

## Spring Colony Divides

### Inspections

- Inspect each wintered colony when weather permits in early March. Provide pollen substitute. If the colony is dead, close all holes to prevent robbing by other colonies and to keep out mice.
- Conduct a second inspection two weeks later. Feed additional pollen substitute and sugar syrup if food is needed.
- Inspect each colony in mid-April. Clean the bottom board and check to see if there is 3-6 frames of brood. If so, conduct a partial reversal (see chart to right). A partial reversal involves switching the position of the top and middle hive body. Replenish the pollen patty if necessary. Examine brood closely for signs of disease.
- Mites can be treated in the spring or fall. Check colonies for presence of varroa mites. If large numbers are found, consider treating them now. Spring is a good time to treat for tracheal mites (See booklet *Honey Bee Diseases and Pests*).
- Inspect each colony ten days after the mid-April inspection. Conduct a full reversal (see chart on right) and replenish pollen patty if necessary.

### Preparations

- Strong colonies should be divided about 6-8 weeks before the main honey flow (during the dandelion bloom, or approximately May 15th in the Twin City area).
- The colony that is to be divided should have a brood chamber consisting of 3 deep hive bodies, a large adult bee population, and a minimum of 10 good frames of brood (1200-1600 sq. in. of brood)

- A young caged queen, an additional hive stand, a bottom board, a set of covers, and at least one deep hive body with frames of drawn comb and/or foundation, and a gravity feeder (feeder pail) with sugar syrup (1:1) are needed to make the divide.
- If the divide cannot be made immediately after the queen is obtained, the caged queen should be kept in a cool, dark, and quiet place. She should be provided with a small drop of water once daily until the divide is made. A queen can be kept in this condition for several days.

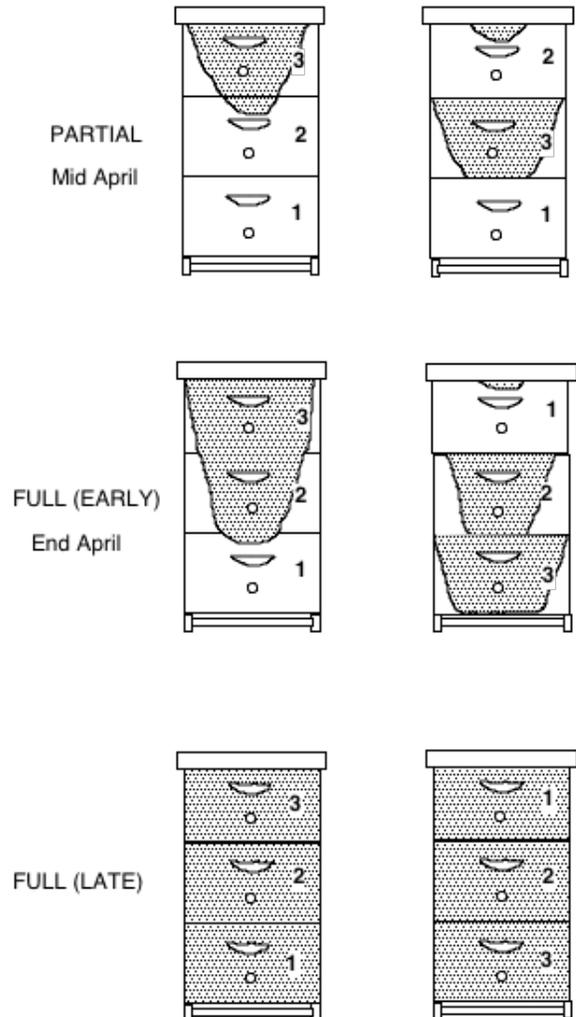
### Procedures

Also refer to the pictorial on the next page. Numbers in {} in text refer to box numbers on pictorial.

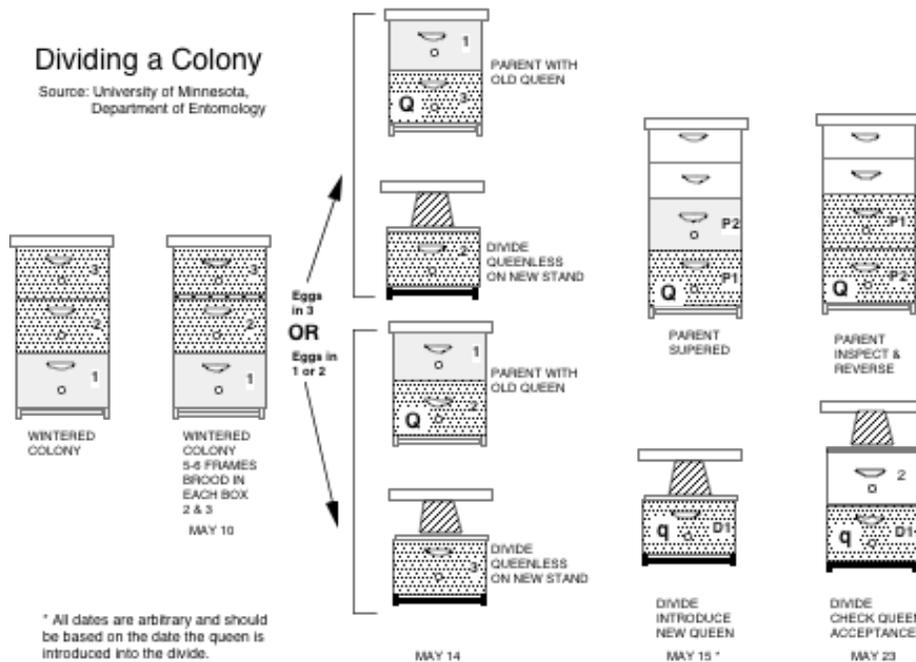
- At least 4 days *prior* to the expected arrival of your queen, the brood should be divided into two approximately equal portions. Half of the frames containing brood (5-7) should be in the top hive body {3} and the other half (5-7) should be in the middle hive body {2}. If you have more than 14 frames of brood the remainder should go in bottom hive body {1}. To isolate the queen in one of these two brood units, a queen excluder is placed between the top {3} and middle {2} hive bodies.

### Reversals

Shaded area indicates bees and brood.



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- When the divide is made 4+ days later, the hive bodies are inspected to find eggs. The section that contains eggs will also contain the queen (it is not necessary to see the queen). If eggs are found in the top hive body you know the queen is there and the middle box is used for the divide. If eggs are found in one of the bottom two hive bodies then the queen is there and the top hive body is used for the divide.
- Place the hive body that contains about half of the brood but no eggs on the bottom board at a new location in the apiary. This newly established colony is the DIVIDE.
- The unit that contains the other half of the brood and the queen (as indicated by presence of eggs) is left at the original site and is referred to as the PARENT. The original bottom hive body {1} is moved to the top so the queen can move up. Two honey supers should be provided.
- Any chemicals used on the parent colony should be moved to the divide to keep pesticides out of the surplus honey.

## "Slow Release Method" for Introducing New Queen to Divide

- The probability of queen acceptance is greater in the divide if it is fed sugar syrup to simulate a honey flow and is kept queenless for a day. Therefore, provide at least one pail of 1:1 sugar syrup and wait from 12 to 24 hours to install the queen in the divide.
- To install the queen using the slow release method, remove the cork from the candy end of the queen cage, and make a hole in the candy with a small nail (frame nail). Be careful not to skewer the queen. Slightly separate two frames containing brood in the middle of the hive body. Suspend the queen cage in this space with the screen down. Center the cage on one of the frames just below the top bar. These two frames will have to be pushed together somewhat to hold the queen cage in place. Close up the hive.
- Be sure to refill pail of 1:1 sugar syrup if necessary. Do not disturb for 5-7 days.

## Following Divide

- Inspect both the parent and the divide after 5-7 days. The presence of eggs and/or growing larvae indicates that the colony is queenright. A deep hive body, preferably with drawn combs, should be added on top of the DIVIDE.