

Treatment free beekeeping
(Reducing varroa without miticides)

Varroa Shook Swarm (Summer)

- The Varroa Shook Swarm (Summer) is a chemical free way of significantly reducing mites around mid August ahead of the important winter bees being laid. At this stage of the season, mite infestations will be at their highest.
- A simple 2 stage technique over 2 inspections where brood frames (where varroa breed) are removed. It is an alternative to Queen Frame Trapping which typically begins in July.
- This is similar to the Shook Swarm technique for replacing old brood combs and removing residual pathogens, with the key difference being that only frames with brood are removed, leaving frames with pollen, nectar and honey in place.
- Method:-
 - Open brood box and secure the Queen (eg; in Queen clip or put the frame she was on in a spare nuc)
 - Where there is brood, gently shake the bees off these frames and set aside.
 - Leave one frame of unsealed brood in the middle of the brood nest as "Bait Comb" to attract phoretic mites (those on the bees)
 - Remember to take this frame out once the cells are sealed (with breeding mites inside)
 - Replace brood frames with drawn comb, which enables the Queen to begin laying quickly (using foundation will work with strong hives, but slows the process whilst wax is drawn)
 - Return the Queen to the colony
 - Review in c.9 days and take out the sealed "Bait Comb" (with mites inside)
 - Render down the wax from removed brood frames or feed to the chickens

Q&A

- What if there is no drawn comb available?

Use foundation if the colony is strong. If the colony is weak, combine it as part of your normal winter prep, ahead of the Varroa Shook Swarm (Summer) Nb; Drawn comb is a valuable part of the Treatment Free kit-list.

- Should a Queen Gate (small section of Queen Excluder) be added to the entrance to keep her there for 7 days until she is laying well?

For a belt & braces approach, that would be helpful, especially if using foundation, not drawn comb

- Why sacrifice brood?

The population of Varroa mites will be at a peak for the season and infested brood make little or no contribution to the colony. Mite numbers double or treble each time brood hatch, ie every 3 weeks.

- Do honey supers need to come off through this process?

No, as there are no chemicals involved.