

## **Feeding Bees with Bakers' Fondant. by Peter Edwards.**

I fed sugar syrup in the early years and always tried to have colonies fed by mid-September. However, as the number of colonies increased, the work involved in feeding became very demanding and I moved to using bakers' fondant - in line with many commercial beekeepers. I now use it exclusively for the following reasons:

- No mixing or preparation.
- Easily transported.
- Easy to feed at any time, so useful for emergencies.
- Can feed around 100 colonies easily in a day.
- No need to feed by mid-September, so no conflict with going to the heather.
- Feeding fondant later allows brood rearing to continue into the autumn, whereas feeding syrup will often fill all the brood area and stop the queen from laying. Young bees are essential for good wintering.
- No need to overfeed in the autumn as it is easy to top-up colonies in winter or early spring.
- Very little work for the bees - no processing of sugar syrup.
- No fermentation of under-ripe stores.
- Fits in well with my varroa management using thymol.
- No leaks or spills, so no robbing .
- Can feed with supers still on the hive. If the supers are then left on until the first frosts, there will be no waxmoth damage and no need for preventative treatment against waxmoth.



Photo left.

I cut 12.5kg blocks of fondant lengthways and place these directly on the queen excluder.

It is very important to put it on an excluder because warmth and moisture from the bees will soften it and it will ooze down between the frames if you do not; this can kill the colony. The polythene stops the fondant from drying out.

An eke as shown here, upside down Ashforth feeder or an empty super go around it. The amount given can be varied by cutting the block in half or perhaps a quarter or a third of the way across.



Photo left.

Supers can then be stacked back on top so that the bees have access to clean them and keep them free from wax moth damage.

Photo below.

If placed on the hive in late summer or early in the autumn (August or September) then the colony will usually take the fondant down and store it in the same way as they would sugar syrup; if put on later, then it is often left on the excluder and consumed as required.

This fondant was placed on the hive on 10 September 2002 and the photograph was taken on 4 November 2002 when most of the fondant had been taken down and stored.

