

New Westminster Beekeeper's Association
19 Things to Know about Beekeeping
Module 8 – Supering for the Honey Flow

This module was prepared for members of the New Westminster Beekeeper's Association and are intended to be augmented by hands-on experience in the bee yard.

What is a Honey Flow?

There is a distinction between honey flow, nectar flow, and dearth:

- Honey Flow – When an abundance of nectar is coming into the hive, more than bees can eat immediately, thus it is stored for future consumption. Usually starts in the middle of April when dandelions are at their peak flower and ends close to August 15 when blackberry flowers drop off and the blackberry plant starts to bear fruit.
- Nectar Flow – When bees bring nectar into the hive. Usually starts early March with maples, pussy willow, and winter heather flower and ends September with loosestrife and knotweed.
- Dearth – When there is no nectar available for bees to gather. Usually from October to February and often the first and second week of June (watch for this!!)

In our climate the honey flow starts between April 15 and 30, with dandelions, Scotch broom and blueberries.

When to Add a Honey Super?

Add a honey super (and preferably a queen excluder) at the start of the honey flow (mid-April) AND when the brood box has 8+ frames of bees. The bees should be at 5/8 strength at this time. Do not remove brood frames because adding more space with the honey super will suppress swarming.



If the honey flow is on but the bees have not filled the brood box, wait until they have done so before adding a honey super.

When and How to Add a Second Super?

Add a second honey super UNDER the first honey super, when the first honey super is 2/3 capped.

Add a third honey super UNDER the second honey super, when the second honey super is 2/3 capped, and so on ..



Is there any Brood Nest Management During the Honey Flow?

Yes, but there is minimal brood nest work as the beekeeper should leave the bees alone to collect honey:

- ~ May 20 – check for viable queen, roll for Varroa, remove brood and bees above 5 frames
- ~ June 10 – check for dearth. If bees are eating back the honey, give them ½ feeder full of syrup
- ~ July 20 – check for viable queen, roll for Varroa, remove brood and bees above 5 frames (last time for the year)
- ~ Aug 15 – remove honey
- ~Aug 20 – start Varroa treatment

The start of the beekeeper's year is August 15 because what the beekeeper does from August 15 to September 30 will directly affect production for the following year!