

MAKING STANDARD FIVE FRAME NUCLEI

When making a nucleus it must be remembered that if it is to stay in the same apiary any older bees will return to the home site to the old stock.

If the nucleus is to be moved to another apiary, every bee included will remain with the nucleus.

Start by finding the queen and cage her in a temporary cage, a match box will do with a few of her workers. She will be in full lay and needs food regularly. Place this in the entrance to the colony. This is a precaution so that the queen is not accidentally shaken into the nuc or you forget to replace her in the hive – the bees will release her if you forget.

Remove from the parent stock four frames of sealed brood covered by bees and place this into the nuc box together with one frame of stores (from any hive or store). If the nuc is to remain on site these four frames should have been given a gentle shake over the parent hive to dislodge the older bees that do not hang on so tightly. Now add 4 more frames worth of bees, again a gentle shake over the parent hive followed by a good shake over the nuc to dislodge the bees. If the nuc is to be taken away immediately, shake in only two (not four) frames of extra bees, dislodging all bees into the nuc. Put the queen into the nuc in a quick release cage so that she will be released onto brood. Close the entrance with sappy grass to hold the bees inside to adjust to their new home. The grass will dry and release the bees. For a nuc to be moved the entrance needs to be secure for the move – foam rubber block is ideal and should be removed at the new site and replaced by sappy grass. Leave for at least a week.

A week later, if the queen is accepted and laying, move the frames gently into a full sized brood chamber and add two to three frames of drawn comb or foundation. These frames should be placed in one lump between the frames containing brood and the frame of stores. If using foundation only feed with 'heavy' syrup (2lbs to 1 pint water) using a frame feeder or a slow feeder (upturned bucket type). Add frames at each inspection as necessary. Continue to feed till all 11 brood frames are drawn. Never ever let either of these colonies be short of stores or they will starve. Stop feeding when the brood combs are drawn.

In a good year the bees may need a queen excluder and super and they may get some surplus honey.