

## **November/December/January:**

Providing all the preparations for successful wintering have been completed, namely:

- A sound & weatherproof hive
- 35LB (16kg) of Sealed liquid Stores
- A young fertile queen
- The colony to be disease free
- Good Ventilation while excluding mice
- No disturbance from October to March

There is nothing the beekeeper can do to assist the bees to get through the winter to the next spring. Apiaries should be inspected regularly or after a particularly bad spell of weather to ensure all is well. Ideally the hives should not be touched; even taking the roof off will raise the temperature of the cluster unnecessarily. When the bees in the cluster are disturbed the temperature of the cluster is raised considerably & the cost of this is increased food consumption & shortens the life of the winter bee. They have to get into a state where they can defend themselves. If something is amiss then, of course, it must be put to rights.

If feeding becomes necessary in the winter, you will need to use a solid form of food e.g.

- Baker's fondant.
- Candy – commercial or home-made.

Bees can also starve in the midst of plenty. Bees move upwards – cold weather may prevent sideways movement. If a super of food is left on the hive, it is usually recommended that the queen excluder is removed to avoid *isolation starvation*.

**Do not feed honey from foreign sources, which may contain spores of Foul Brood**

Heavy snow falls can cover the hive entrances; any snow should be very quietly cleared away without alarming the colony in order to maintain the ventilation at the bottom. Bees can survive long periods of cold – the real danger is dampness.

During the winter months, secure in the knowledge that you have done everything possible for your bees, read beekeeping books and appliance catalogues – make a Christmas 'wish list'. Assess this year's successes & failures and plan for next year. Repair hives etc. make up hives & frames. Spare floors or varroa screen inserts should be got ready for spring cleaning replacement.

Attend your association meetings & if you have not done so already be sure to pay your association subscription.