

How Do You Winterize a Beehive?

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Quick Answer

To winterize a beehive, check its honey supply, control mites, and protect it from wind and mice. Reduce the entrance, but leave enough airflow to prevent moisture from dripping. An established Utah colony usually needs 80 to 100 pounds of capped honey. Finish major inspections before cold weather; afterward, open the hive only on calm days warmer than 55°F.

When Should You Winterize a Beehive?

Start checking your beehive in late summer so you have time to address problems before cold weather arrives. Aim to finish most of the work in September and October.

- **August:** Check the queen, brood, honey supply, and mite levels.
- **September:** Feed a light hive, reduce the entrance, and protect it from robbing.
- **October:** Make final checks for food, airflow, wind, mice, and a tight lid.

Use warm days for these checks. See [How Often Should I Inspect My Beehive?](#) for safe inspection timing.

Use This Beehive Winterizing Checklist

- **Check the queen and brood.** A healthy colony needs a strong queen and a good bee population. Learn [how to tell if your queen is healthy](#) and [what bee brood is](#).
- **Leave enough honey.** An established colony should have about 80 to 100 pounds of capped honey.
- **Check and control mites.** Test for Varroa mites and use a treatment when needed. Always follow the product label.
- **Feed a light hive.** In fall, use two parts sugar to one part water. Stop liquid feeding when temperatures are near freezing or the bees stop taking it.

- **Reduce the entrance.** A smaller opening helps the colony guard against robbing and cold wind.
- **Keep mice out.** Add a mouse guard that does not block the bees.
- **Manage moisture.** Keep enough airflow so water does not drip onto the bee cluster.
- **Protect from wind.** Use a windbreak or wrap hives in very exposed or high places.
- **Secure the lid.** Make sure rain and snow cannot enter and strong wind cannot lift the cover.

For a fuller health check, use [What Should I Look for When Inspecting My Beehive?](#)

How Much Honey Does a Hive Need for Winter?

An established hive in Utah should usually have 80 to 100 pounds of capped honey. That is about 10 to 12 deep frames filled with capped honey on both sides. Do not take so much honey that the bees run short before spring.

Should You Wrap a Beehive for Winter?

Wrap a hive when it is at high elevation or exposed to strong winter wind. Many hives in protected places do not need a wrap. If you wrap the hive, keep the entrance and airflow openings clear.

How Do You Prevent Moisture in a Winter Hive?

Do not seal the hive airtight. Warm, damp air must be able to leave. A moisture-absorbing cover or a hive lid made for winter can also help stop water from dripping onto the bees.

Should You Feed Bees During Winter?

If the hive is light in fall, feed thick sugar syrup made with two parts sugar and one part water. Stop when the weather is near freezing or the bees no longer take the syrup. If the hive becomes light during winter, place fondant above the cluster on a calm, mild day and close the hive quickly.

Do Not Open the Hive in Cold Weather

Bees form a tight cluster when the hive is cold. Opening the hive can chill the bees and brood. If you must lift the lid, choose a calm day warmer than 55°F and work fast. On colder days, check the entrance, clear deep snow, and gently lift the back of the hive to judge its weight.

How Do You Winterize a Beehive in a Cold Climate?

Use the same basic steps, but give extra care to wind protection, food stores, and moisture control. A hive in a high or windy place may need a wrap even when a protected hive nearby does not.

Learn more about nectar, pollen, honey, and feeding in [What Do Bees Eat?](#)

References

- [USU Extension Beekeeping Annual Calendar](#)
- [USU Extension Bee Nutrition](#)

Adapted from USU Extension beekeeping and honey bee biology resources.

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