

# Bees in Winter



Honeybees do not hibernate over winter. Like penguins, bees cluster together to keep warm during the coldest months of the year.



Adult bees generate heat by shivering. As temperatures drop the cluster contracts into a tighter ball with the goal of keeping themselves and the brood warm enough to survive.



Once temperatures drop below 17C outside the hive should not be opened for long periods of time and brood frames ***should not*** be removed for inspection.



When the temperature inside the hive drops to 18C the bees will start to form a loose cluster and when the temperature drops below 14C all the bees in the hive will become part of the cluster.



A colony needs between 4 and 6 full frames of honey to survive over winter.



One way to monitor honey stores in your hive over winter is to feel the weight of the hive by gently pushing on one side of the hive. A heavy hive indicates plenty of honey left. A light hive indicates dwindling stores.



If you do have to replace an empty frame of honey during the winter try to limit the amount of time that the hive is open and do it at the warmest part of the day.



Ensure that you place the new frame of honey close to the bee cluster. If the new honey is too far from the cluster the bees may not leave the warmth of the cluster to seek food.