

MAKING A NUCLEUS OR SPLITTING THE HIVE

SPLITTING A HIVE OR CREATING A NUCLEUS

1. Why split a hive?

The prime reason is to increase the number of hives and our stocks of bees. Many beekeepers have lost stocks of bees over the Winter and need to take steps to recover numbers.



2. When should we split a hive?

May or June is the best time. The hive we are about to split should be healthy and have plenty of bees. We are going to take something like half the bees from the parent stock but providing it is a good strong stock with an active Queen it should quickly build up the number of bees and produce honey.

The new nucleus or split, on the other hand, will initially be Queenless. Many bees will die off through natural wastage and until a new Queen is reared and she starts to lay, the stock will reduce in size. It is unlikely that much (if any) surplus honey will be produced this year but you may have a good healthy stock of bees to carry through the Winter for next year.



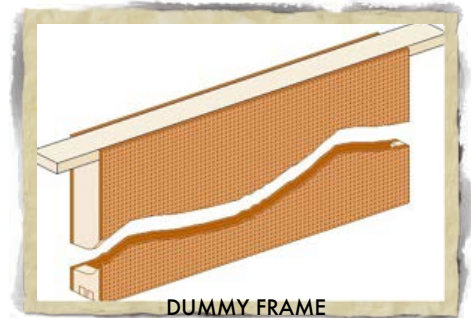
3. Preparation



Prepare a nucleus box. This is a hive to hold five frames. It can be a hive especially made for the job or you could use a standard hive, filling it with the five frames we are going to split from the parent hive together with five dummy frames.

For the uninitiated, a dummy frame is, in effect, a box with the overall thickness of a drawn out frame (You could use a frame infilled with wood)

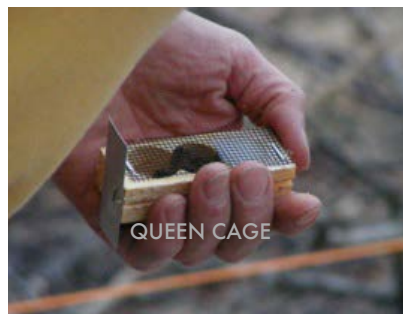
Place the new nucleus box alongside the hive which is to be split.



4. The split

Open the main hive and examine the frames to find the Queen find and put her in a cage so as to be

certain we know where she is throughout the operation. She will be at the centre of the nest or cluster surrounded by bees if you haven't used too much smoke. The Queen **MUST** be released back into the old hive at the end of operations



Take a frame containing emerging brood (2), also a frame containing some brood and eggs (3) together with two frames of mostly new honey or nectar if we must use capped honey then break some of the capping to expose the honey. (1&5) and one frame containing pollen (4). These frames must include all the bees that are adhering. Place them in the nucleus box in the following order.

- (1) a frame of honey
- (2) a comb of emerging brood
- (3) a comb containing some eggs and brood
- (4) comb of pollen
- (5) a comb of honey

Place five new brood frames in the **old hive** to replace the ones you have removed.

6. The nucleus

The main difference between a normal stock of bees and a nucleus is that the nuc is entirely artificial, it could never happen in nature. It has no laying Queen, possibly not even a Queen cell, relying on the bees building a queen cell around one of the eggs that have been given.

Given half a chance all the flying bees will go back to the stock from which they came, leaving the nucleus with insufficient bees to keep the brood warm, it would, therefore, die out.

We can overcome some of this artificially.

The best method would be to take the nuc away from your apiary, some four miles or more, and let them fly freely until the bees have raised a new Queen, and she is mated and is laying eggs.



Perhaps another beekeeper in our group will allow you space at his or her apiary for four or five weeks then they can be moved back to where ever you want them.



If this is not possible, then close the entrance up and place the nucleus in a cool dark place for a few days (A cellar if you have one). After the three or four days, place the nucleus in a suitable place away from the old hive. Release the bees in the late evening (At dusk) do not feed for three days by which time they will have settled. You can now leave them for four or five weeks to raise a Queen, allow her to mate and start laying. Start feeding continuously after the three days

7. Back to the parent hive

Close up and feed the old hive, especially if there is no honey flow. But remember, don't feed the nucleus until it has been established (free flying) for three or four days, otherwise other bees could rob them out.

Are there sufficient bees in the new nucleus? (You will have to make your own judgment on this) If not shake more bees into the nuc from a super from the old hive. The Queen has been prevented from getting into the super by placing her in a cage and cannot be amongst them. When the job is done, make sure the queen is been released back into the old stock



One other point.

If when we first open the old hive we find queen cells, we can speed everything up by giving the new nucleus comb containing queen cells (With one open queen cell containing a big fat grub - sealed cells may be empty) This would be in place of the comb containing eggs and brood.

The old hive, having been deprived of so many bees and brood will in all probability abandon any idea of swarming, but it is worth while destroying any the remaining queen cells just to be sure.