

June 2022 Pheasant Run Bee Apiary Update

A report from Laurie Simard, Pheasant Run Beekeeper.

I was a little nervous when I went to the Pheasant Run Bee Apiary for the first time in 2022 as preliminary overwinter 2021-2022 hive mortality rates in Ontario are at 50% with some areas reporting losses of 70-90%. This is a huge loss in an industry where losses of 15% is usually expected.

To put this in perspective; a large commercial beekeeper in Ontario reported that out of his 8,000 hives only 500 hives were viable after the winter. Compounding this problem is product availability meaning purchasing new nucs to replenish losses. Since losses across the province have been so huge the demand for nucs far outweighs what is available.

As a side note to the above, if you like to have honey on hand all year round and enjoy the Pheasant Run raw unpasteurized honey consider stocking up with more than you normally would as Ontario honey is going to be in very short supply this year and into 2023.

I am extremely happy to report that all three hives had bees across all 10 frames. Because of this splitting each hive into two was possible. When a beekeeper does this a new brood box (where the bees live and raise their young) is installed right beside the original hive. Half of the bees are shaken into

the worker bees to get accustomed to the pheromone scent of the new queen. Once all the candy is eaten up then the new queen travels into the hive to start her job of laying eggs.



Spot the queen bee with the bright blue marker

the new hive and a new queen is put into the hive.

I purchased 3 new Buckfast queens that travelled all the way from Italy. Each queen came in its' own little plastic cage with 6 worker bee attendants. At one end of the cage is a hole that is plugged up with candy that the attendant bees use to feed the queen. Once you put the cage into the new hive between it takes about 3 – 4 days for the candy plug to be eaten up which allows



There are a lot of variables with respect to the success of splitting hives and the acceptance of a new queen but **I am also happy to report that all three queens were accepted into their hives** and so from three original hives there are now six.

Honey supers are on all hives and if we get some decent weather the bees will be happy to get those supers filled with that golden goodness!

Lots more is going on in the bee yard but I will leave it here and report back in another month.

If you happen to be by the bee apiary stop and take a look at the set-up. You will see what I have described above on how to split hives. As well, if I happen to be there please stop by and say hello!

Laurie Simard

Pheasant Run Beekeeper