

Wrapping Honey Bee Colony for a Northern Winter with Tar Paper

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1. The first step is to evaluate the colony in September for its wintering ability. It should have; a young prolific queen, enough honey stores (75-95 lbs.), large bee population (10+ frames of bees) and few mites.



2. The colony should be in 3 deep hive bodies with most of the honey toward the top. The holes in the bottom two boxes should be closed.



3. The hole in the top box should be open. If you do not have a hole for an upper entrance you should drill one now. Make it below the handle.



4. The entrance reducer should be placed with the 3" space facing up.



5. Soon after the first of November start wrapping by placing a moisture board on top of the inner cover. This is a porous sheeting that will absorb moisture from the hive and evaporate to the outside. Shown is 3/4" Bild Rite® sheeting.



6. The moisture board is very important. Shivering bees in the winter cluster produce a lot of metabolic water that must not freeze inside the colony. Do not use one that has a moisture barrier. If you do not have access to this sheeting a stack of newspaper 1" thick can work. Do not use Styrofoam type material.



7. Cut off a piece of roofing felt (15#) long enough to wrap around the colony and overlap 2-3", I use 78".



8. Staple the paper where it overlaps. For more security nail a thin board over the lap.



9. Fold the paper over the top. Note the open space in the middle. This is to allow the moisture to evaporate from the moisture board. If your paper is too long cut it off so this hole is there.



10. Put the cover on top. Do not push the cover down over the sides; you want it to be up a little so the air can evaporate the moisture from the moisture board. Be sure to put a rock on top to keep the wind from blowing the lid off.



11. Cut a hole in the tar paper to correspond to the upper entrance.



12. Staple the paper around the hole to prevent tearing in the wind.



13. Optional. You can make a little landing board and nail it below the hole. This also keeps the cover tight against the box.



14. Optional. You can also make a little wind deflector and staple over the hole. This can stop some of the wind from blowing in the entrance. Be sure to put it up from the landing 1/2" to let the bees enter.



15. For more information on managing honey bees see our manual [Beekeeping in Northern Climates](#).

For details on mites and diseases see [Honey Bee Diseases and Pests](#) manual or [Healthy Bees](#) web course.

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