

How Can I Tell if My Queen Is Healthy?

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Quick Answer

You can tell if your queen is healthy by looking for fresh eggs, brood in all stages, and a steady brood pattern during the active season. These signs show that she is laying well, even if you do not see her. If eggs are missing or the brood stays scattered, check again soon and ask an experienced beekeeper or bee inspector for help before replacing her.

Not sure what brood includes? Read [What Is Bee Brood?](#) to learn how eggs, larvae, and capped brood look.

For a full hive check, read [What Should I Look for When Inspecting My Beehive?](#) Also see [How Often Should I Inspect My Beehive?](#) to plan your next visit.

Use the Brood to Judge the Queen

The brood nest shows how well the queen is laying. Look for:

- Fresh eggs
- Young larvae
- Capped brood
- A steady patch of brood with few empty cells
- New bees growing during the active season

You should see brood in different stages because the queen lays eggs over many days. Compare the pattern with your notes from earlier visits instead of judging one frame by itself.

Do I Need to Find the Queen?

No. Fresh eggs and growing brood are better proof that the queen is working. If you do see her, look for an abdomen that is longer than a worker bee and a smooth, often darker area on the back of her chest. Her looks alone do not show how well she is laying.

What Does a Poor Brood Pattern Look Like?

A poor pattern has many empty cells mixed through an area where brood should be growing. Missing eggs, very little young brood, or a pattern that keeps getting worse can point to a queen problem.

One poor-looking frame does not prove that the queen is failing. Check the full brood nest and consider the season, weather, food, swarming, Varroa mites, and brood disease.

What Do Queen Cells Mean?

Queen cells are long and shaped like a peanut. Cells in the middle of a frame may be replacement cells. Bees may build them when a queen is injured, sick, or getting old. Cells near the bottom of a frame may be swarm cells, but their location does not always tell the full story.

If you find queen cells, look for eggs, note whether the cells contain eggs or are capped, and try to find the queen before you decide what to do.

How Long Does a New Queen Need to Start Laying?

After installing a purchased queen, check that she has left her cage and then look for eggs about 10 to 14 days after installation. A colony raising its own queen after a split may not have new eggs until about day 24 to 28.

When Should I Get Help?

Ask for help when:

- You find no eggs after the queen should be laying
- The brood pattern stays poor during the active season
- The colony keeps making replacement queen cells
- The bee population is getting smaller
- You see signs of mites or brood disease

Utah beekeepers can [request help from a county or state bee inspector](#). An inspector or experienced mentor can help you rule out other problems before you replace the queen.

Keep Notes Before You Requeen

Write down when you saw eggs, what the brood pattern looked like, how many frames held brood, and whether you found queen cells. Good notes make it easier to tell if the queen is improving or the colony needs a new one.

For cold-weather preparation, read [How Do You Winterize a Beehive?](#)

For a simple guide to nectar, pollen, honey, and feeding, read [What Do Bees Eat?](#)

Need help spotting her? See [How Can I Identify a Queen Bee?](#)

References

- [Beekeeping Annual Calendar](#)
- [Splitting the Hive](#)
- [Setting Up and Placing a Hive](#)
- [Have Your Hive Inspected in Utah](#)

Adapted from USU Extension beekeeping and honey bee biology resources.

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