

Comblless Bees from the South  
As a Business Proposition  
A G WOODMAN Grand Rapids Michigan  
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The subject assigned the writer; the possibilities of the comblless bee package is comparatively a new venture in modern beekeeping. During the past season we have shipped bees in comblless packages from the South to the North and where conditions were right very satisfactory results were secured. Our experience has led us to believe that no professional can afford to allow any good bee hive and equipment to stand idle during the season on account of winter losses. We have come to almost believe that it would pay to kill off all our bees at the end of the honey harvest take the honey from the hives and buy bees by the pound the following spring to supply your operating force. Certainly three pounds of young bees from the South with a good young queen are as good as any northern wintered colony. There is at least some question as to which would be most profitable to feed colonies that are short of winter stores or take what honey they have kill the bees and buy more to put onto their empty combs the following spring. The comblless bee package is a great factor in eliminating danger of carrying disease and in reducing weight to a minimum and a consequent low transportation charge.

The degree of success or honey crop to be secured outside of weather conditions will be relative to the number of pounds of bees placed in each hive and the season of the year they are secured. Of course you will understand that three pounds of young bees and a good queen secured on or before May first is about all that can be desired. We all know that time at this season of the year is very precious. With a good queen laying two thousand eggs per day more or less a few days will make a great difference in the amount of brood in a hive and in the ultimate working force and honey crop. The rapidity with which the queen can lay will depend much upon the population of the hive or the number of pounds of bees you put into them It is reasonable to believe that the queen in a three pound package can lay three times as many eggs as in a one pound package on account of three times as many bees to care for the eggs and brood. Figuring five thousand bees to the pound it will be quite evident that if ten thousand are required to keep the hive to a certain temperature for brood rearing and you have fifteen thousand in the hive you will have five thousand released for field or other duty. The style of the hive whether single or double walled or protected in any way will also have a bearing on this point. An apiary of single wall hives was visited during fruit bloom and some comments were made about no bees flying. Some old newspapers were called for and about half of the hives wrapped when there was an interruption in this work. Returning again in something over an hour those that had been wrapped were found to be flying freely while those that were not still remained inside the hives It is fair to believe that a certain number of bees were required to maintain a certain temperature and by supplying the added protection a certain percentage were released for field duty. While one pound of bees will make good colonies there is no question but what an extra pound or two is well worth the extra cost. In good seasons the pound or so will more than pay the entire cost. Some of the three pound packages we secured this season gathered as much as one hundred and fifty pounds of surplus honey.

The practicability of a venture of this kind from a financial standpoint will depend somewhat upon the purchase or cost price of such comblless bee packages. As the quality of honey in the South is not generally of the best it would seem that many southern beekeepers could do better by the sale of bees rather than

in the production of honey. We are sure that this will be the case and as time goes on there will be an increasing number engaged in this work. As yet few in either the North or the South have awakened to the possibilities. If any individual or group of persons or this association were in a position to contract for bees in combless packages in five hundred or one thousand lots prices should be much lower than general market quotations. A price of fifty cents per pound for bees and fifty cents for untested queens with a possible charge of about fifty cents for the shipping package is not low to expect in quantity lots. Three pound packages with untested queens should be delivered to Michigan points in quantity lots at three dollars per package or less. The bee supply people should be interested in supplying this demand at the lowest possible handling charge.

One more factor will contribute to success or failure of an undertaking of this kind and this is the shipper. You must have a reliable thorough systematic painstaking man on the other end of the line. There will be no profit or satisfaction for buyer or seller unless the packages are put up right. The first sixty two pound packages we received this season were a complete loss the shippers fault on account of too small packages. The first ten three pound packages we received were extra fine producing one hundred fifty pounds surplus honey each or the equivalent. We had others later not as good some with poor queens. The shipper could not have been careful about the queens. We have no reason to believe but what every package that is put up properly at the shipping point and is handled promptly by the express companies will arrive in good condition and do well for the purchaser. The buyer should insist on the shipper guaranteeing the queens in these packages to be laying within ten days after being placed in the hives.

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