

May 8th, 2010

Dear Reader,

The results of my 2009-2010 overwinter survival rates with OTS queens were again very encouraging as I overwintered over 75% of my July starts here on the 43rd parallel. That means that of the 4 starts I made in July from the previous year's overwintered queen, over 3 out of the 4 survived on average. Likewise, reports from the 40th parallel where the same methods are being used, are very positive with a nice 90% overwintering success.

I have checked the dead-outs and weak survivors from my and apprentices' yards and have identified several areas where the system can be improved. Most problems were a result of not completely following procedures (and that will always happen) but other problems also are present. In some cases, July Starts lost bees to pesticides before they went into winter and in other cases it appears that July Starts were reinfested with Varroa after August by drones from conventional hives in close range. In the latter cases, the Starts were found to have a queen, mites, and no brood and few bees by March. Drones are the main transmitter of Varroa and I have found mites on drones. July Starts don't raise any drone brood on the 43rd parallel as all effort goes into worker bees for winter survival. Drones also go into any hive uncontested because the guards know they are not a threat and can't rob honey.

I loaded a photo journey to the website of a couple of this year's Spring Starts made from the overwintered queens. This will give you a quick overview of how I :

- (1) Remove the overwintered queen with two frames of brood and two shakes of bees and then move her over two miles away
- (2) Use OTS (on-the-spot queen rearing) by notching six frames of brood in what becomes a cell builder after the overwintered queen is removed

(3) Make Starts one week later with the sealed queen cells. I leave only 2 cells in each Start so as to not waste the Virgin's strength needed for her mating flight on killing rivals.

You can find more detailed information about OTS (on-the-spot queen rearing) on this website. Currently, I am working on a book as many readers have requested for a long time. My objective is to share everything there is to know about OTS so that you will never have to buy bees again.

Enjoy the photo journey. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Mel Disselkoen