Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS) Frequently Asked Questions

Here is a Top-10 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list for MAQS:

1) Subject: The paper wrap on the gel strip. Q) I remove the outer plastic wrap, should I peel the inner paper wrap off of the gel? A) The paper wrap stays on. It works as a wick to help control the vapour release.

2) Subject: Examining the colony and then treating. Q) The label says to disturb the colony as little as possible at time of application. Can I do a full colony exam and then treat immediately, or should I wait and come back and treat? A) The bees need to have their affairs in order when treated. When running trials it was found out that the colony assessments were best done 3 days in advance of the application. If the colonies were taken apart, assessed, reassembled and then treated shortly after we saw some absconding. It also increased the risk of queen loss. After an exam it would be best to wait at least until the next day to apply MAQS.

3) Subject: Treating with honey supers on. Q) Can I really treat with honey super on? Why does it not flavour the honey? A) Formic acid naturally occurs in honey at levels ranging up to over 2,000 parts per million (ppm). The formic acid concentration in hive air during MAQS treatment remains well below 100 ppm, so the levels in the honey do not go outside of naturally occurring levels.

4) Subject: Screen Bottom Boards Q) Should I leave the Screen Bottom open or close it off? A) There was only one trial run so far with screen bottom boards open, by Randy Oliver (www.scientificbeekeeping.com). He published the results in the February 2011 issue of American Bee Journal. There was a 4 to 5 % reduction in efficacy over a solid bottom board, however, both open screen and solid bottom boards saw over 90% drop in mite loads. Ventilation to the brood area is important during treatment, so leaving the screened bottom open will provide this additional ventilation.

5) Subject: Additional entrances, cracks in the equipment. Q) Should I close off all entrances except the fully open bottom board entrance? A) The fully open bottom entrance should be seen as meeting the minimum ventilation needed. Having additional entrances does not seem to affect the efficacy of the treatment. Adequate ventilation is critical with this product. For 2 brood chamber colonies some beekeepers set back the second story to create a temporary full width entrance, and then slide the boxes back square sometime after the first 3 days. If permanently reduced entrances are used, this set back procedure is absolutely necessary to provide adequate ventilation to the brood area.

6) Subject: Colony response - bees bearding on the hive. Q) It looks like most of the bees in the hive are bearding out on hive. Is this normal? A) It is normal for the bees to beard out for the first day, especially under warmer conditions. See the University of Hawaii photos in their report from 2009, found at: http://www.miteaway.com/V1-wright-varroa.pdf . Add an empty honey super with frames to the top of the hive during treatment. This will give the bees space to move UP away from the strips instead of OUT on the front of the hive. The extra super will certainly reduce, but may not totally eliminated bearding. There may be an increase in adult bee mortality in the first three days after application. Remember natural loss of bees occurs at about the same rate as egg-laying; with the formic treatment the bees may not be able to clean away the bees as quickly as usual.

7) Subject: Field bee activity. Q) Will the bees continue to forage during the treatment? A) Yes, the bees continue to forage.

8) Subject: Impact on brood - reducing dose? Q) What is impact on the brood? Can I reduce the dose? A) Studies have shown that reducing the dose reduces the effectiveness, and may still cause some brood damage. What we know from trials conducted so far is that MAQS works best by the 2-strip dose. Any brood damage that occurs is quickly made up, the queen is laying throughout the cluster area by Day +7. There are often lots of eggs by Day+4 although they may be as far away from the strips as possible. Any damage is cleaned up by Day +7. The field bees can continue to get pollen through the whole treatment, so there are good protein reserves when all the larva need feeding. The next time that MAQS is used, even if it is months later, the bees somehow know how to cope better.9

9) Subject: Feeding during treatment.
Q) Can I feed during treatment?
A) Feeding of any type (frame, hive-top feeder) is not recommended during treatment. Feeding may commence after the 7-day treatment is finished.

10) Subject: Moving bee hives during treatment. Q) Can I move the bees during the 7-day treatment period? A) The bees should not be disturbed during the treatment period.

11) Subject: Removing the strip residue after treatment. Q) The bees chewed up some of the strip but did not remove it all. How do I dispose of the residue? A) The residue from MAQS will simply compost over time. It can be handled the same way as any other organic yard-waste material. The strips can stay in the hive after day 7 as they are totally biodegradable. The strips can be removed at the beekeeper's convenience, post treatment.

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