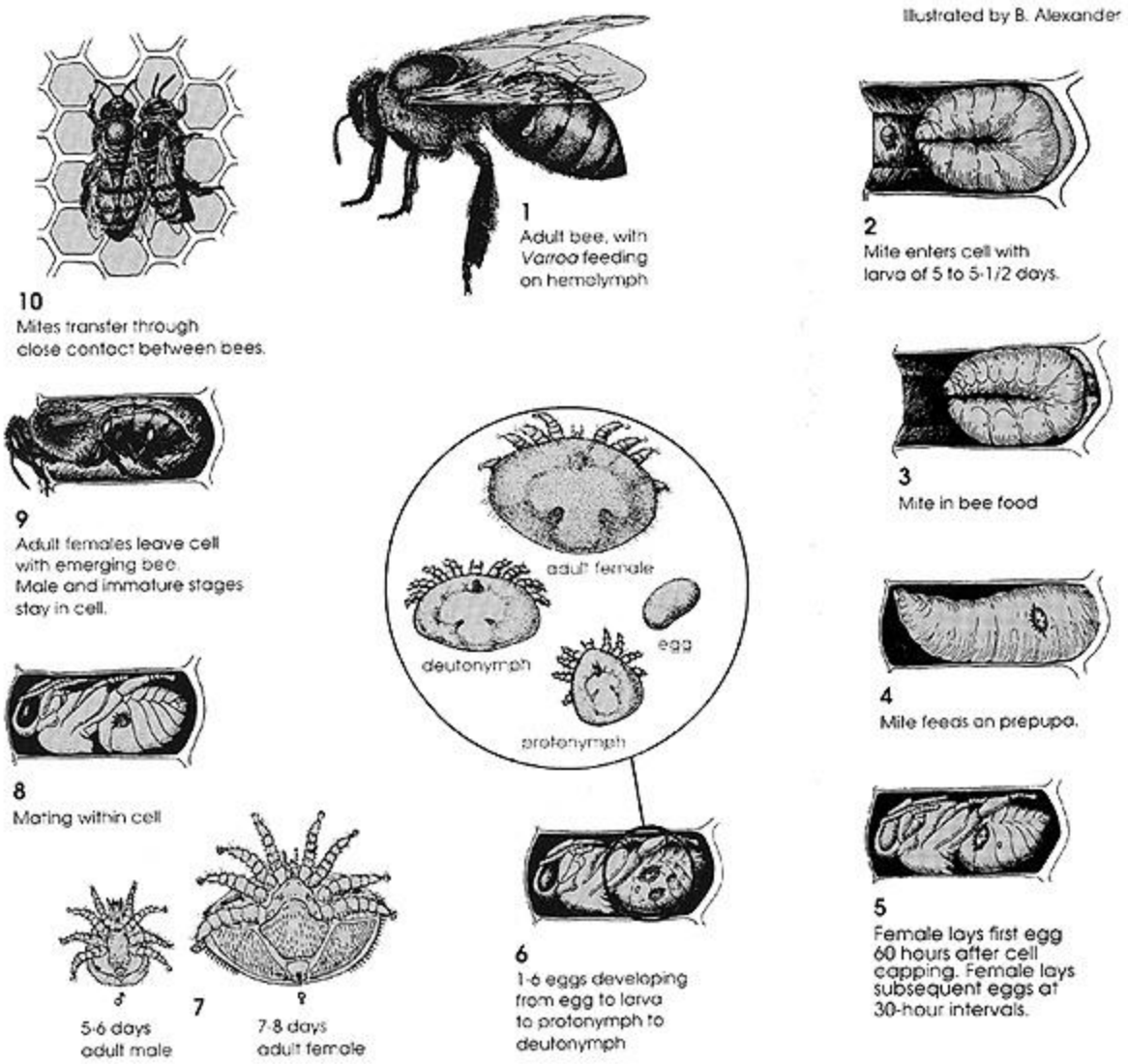
Life Cycle of the Varroa Mite



The reproduction of the mite is directly tied to bee reproduction. Just before the cell of a maturing bee is capped (sealed) a female mite enters the cell. Once the cell is capped, she waits about 60 hours before she begins to lay eggs and then she will lay one egg every 30 hours. The first egg will be a male mite and subsequent eggs will be female. The maturing mites will feed on the pupating bee. The feeding of the mites on the bee opens wounds which are sites for possible infection. In addition, the mite will infect the bee with viruses, much the way a mosquito can transmit malaria. The mites mate in the cell and only sexual mature female mites will exit the cell when the adult bee emerges.

Worker bees are capped for about 12 days and drones are capped for about 14 days, as a result more mites will be able to reproduce in drone cells than workers. A single mite reproducing in a worker cell, on average will result in 1.8 mites emerging with the bee, but 2.8 mites will emerge with a drone. Not only do the mites reproduce more successfully in drone cells, but they also gravitate to them and enter them more frequently than worker cells.