

# Northwest Georgia Beekeepers Association

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[www.nwgabeekeepers.com](http://www.nwgabeekeepers.com)

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## Happening in the Hive

The nectar flow is dwindling, which means colony size and weight has peaked unless you feed. The reduction in nectar flow also triggers several changes in behavior: the worker bees are unlikely to draw new comb now (but will continue to cap ripe honey), swarming tendency is decreasing, and robbing risk is increasing. Water foraging has also increased due to high temperatures. You may also see fanning at the entrance, bearding, and wash boarding.

## Beekeeper's To Do List

**Inspect hives regularly. Recommend every 2-3 weeks. Look for:**

- **Full honey supers.** As a rule of thumb, if  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the cells on a frame are capped, the frame should be suitable to harvest. Ensure you leave enough honey to get the bees through the dearth and winter, otherwise have a plan to feed.
- **Eggs & good brood pattern.** It's important to ensure the colony is queen-right. Queenlessness is particularly a concern after a swarm or split because the colony might have rejected the new queen (if one was provided to them) and/or failed to raise a new queen. Even if the colony still has their queen, an older or poorly mated queen may begin to fail following the huge effort of spring laying. Spotty brood pattern and drone brood in worker sized cells in the middle of a frame often indicates a failing queen that should be replaced.
- **Excess space.** It's unlikely that the bees will draw any more comb or add significantly to the honey stores now that nectar flow is dwindling. It's a good practice to remove or combine supers of partially drawn and partially filled comb so that the bees don't have excess space to defend against small hive beetles, wax moths, and robbers.
- **Signs of excessive Varroa mites.** See Pests sidebar.



## Forage

White clover and Mimosa are blooming. Nectar sources will dwindle in June. Continue feeding new packages 1-1 syrup if they will accept it. Consider providing a water source.

## Pests

Varroa mite populations are rapidly climbing in the hive this time of year. Look for signs of deformed wing virus and brood being uncapped/removed, which can indicate a high mite infestation. For more accurate monitoring, perform an alcohol wash to determine the mite load. Treat if needed. Consider daytime temperatures, the presence of honey supers, and the presence of brood when selecting an appropriate treatment.

Robbing can be an issue for smaller/weaker colonies. Consider adding robbing screens.

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Club Meetings are the Second Monday of each month  
6:30 pm - New Beekeeper Session  
7:00 pm - Program Speaker

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## A look ahead – start preparing now for these July tasks

Many beekeepers in NW GA harvest honey in early July. First year nucs and packages generally do not have a surplus of honey to harvest. But if you have healthy, overwintered colonies, check their stores – if they have a surplus of honey, start preparing now for a July harvest. Order bottles/jars and design and print labels.

The dearth (a period where there is little to no nectar available) can begin in July in NW GA. This often triggers robbing behavior, where strong colonies may mob weaker colonies and steal their honey. Typically the queen of the weaker colony and most of its workers are killed in the process. Robbing screens can help prevent this. Go ahead and consider purchasing or making robbing screens so you have them ready to install if you see robbing behavior.



Above: home-made screen with entrances at the side ends. #8 hardware cloth was folded in to a 'W' shape and then attached with staples to the hive.

Varroa mite populations often surpass treatment thresholds beginning in June/July, even for hives that were treated or experienced a brood break in spring. It is recommended to do an alcohol wash in July (even if you did one in June, since varroa populations can skyrocket quickly). Refresh yourself now on the procedure for an alcohol wash – there are several good YouTube videos. Purchase an alcohol wash kit (such as varroa easy check) or make your own using a Mason jar and screen. Gather any additional supplies needed, such as a 1/2 cup measuring scoop, a tub similar to a cat litterbox, and rubbing alcohol. Consider what treatment you will apply if your hives are over the limits. The Honey Bee Health Coalition has a helpful tool for deciding which treatment fits your situation: <https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroatool/>

Right: commercially available varroa mite wash shaker

