



National Bee Unit

Swarm Control When You Can't Find the Queen

This system can only be used if the colony is showing signs of swarming, i.e. there are queen cells with larvae in them. If queen cells are sealed it is too late as this indicates that the colony may have already swarmed.

1. Move the original brood box and floor to one side. A minimum of one metre. This is called the 'Parent Colony'; the younger bees remaining in this box.
2. Place a new brood box and floor filled with drawn comb or foundation on the original site. This is called the 'Artificial Swarm'; the flying bees will fill this box.
3. Examine the brood combs in the original brood box (parent colony) and remove a comb containing eggs and young brood. It must not have any queen cells on it.
4. Place this comb in the centre of the new box (artificial swarm).
5. Replace the vacant space in the original box (parent colony) with a new drawn comb or foundation.
6. Place any supers on the new brood box (artificial swarm) at the original site.

Leave for seven days then

7. Examine the new brood box (artificial swarm). If there are no queen cells then the queen is probably in this colony and eggs should be visible. If there are queen cells select one with a visible larva and destroy the rest.
8. If the queen is not present in the original box (parent colony) then emergency queen cells will be built. Knock down all queen cells bar one opened cell with a visible healthy larva. From this, a virgin queen will hatch and take over the colony. However, if the queen is present then due to the reduced number of bees they will break down any queen cells and eggs and young larvae will be seen.
9. Later in the season or in the following spring you will need to find the older queen to cull her. The colonies can then be re-united.

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APHA, National Agri-Food Innovation Campus
Sand Hutton, York. YO41 1LZ

Telephone 03003030094 email nbuoffice@apha.gsi.gov.uk NBU Web site:

www.nationalbeeunit.com

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