

Managing honeybees during dry period



An apiary should be near a water source and in a place with many trees. NET PHOTO.

Factors to consider

- Provide drinking water. This should be fresh and clean water and within a short distance of an apiary. Bees need water
- Unite weak bee colonies. It is advisable that two or three of weak colonies be united to make one strong colony which can forage effectively and resist pest and disease attacks. In this case, only one queen is retained.



- Provide shade. When it is very hot and there are no sufficient tree shades, colonies can be covered with grass or papyrus mats to reduce the effects of heat

- Keep the apiary clean. To avoid losing your colonies to wild fire, make sure that you keep your apiary clean and without dry grass.

- Control pest and disease. During dry periods, most honeybee colonies are always weak due to insufficient forage and water supply. Weak colonies are easily attacked by pests and diseases. Pests such as lizards, rats escape from fires to hide in hives during the dry seasons and need to be controlled through installing rat guards and suspending beehives on wires.

- Regularly inspect your apiary. This is important because it will help you identify any problem within the apiary and make appropriate remedies accordingly. Apiary inspection will help you find out whether there is need for any of the above mentioned.

Finally, a beekeeper has to plant crops and trees that yield good pollen and nectar (bee forage). Plants which are good source of nectar include; Tamarind, Moringa, Neem, Eucalyptus and Bottle brush while sorghum, sweet potato, millet, coconut, roses, castor, pomegranate and date palm are good for pollen. Plants such as Banana, Peach, Citrus, Guava, Sunflower, Mango, among others are good for both nectar and pollen.

Climate change should not be a threat to bee keepers, writes **Brian Ssenoga**

The climatic change has brought out an uncertainty in weather patterns. This has affected plants, crops and pollinators.

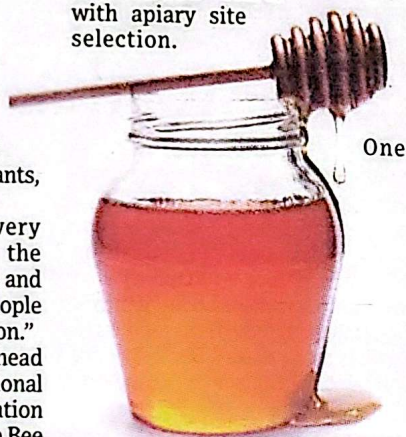
"Honeybees are a very important component of the ecosystem, providing services and highly valuable products to people especially during the dry season."

Dr Patrice Kasangaki, the head of apiculture research at National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO), at the sidelines of the Bee keepers annual general meeting in Kampala.

The products provided by honeybees range from food, medicine, cosmetics to art while services include pollination of agricultural and wild plants and indicators of environmental health.

The value of bees as service providers remains ignored despite being critical to agricultural livelihood sources and ecosystem

functioning. "Proper management of bees during dry season starts with apiary site selection.



should consider the following when selecting a site for a good apiary which will not be affected by the weather conditions," says Dr Kasangaki "There should be a nearby source of water and enough trees to serve as wind breaks. This is because high wind speed causes reduction in flight and also distorts the flight direction thus reducing foraging

activity." According to the February ApiNews magazine, beekeepers should bear in mind that climate change is real and dealing with the dry period starts with setting the apiary near a place with plants that yield pollen and nectar for the bees.

In addition, the following can be done to sustaining bees during dry season;

- Control swarming and absconding. Swarming can take place anytime of the season but when it happens when the colony is weak; it may lead to the collapse of the colony. Absconding on the other hand is a situation where by the entire colony abandons the hive to look for another.

Regular inspection helps in identifying colonies which are preparing to swarm and also identify conditions which may lead to absconding and appropriate control measures taken.

- Do artificial feeding. To sustain bees during dry season when natural sources of nectar and pollen are scarce, bees can be fed on sugar syrup or sugar dough. However, this should be done in very difficult situation.