

Ten Tips for Foulbrood Prevention

1. **Know the signs and causes of foulbrood and other honey bee brood disorders.** Be familiar with how to identify infected larva in vegetative and spore stages of the bacteria. A foul smell is unreliable and often indicates advanced stages of infection.
2. **Inspect your colonies at least every spring and autumn specifically to check for brood disease.** If you are unsure, seek expert advice from a knowledgeable beekeeper or state inspector. If you find signs of the disease report it to the state apiarist or local inspector.
3. **Never transfer combs between colonies, or divide colonies, without first checking for signs of brood disease.** Scales in brood cells are readily apparent and can contain several billion spores of the bacteria. Less than ten spores are enough to infect 1 day old larvae. Avoid transferring comb between apiaries and potentially spreading diseases.
4. **Never bring colonies, combs or beekeeping equipment into an apiary unless you are sure that they come from a disease-free source.** Even if scales or other signs of the disease are not present, spores may be on or in comb, propolis, honey, pollen and woodwork in hive.
5. **Never buy old combs or used equipment unless it is certified disease-free.** Always request a health certificate from the seller. If one is not available ask the state inspector to examine the equipment before purchasing. When in doubt, always sterilize second-hand hive boxes by thoroughly charring inside surfaces before use.
6. **Control robbing in the apiary.** Foulbrood spores are found in stored honey and pollen. Never leave combs or honey exposed to robbing bees. Never feed honey from another source to your bees. Never use honey in making sugar candy for queen cages.
7. **If a colony of bees dies out, seal the hive to prevent any remaining honey and pollen stores from being robbed out.** Exam the brood combs for signs of disease before reusing frames with comb or brood and honey boxes. Destroy or appropriately dispose of any suspect comb to prevent foraging bees from coming into contact with the diseased comb and equipment.
8. **Examine brood for signs of disease in any colony that appears not to be thriving and the reason is not already known.** Robbing bees and exchanging frames between hives may spread disease throughout apiary.
9. **Be suspicious of stray swarms and packaged bees.** Hive swarms and packages on foundation rather than drawn comb. When possible keep them "isolated" from the rest of the apiary as the colony expands. Inspect them for disease once they have become established.
10. **Annually replace a portion of old brood and honey combs in every hive.** All comb should be replace within 5 to 7 years. At least 2 to 3 frames in each box should be removed each year to minimize the number of spores in a hive. Replace old comb with frames fitted with foundation. Melt down old comb to reuse the frames.