

ROBBING AND ABSCONDING

Robbing and its prevention

Robbing is stealing of food store by bees from other colonies.

Causes robbing

- Exposure of colonies for long duration during examination
- Exposed sugar syrup or its spillage near apiary
- Careless feeding of weak colonies
- Robbing is more during lean period when there is little nectar in the field.

Robber bees

- Robber bees become smooth, shiny and dark coloured due to repeated attack of guard bees - Robbing bees generally do not alight at the hive entrance boldly and face the guard bees with fear. They try to sneak in the hive through cracks and crevices.

Prevention of robbing

For an attentive beekeeper robbing is not a problem. Following precautions are needed:

- Never leave combs of honey exposed and examine the colonies quickly during dearth period
- During feeding avoid spillage of sugar syrup near apiary
- Take special care of weak colonies while feeding, since these are prone to robbing. Try to make weak colonies strong by uniting weaker ones. Feed such colonies in the evening. - Do not keep honey combs exposed after honey extraction. These combs are given back to the colonies only in the evening when foraging activity has stopped.

Control of robbing

If in spite of taking precautions the robbing is prevalent, manage colonies in the following manner:

- Reduce the entrance of the colony and close all other cracks and crevices
- Place wet grass in front of entrance of colony being robbed
- Sprinkling of repellents like carbolic acid or kerosene at hive entrance will also discourage robbing
- The colonies being robbed badly may be shifted to new site in the apiary after reducing entrance and throwing green grass at the hive entrance.

Absconding

It is desertion in which the whole colony leaves the hive. *A. cerana* is more prone to absconding than *A. mellifera*.

Causes:

- Shortage of food reserves
- Attack of bee enemies
- Too much disturbance and handling.

Prevention:

- Keep colonies strong and ensure that each colony has at least 5kg of food stores
- Avoid broodlessness in the colonies. If a colony is broodless, provide 1-2 frames of young healthy brood.
- Check the colonies for diseases and attack of bee enemies. Manage colonies accordingly.