



Introduction

Pests and diseases can be problematic in intensive beekeeping due to the high concentration of bees located in a small area. Below are common pests found in bee hives. For more information on the control and management of pests and diseases, please refer to the Diseases and Pests Manual online: http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/c_livestock/bees.

Common Pests

Wax Moths:

Wax moth adults (Fig.1) can enter the bee colonies to lay eggs or leave eggs along cracks on the outside of the hive. After the eggs hatch, the larvae tunnel through the hive to the honeycomb area.

Wax moth larvae should never become established in the comb. The bees will abandon infected areas, leaving the comb to the larvae and potentially losing the colony.

Larvae destroy the comb by:

- Consuming wax and older, darker comb
- Leaving webbed masses of excrement



Fig.1 Wax moth adult

Small Hive Beetle:

Bees can tolerate the small hive beetle if the infestation is not so much that the bees are unable to work properly. They can be seen on combs and on the inside of the hive.

The small hive beetle destroys the comb by:

- Defecating in the honey causing discoloration, frothiness and fermentation making the honey inedible
- Heavy infestations can cause the colony to disband because they will be forced to leave the hive.



Fig.2 Small Hive Beetles

In general, to prevent pests from infesting the hive:

- Maintain strong colonies by removing weak workers from the hive
- Remove empty, unused comb from the hive during the total absence of resources also known as the dearth period.
- Put older, darker combs away from the nest of the honeybees so that it can be removed when it becomes empty
- Keep the bottom area of the hive clean of residue that drops
 - Wax moths can evolve in the residue and move onto the comb.
- Slightly tilting the hive in the direction of the entrance helps the bees remove residue. Do not leave comb lying around the beekeeping area or stacked inside nearby shelters.
 - Leftover comb provides a good rearing site for wax moths.
 - Turn unused wax into blocks instead of storing it as comb; wax moths cannot complete their life cycle in blocks of pure beeswax.

Reference: Honey Bee Diseases and Pests: A Practical Guide

(http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/c_livestock/bees/Man_Honeybee_diseases_and_pests_FAO.pdf)