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Creature Tips

Honey Bees:

You do NOT need chemicals to control VARROA MITES!!!
Simply adding natural creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) to your smoker will kill the mites WITHOUT negatively impacting the bees (as miticides will do). *Larrea tridentata* is native to central and southern New Mexico and is easily harvested from roadside stands. When applied in a time schedule that coincides with the varroa mite life cycle, an infestation can be virtually obliterated. A few mites here and there is not a problem, that is a natural population kept in check by a balanced ecosystem (generally no more than ten easily visible mites per colony). Please see "Top Bar Beekeeping" by Les Crowder and Heather Harrell for more information.

Virtually all honeybee problems (diseases [even Chalk and Foul Brood!!!], poor laying patterns, infestations, behavioral issues, etc.) can be eliminated by simply re-queening (preferably from stock locally obtained and known to have favorable characteristics). Additionally, make sure that the comb they are using is not too old– very dark brown and black combs are TOO OLD! Move them to the back of the hive to be cleared-out by the bees and promptly removed by the beekeeper. Please see "Top Bar Beekeeping" by Les Crowder and Heather Harrell for more information.

Old combs can be piled in an undisturbed wild area a hundred feet or so from the hive as a form of "trap crop" for wax moths. Wax moth infestations in the hive indicate that the combs being used are too old! ("Wax" moth is a bit of a misnomer, as what the moths are really after is all of the propolis, cocoon and larval residue left in the compartments of the comb, giving the combs their dark color.)

Do NOT feed bees anything but, PURE RAW HONEY (preferably, though it does not need to be, their own honey). When placing crystallized honey or comb in the hive, first mist it with clean, pure water. Sugar water is not food. When fed this, the bees still need to make it into a form of honey before they can actually use the

substance, and they do not gain any of the necessary vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients they gain from real flower nectar.

When reattaching comb that has broken off of a top bar, do not use actual sewing thread (despite the fact this activity is referred to as "sewing" or "threading" comb). Instead, use a 100% NATURAL twine (we like organically grown hemp) that has been dipped in pure beeswax. A wick, if you will. It is important that a non-synthetic material is used and dipped in nothing but beeswax, as the bees will properly re-attach the comb themselves and then they will chew away the remaining twine, once you've put your makeshift top bar-attached comb in place. Please see our page on "Top Bar Beehives" listed under "Products– Handcrafted Goods" for prices on this wick and related products.

Full Sized Top Bar Bee Hive

Comb of Honey on a Top Bar

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Wild Native Bees:

DON'T MOW! In fact, refrain from tilling, plowing, raking, using tractors and mechanically harvesting crops if possible. Virtually all native bees are adversely impacted and/or killed by these activities. The majority of native bees are ground-nesters, needing open, bare, un- or minimally-disturbed soil sites. The remaining bees need standing stalks (like corn, sorghum, bramble, yucca, agave flower, etc.) left a *full year*or, like bumble bees, need old grass tussocks and abandoned rodent dens for nesting. Incorporate undisturbed wild spaces into your farm or garden, to help both with pest management and pollination.

Native Bee Nests