



• SINCE 1923 •

BEEKEEPING IN JANUARY

January is a slow month for the beekeeper and the bees. The bees really aren't doing much this month other than keeping warm and staying alive. The beekeeper, however, has certain tasks that will need attention.

JANUARY: BEES

There's little bee activity in January. The queen is surrounded by thousands of her workers in a tight cluster. The cluster will move around when temperatures are above 40 °F, but when they do move, they all move together. They'll go to a new area of the hive with honey stores or to take cleansing flights. The cluster may cover 4-8 frames from top to bottom.

The bees may consume 1 to 2 pounds of honey per day to maintain the hive's temperature. Many bees die during the winter, just from old age. You'll notice more dead bees around your hives, but this is normal.

JANUARY: BEEKEEPING

Little work is required from you at the hives. In case of snow, make certain the entrance to the hive is cleared to allow for proper ventilation. The hive isn't normally opened in January. The bees are just doing their thing. In rare cases, when their food supply is feared to be low going into winter, you may want to take advantage of a nice day to peek inside. Make sure it's a day with no wind or when the bees are taking cleansing flights.

Don't remove any frames, just look under the cover and determine the cluster position and size. The bees should be loosely clustered, and during this month, they may appear in the upper part of the hive. Look for sealed honey stores. If they seem low or absent, you may want to consider an emergency feeding.

HONEY BEE FUN FACT »

Bees maintain a temperature of 92-93 degrees Fahrenheit in their central brood nest, regardless of whether the outside temperature is 110 or -40 degrees.



If you begin an emergency feeding, you must continue until spring when there's good nectar and pollen flows. You can feed frames of honey from a healthy hive. Sugar boards are a very good option as well, but it's still too cold to feed syrup.

This is the time to anticipate your upcoming needs. Playing catch-up once the season has begun is not a good way to start. Build or repair your equipment and order your bees (if needed). Surround yourself with bee-related reading materials and attend your local bee club meetings and workshops.

Estimated time needed: Less than 1 hour*

JANUARY: CHECKLIST

- Order bees, nucs, queens and other equipment and supplies
- Check the hive entrance for blockage
- Check the hive food stores, if it's feared to be low going into winter
- Clean your smoker and repair any damaged hive components
- Attend your local bee club meetings or workshops

GENERAL NOTES

Weather is the ultimate calendar when taking care of bees. Depending on the weather and your bee type, the time frame for activities should be adjusted earlier or later as necessary. You will have more success adapting to the bee's schedule, rather than them adapting to yours.

Beekeepers are many and varied; some choose a hands off approach, while some are very hands on. Some choose to medicate and others are using other Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods which do not include medication. Whatever your preference, you can and should adapt this calendar to fit your needs. Thank you for keeping bees, and let us know if you have any questions regarding your hive. We're always happy to help.

**Time estimates do not include equipment repair and cleaning or honey extraction.*

Information for this article was provided by Kent Mickelsen, Utah Certified Nurseryman, IFA Country Store; Utah State University Extension; and Slide Ridge Honey in Mendon, Utah.

