

Beekeeping on the Prairies

Farm over view

A walk through the farm

Specific Management practices I use
to CAPITALIZE on Honey bee
Behaviour

- early spring hive development
- management of hive growth
- extraction facility
- winter nest preparation

Questions

**Comments/questions are
welcome!**



Ian Steppler

- Farm located near Miami MB
- Married to Sandy, family of 5
- Diploma of Agriculture
 - Introduction to beekeeping
- Director on the MBA
- Owner/Manager/President
Steppler Farms Ltd.
- The farm's Apiarist



Miami Manitoba



Grain Farm

- 3300 acres
- wheat, canola, corn, soybean
- silage and feed grains
- Conservation practices



Cattle Farm

- 500 PB Charolais cattle
- 43 Years breeding Charolais
- Consistes of Two Annual Sales
 - Bull Sale mid March
 - Piece of the Program Mid December



Honey Farm

- 1200 hives
- Primarily honey producers
- 300-350 drums annual production
- hire up to 7 local employees
- Member of BeeMaid Honey

BeeMaid



A step by step Walk Through My Honey Farm

A management
perspective from a
Prairie Beekeeper



It all starts inside



Spring Approaches

- indoor temps start to increase
- bees get active





Move out at night

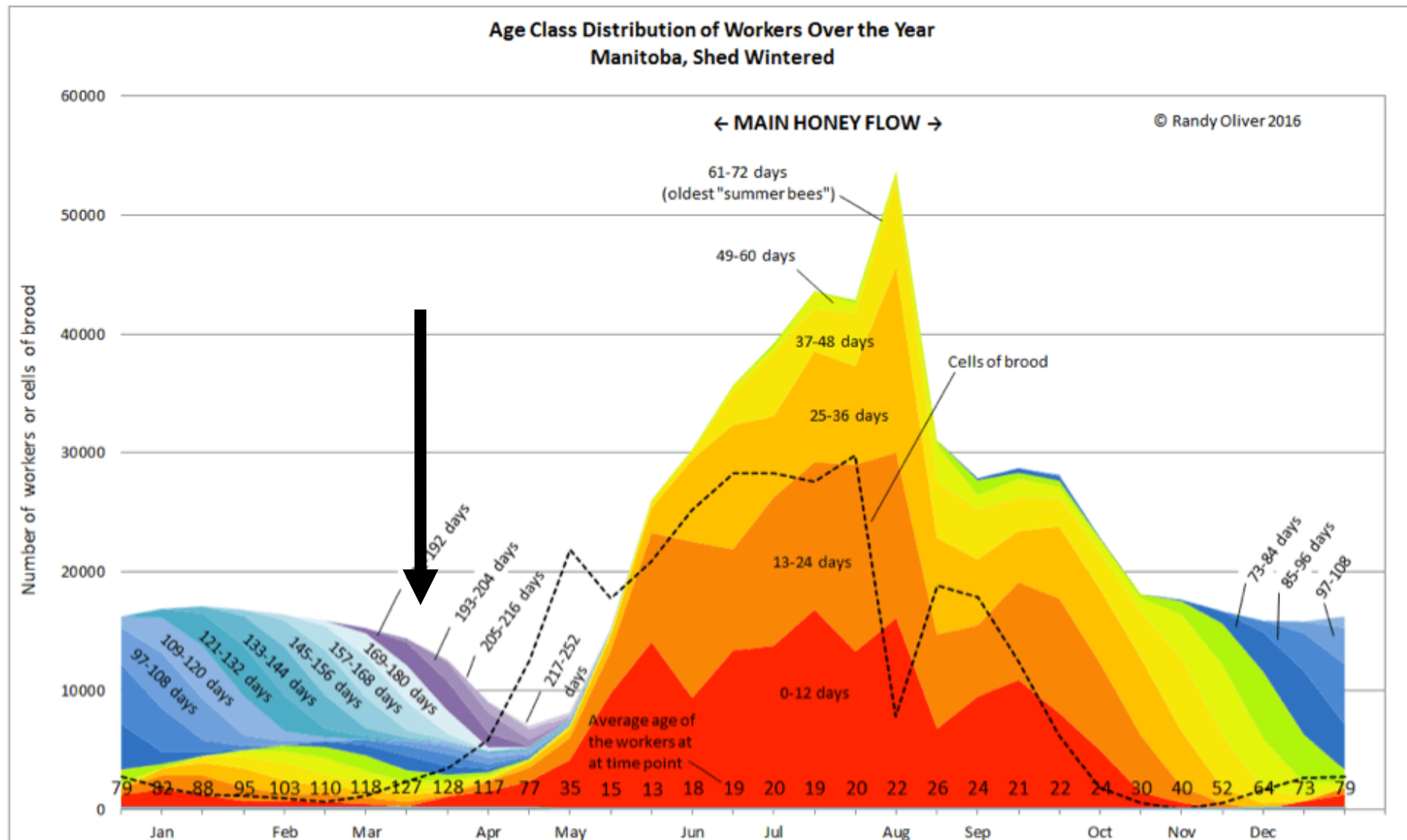
- bees don't fly at night
- settles them into their yards
- drive to yards on frost



First Flight

- 5 months without a cleansing flight
- free flight to relieve themselves
- quick with feed assessment/emergency feeding





- exiting winter with 180-200 day old bees
- focus on disease control
- focus on stimulating colony growth

Supplemental feeding

- dry feed
- open liquid feed
- protein patties



Protein Supplement





Apiary Assessment

- tip hives back and counting frames from underneath (frame score)
- Strong 8-10, Medium 4-6, Weak <3
- culling out dead and weak
- monitor for disease
- treat diseases accordingly



Clean up Equipment and Disease Check

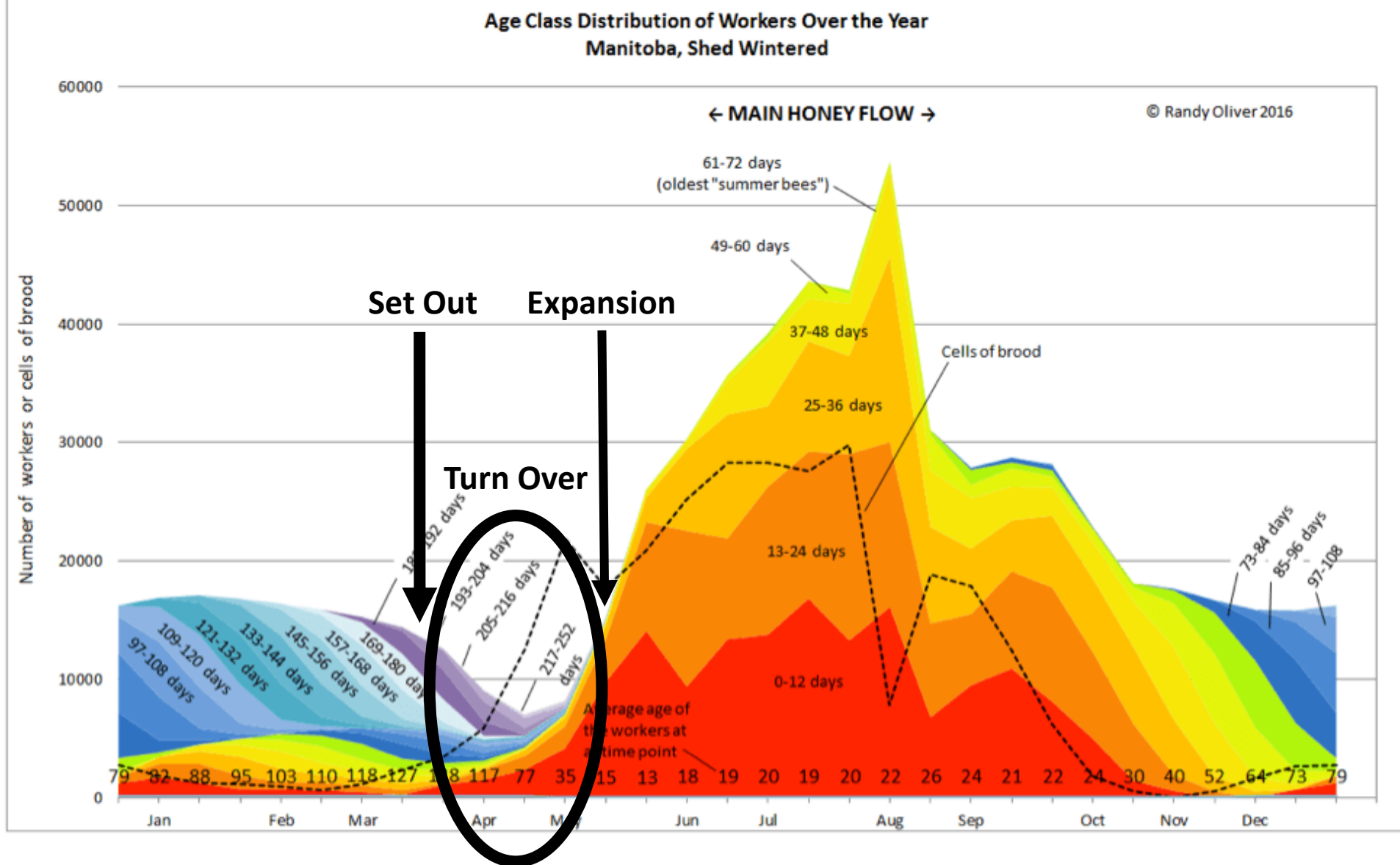
- disease check
- scrape frames and boxes
- sort empty/pollen/honey





Sort boxes to make seconds

2 foundation
1 honey
4 empty
1 honey
2 foundation



- switch out winter bees/spring bees
- add space to accommodate massive population growth

Credit Randy Oliver

Secondary Hive Assessments

- first round of brood has hatched
- tip to assess hives
- Strong hives (8-10 frames) get second brood box added
- Medium hives (4-6 frames) left in singles
- Weak hives (<3 frames) left in singles and taken to Nursery yard



Keep them tight/Give them space

the Philosophy of managing cool variable spring conditions

- bees thrive in small spaces
- keep them tight
- but
- hives grow exponentially
- give them space



Singles grow into double brood

- Upward movement of the queen
- I want a centered nest
- Lay 4 frames in the empties frames
- foundation buys time

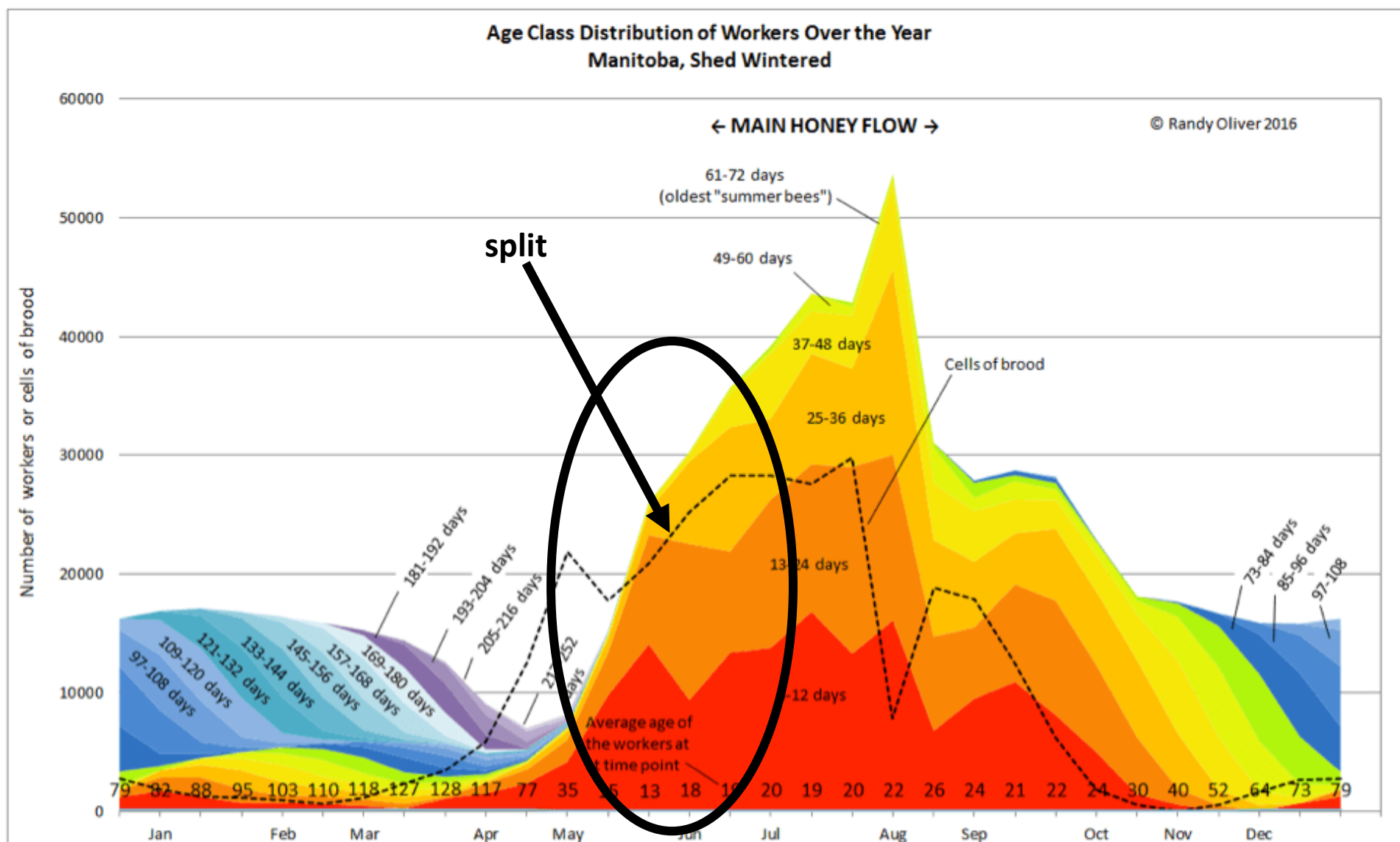


Split

- busiest time of the year
- split to early and the hive is shocked and moves backwards
- split too late and the hive swarms

We want to promote continual hive growth ALL through the spring





- May and June >>Swarm Control<<
- gave them space May 1(double brood)
- manage population May 20(take splits)

Sorting out
the splits

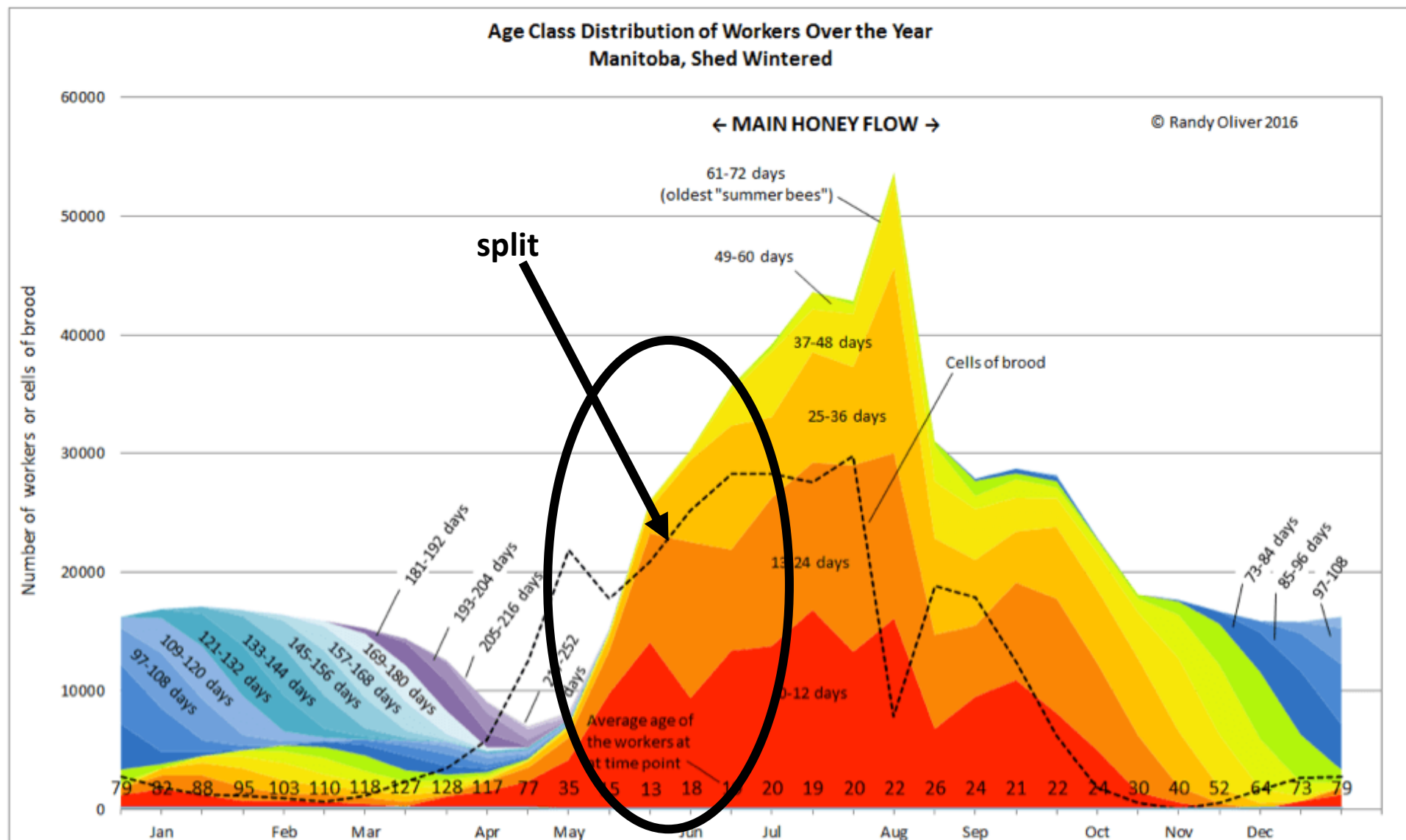


Take the single splits

- strip top boxes
- remove excluders

ADD SUPERS AS
THE SECONDS,





- splits taken
- promote continued hive growth >>**more bees more honey**<<
- continue to allow the queens to manage its nest in 2 boxes
- clovers/alfalfas – building bees

or
Sort and take
away as nucs





Import
queens

Queen Cells

Self Sustainable
Queen Management



-the queen has full reign
over both boxes

-the apiary is set into its
summer yards and ready for
the main flow

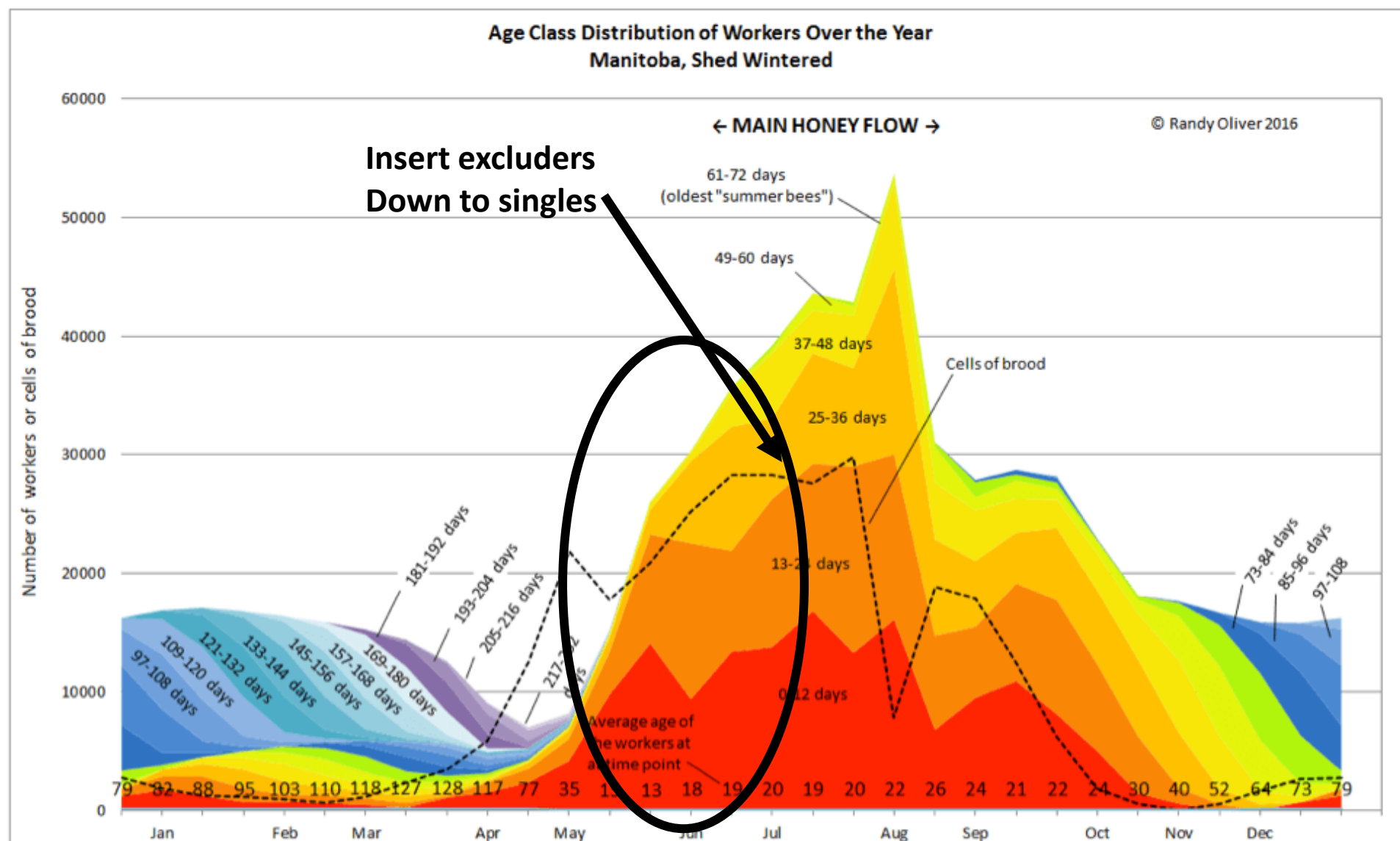
- clovers and early alfalfas
provide steady nourishment

-down time...queens are
happy, no hives are
swarming,
everything is great!



Canola





Back down
to singles



Inserting Excluders

- school kids start work
- crew of 3-6
- simply shake the queen and bees down
- insert excluder





Fumes are used to quicken the work up
Canola flows, boxes
plug, space is
needed!!

-we push hard long
hours to get these
hives shook down
and supered up

Back down to a
single brood nest

Seconds hatch
out and allowed
to backfill

Thirds are added



Apiary is set for the main flow

Family time



- crew adds fourth
- crew mows bee yards
- crew builds frames
- crew sorts foundation

we wait for the honey
boxes to fill



Pre harvest Supering Round

- 21 days after inserting
excluders the brood hatches
- the seconds are backfilled

Harvest Begins

- stage supering according to the
honey pull schedule
- one box per week rule



Honey Pull

Escape boards

- full boxes are lifted
- empties are set under escapes





-escapes are left for 3 days

-the bees migrate down
through the cones

-the bees cant get back up

-we remove bee free boxes

- the bees do not know any
different

Collect the Honey





Hot room,
30 degrees C
floor heat



60 frame Cowen
Extractor
Cooks & Beals
wax separator

-3-4 crew

-extracts 275-350
boxes per day

-18-22 drums per day



2-3 honey collection rounds

- 2 crews
- yard crew of 2-3
- extraction crew of 3-4
- Start pulling honey mid July, typically ends September
- total honey production of 200-250,000 lbs
300-375 drums



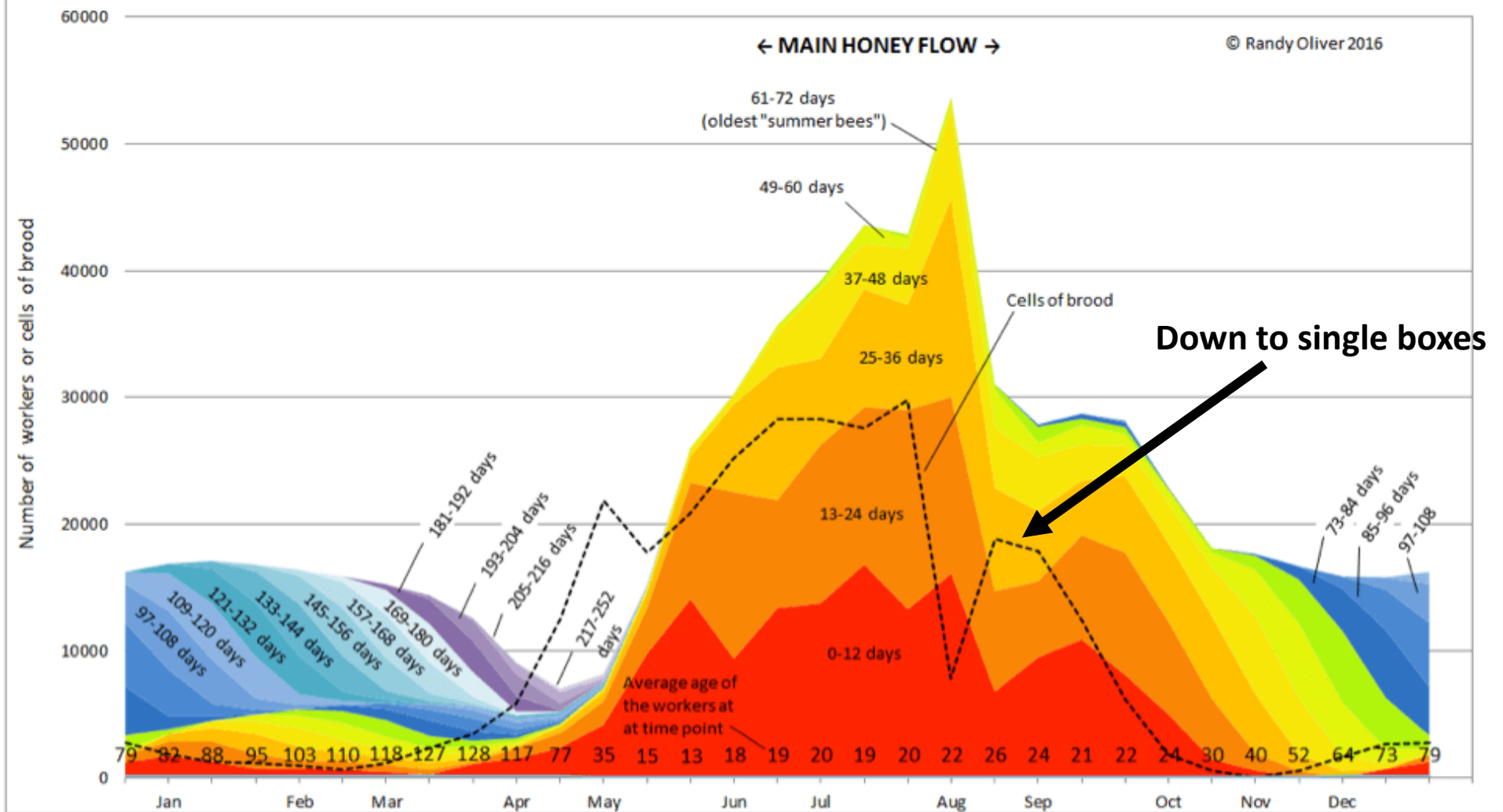


-Last round the bees are pushed down into singles

-the bees need feed ASAP

-8-9 frames of brood and pollen leave very little space for honey stores

Age Class Distribution of Workers Over the Year Manitoba, Shed Wintered



Immediate open feeding

-very careful not to
over feed

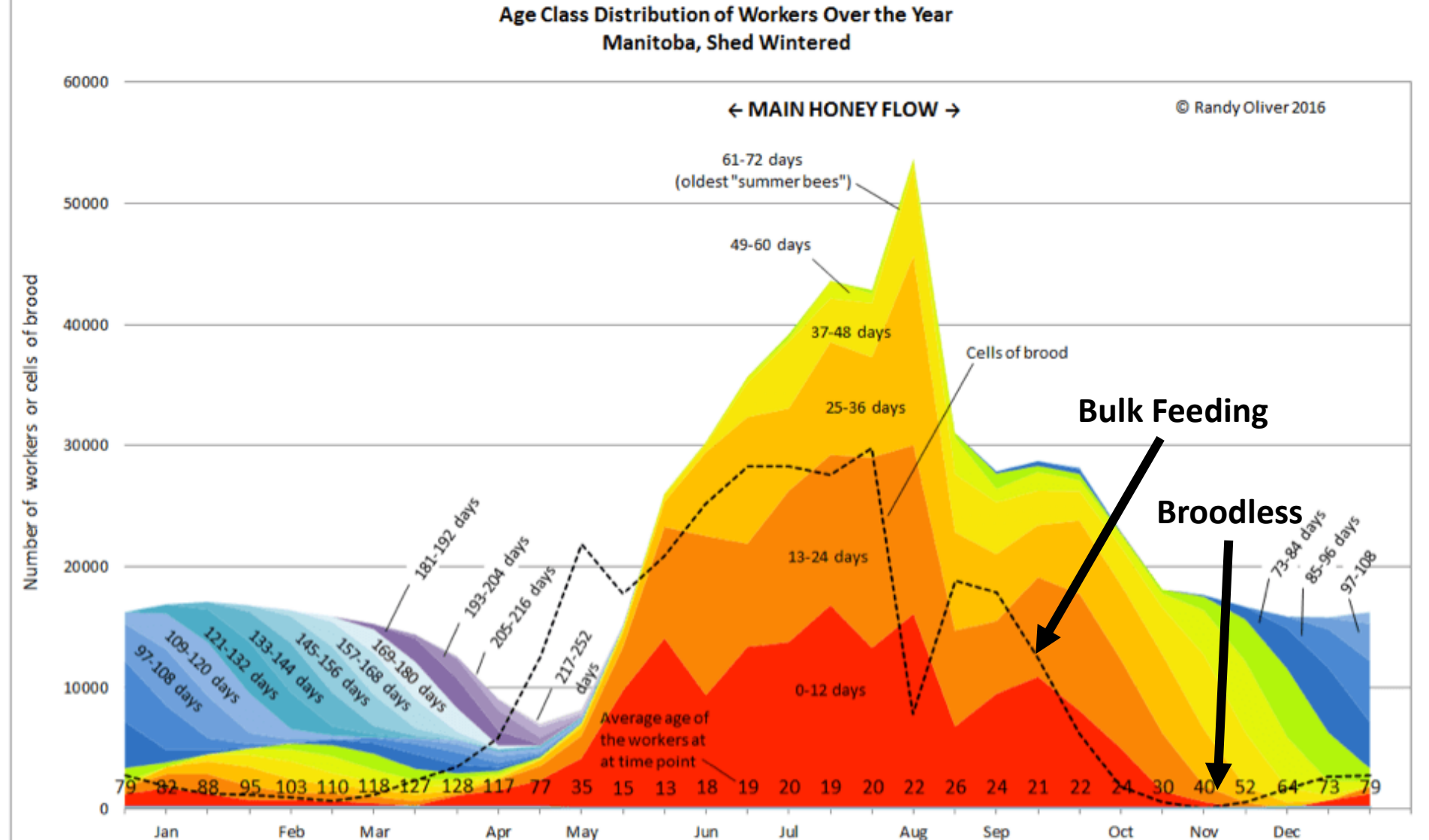
-very careful not to
under feed



September Bulk Feeding

- fall assessment round to cull poor failing hives
- disease monitoring
- mite treatments
- heavy feeding to backfill nest





- the queen finishes off brood laying
- we back fill the brood nest with syrup
- Old and plentiful summer bees make quick work storing away syrup
- by October the perfect sized winter nest easily fits into a single brood box

Credit Randy Oliver

Target weight of
95 lbs per single

Random hives
are weighed



Fall OAV treatment

Mid October/November
hives are broodless

Before we bring the
hives indoors we treat
with OAV

>>recommended<<
IT WORKS!





Hives are
picked from
the yards



Stacked in my
Wintering Shed





Questions?

