

SBA Technical Data Sheet Number 22 - The June Gap and the Possible Need for Summer Feeding

You can usually determine whether there is a June gap by watching the beehive entrance – if there is little activity, no pollen being taken home, then it is likely that there is a dearth of flowers. In this case and especially if the weather is inclement, or very dry, the bees may run short of food – a full sized colony should always have sufficient stores for 10 days about 5kg (11lb). A very full BS deep frame holds about 2¼ kg (5lb) of food, so at least 2 or 3 full frames of food (usually the two end frames). Normally there would also be some food in the super.

Very populous colonies are especially vulnerable when a June Gap strikes, so if you have a colony with 8 or 9 frames full of sealed brood. that will be a lot of young mouths to feed in one- or two-weeks' time.

However if the June gap is severe and the weather is inclement, perhaps it is a new colony getting established, then check your bees for food and if in doubt e.g. the super is empty and hardly any food in the brood chamber, then remove the super(s) and put on a rapid 2 litre feeder of summer sugar syrup (0.8 litre water to 1 kg sugar – equal volumes water and sugar). Strong syrup can be used as an alternative (0.6litre per kg). As an extra precaution you can put on 2kg of fondant. If you are short of sugar but have remnants of fondant left over, you can make summer syrup by heating up 1.4kg of fondant per litre of water. Heat to near boiling to kill off any pathogens that may be present in the fondant remnants. Take care when heating as hot sugars cling to skin and cause bad burns. Supers must not be in place when feeding syrup as the bees may store it in the super and selling honey containing sugar is illegal. See Precautions below

The June Gap has been appearing earlier in recent years and has been becoming more severe.

Beware the June gap and never be reluctant to feed your bees in summer if necessary.

Feeding should be done in the evening to reduce the risk of robbing.

Health and Safety Information

The following hazards are identified when preparing syrup:

1 Danger or burns and scalds from:

1. Boiling sugar
2. Splashes from the pan
3. Utensils in contact with the hot sugar

Precautions:

1. Long handled stirring utensils
2. Children continuously supervised
3. Protective apron and covered sleeves
4. Utensils and products cooled or left out of reach until cool