought close to each other by moving 1 metre each day so as to avoid drifting of bees. When they are near to each other (within one metre), the colonies can be easily united using newspaper method in which few small holes are punctured in the paper and placed over the brood chamber of the colony. Place the brood chamber of

other colony (without bottom board) over the first colony which is now separated by punctured newspaper. The bees will gradually mingle together by gnawing the paper.

Precaution

Keep the better queen and remove poor queen before uniting.

Shifting of bee colonies

- If colonies are to be moved within the apiary to a short distance, these should be moved 1 metre every day in the evening to the desired site
- If colonies are to be moved to a few hundred metres in the apiary, then these should first be taken to a distance of about 5km beyond the flight range. Keep the colonies for 2-3 days, and then bring back to the apiary and place at the desired site. However, before moving the colonies, all movable parts are nailed and colonies are closed in the late evening after the bee activity has ceased.