



Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

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How Do I? Information Sheet #1 Artificial Swarming / Raising a New Queen Author Andy Willis - Foragings Jan 2007

1. You require a clean, empty spare hive, (No. 2), fitted with new frames of foundation & a strong healthy colony, (No. 1), making queen cells – these must not be sealed.
2. Move hive, No. 1 to one side, more than 3 feet, (1m), away & put the empty hive, No. 2 on the original site of hive No. 1, ensuring that the entrance is aligned with hive No. 1's original position.
3. Go through hive No. 1 & find the queen, (hopefully she is marked) this is the most difficult bit.
4. Carefully place the queen in to hive No. 2, (I like to trap her in the brood box between a queen excluder on the floor & one in the usual position – that way the artificial swarm can't abscond. One drawn frame is helpful but not essential in the new box.
5. Next put all the supers on top of hive No. 2 & close up – the flying bees return to the new hive, No. 2 finding the queen with no brood thus thinking they have swarmed & set too drawing foundation & make honey as they have no baby mouths to feed.
6. Go through the old brood box of hive No. 1 & look for the best queen cell, ie: large plump grub on a thick bed of royal jelly – this cell ideally is not on a bottom bar where it's easily knocked or damaged. Mark the frame with a drawing pin or an X with Queen marking paint of that year & remove all other cells & cups with eggs. (This concentrates the whole hives energies into this one chosen queen cell resulting in a bigger, better queen. Reassemble the hive & if stores are low in the old brood box feed with some dilute syrup.
7. One week later go through the old brood box again & check the chosen queen cell is still the only one in the hive – the bees will quite often – but not always draw more queen cells from eggs or young larvae. These should be removed unless disaster has befallen the chosen one. If you leave more than one queen cell in the hive, caste swarms are quite likely to happen. A further check, often a few days later ensures no grub queens are produced. This must be done before the chosen one hatch.
8. Check the queen in hive No. 2 has started to lay again & the foundation is being drawn. If the old queen was trapped in the brood box by an extra queen excluder, remove it. Add more supers as needed. After about three weeks some colonies that are very strong try for a second round of swarming, if so repeat the process as before or cull the queen & re-queen/amalgamate with new queens colony once she is laying.