Abstract

There has been a long-standing interest in developing approaches to maximize honey production by Kenyan beekeepers. Since honey bees in Kenya are passively managed, the main decision beekeepers make is which hive type to use: traditional Log hives, Langstroth hives, and Kenyan top-bar hives. We found Langstroth hives to be the most attractive to migrating swarms, followed by Log hives, while Kenyan top-bar hives were the least preferred. Pathogen and parasite loads correlated only with colony age and absconding rates were associated only with colony size and weight. We recommend additional studies to understand the factors that drive swarm attraction to hive bodies and highlight practical concerns about Kenyan top-bar hives that need to be addressed to improve their utility to beekeepers. Also, placing apiaries in areas with floral resources may reduce absconding rates; however, periodic breaks in brood production may serve as a mechanism to reduce parasite and pathogen loads.