WAX MOTH AS HONEYBEE PEST

The knowledge of the destruction and losses caused by wax moth in the beekeeping industry is yet not available to many beekeepers in Uganda, especially among the rural majority.

Two types of wax moth-the greater and the lesser wax moth are the identified insect pest among others, paralyzing the apiculture sector.

The wax moth create cobweb-like structures in the hive which trap the bees. They also lay eggs in the honey combs.

It is the larvae stage which is very destructive and feed on the honey and combs. The pupae stage is a dormant stage in its lifecy-





Destroying wax moth eggs and larvae on the frames using fire

Wax moth invasion is evidenced to be very common in weak honey bee colonies and minimal in strong colonies meaning strong colonies can survive attack by the dangerous pest



Burning infested combs controls wax moth



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Effects and control of wax moth in bee industry



Adult wax moth and larvae



Destruction caused by wax moth. Wax moth cocoons

Introduction

Wax moth is one the most destructive pests in beekeeping. The lay may eggs in the hive and their larvae look like maggots. Both the larvae and the adults feed on the combs and destroy the wax. The larvae burrow into the combs leaving a soft cob-web. The destruction of combs lowers the quality of wax and lowers the productivity of the colony. It is therefore important that a beekeeper becomes knowledgeable about their control in order to contain the destruction they cause



Wax moth Larvae and pupae on a hive lid

Destruction caused by wax moth in a bee hive



Webs and pupae of wax moth in a heavily infested hive



Wax moth pupae on the frame

Effects of wax moth invasion

- Low honey production
- Abscondment
- Death of bees/ colony

Remedies for Wax moth control

Despite of the country wide distribution of wax moth, its invasion and effects on the productivity of honey bee colonies can be checked. The following strategies can be employed :

- Keeping strong bee colonies (feeding bees during dearth period and uniting weak colonies)
- Narrowing the hive entrances and sealing off the crevices on the hive using propolis, soil or cow dung)
- Ensuring apiary hygiene . Avoid spilling honey and scattering honey/ brood combs in the apiary during harvesting or inspection
- Avoid transferring of hive contents (combs) from one hive to another of suspected infested hives
- Avoid transfers of colonies without inspecting for wax moth and or and other pest
- Remove and burn all the hive contents in the infested hives
- Hive parts can be passed on fire or