

A B C's

of Beekeeping

By Sandy Tabako

Assess Basic Conditions

What do you want to do?

- Check hives?

The best time to check hives and work with your bees is between 10 AM and 2 PM on a calm, sunny day. Avoid working your hives after 4 PM when your foragers are returning home. You will also want to avoid opening your hives if it is rainy or windy. . . even a cloudy, overcast day can cause bees to be a bit grumpy. Ideally, the outside temperature should be at least 55* before you open the hives. Remember that they work hard to keep their internal temperature around 95*, so consider heat loss. You may want to cover the frames with a cloth and just expose the ones you are working with at the time. I use a pillowcase and it helps keep the bees calm and more settled as it is less invasive for them.

- Feed bees?

Depending on the type of feeder and the location, weather conditions are not as critical. Using a front entrance feeder, such as a boardman, or even a top feeder, the hive doesn't need to be opened and exposed and these can be changed or refilled during almost any type of weather. If using an inside feeder which hangs inside the hive in place of one or more frames, be more weather wise and avoid extremes as even the nicest bees may get agitated. Having a replacement feeder filled and ready to exchange will save time and stress. Make sure there are adequate water sources nearby, especially during inclement weather. Consider adding a 'water feeder' when conditions are extreme.

- Move hives?

The best time to move a hive is just after dusk or predawn. Most of the colony will be home or have returned home from foraging so less bees will be lost. This is also the ideal time to capture a swarm if you are allowed a choice of your time to do so. Be mindful of wet, windy, and extreme weather conditions for your safety as well.