Special Topic:
Swarm Capture / Bait Hives

Swarm Basics

- Reproductive strategy
- Very docile while in swarm stage
- At rest while scout bees search for nesting site
- “Wet” or “dry”
- Typical size of 10 – 12 thousand bees
- After swarms are smaller, have virgin queen
- Mostly occur late in spring buildup period

“Capture” of Swarm

- Respond quickly, risk of departure to nest site
- Scenario A: if on flexible support structure
  - “Shake” into container, object get queen inside
  - Allow bees in flight to find captured queen
- Scenario B: if unable to shake
  - Vacuum, using light suction (avoid harming bees)
  - Linger to capture most returning scout bees, bees in flight
- Use slow deliberate motion
- Be wary of suffocating bees in capture box

Use of “Bait” Hive

- Object to “excite” scout bees
  - Volume sufficient for nest construction
  - Small entrance, easily defended
  - Pheromone lure (commercially available)
- Use of two hive bodies recommended
  - Lower one should be completely empty
  - Upper one should have 6 – 10 frames, some with comb previously used for raising brood (odors are attractive)
- Best to use solid bottom board
- Move to bee yard after swarm has begun to invest in nest building and eggs are being laid by queen

Hiving a Swarm

- Improve odds of acceptance of hive site
  - Use solid bottom board
  - Restrict entrance
  - Provide some drawn comb, frame with eggs
- Set up to prevent queen departure, absconding
  - Queen exclude between bottom board, hive body
  - Screen inner cover exit
- Feed syrup (comb production, build stores)
- Allow to settle in; don’t disturb too often, too soon

Conclusion

- Price is right
- Relatively low energy expenditure
- Small swarms can be used to supplement another colony by combining (caution: disease)
- After swarm is hived and established, requeen
  - “Improved” genetics
  - High incidence of superscedure in the near term
- Enhances survival odds of the swarm