

Artificial Swarm

The **artificial swarm** is probably the most commonly used method of carrying out swarm control and is effective in 95% of cases. It has many variations.

The rule of thumb is to master one method before trying others. **Do not try to attempt various methods** because you could confuse yourself, or at worst even lose your bees.

The artificial swarm best mimics a natural swarm in that it separates the queen and flying bees from the brood. She can continue to lay eggs with no interruption to the honey flow.

The key to success is to carry out careful inspections and to ensure you don't miss seeing any queen cells.

You will need:

1. **A Floor.**
2. **A full complement of brood frames fitted with foundation.**
3. **Crown board (inner cover) and Roof (outer cover).**
4. **A manipulation cloth or an additional crown board is also useful.**

If during an inspection you see a queen cell (**unsealed**) containing a larva, it is time to carry out an **'artificial swarm'** procedure.

Check each comb in the brood box and note which frame(s) has a queen cell or cells. This can be done with a marker pen or by using coloured drawing pins.

Do not shake any bees off a comb with queen cells because this is likely to damage or injure the developing queen.

1. Prepare your **"New"** stand 4 or 5 feet to the 'right' of the **"parent"** hive (*original site*).
2. Remove the roof of the **'parent'** hive and place upside down on the ground between the hive and the stand that has just been positioned.
3. Insert your hive tool into the joint immediately above the queen excluder to break the propolis seal and transfer the super(s) complete with crown board into the upturned roof thus trapping all the bees that were in the supers (*this keeps them out of our way*).
4. Remove the queen excluder and place out of the way for later replacement.
5. Place the spare crown board on the **'parent'** brood box (*to calm the bees*). Then transfer the floor, brood box and crown board as one unit from the **'original site'** to the **"New"** stand with the entrance facing the same direction.
6. Put the empty **'new'** hive in the place where the **'parent'** or original hive was; face it in the same direction. Remove one/three frames (*foundation*) from the centre of the **'new'** hive and put it/them to one side for the time being.

7. Remove the crown board and examine each comb until you find the frame containing the queen (*not very easy if she is not marked*). Transfer the frame of bees that contains the queen into the gap between the frames of foundation (*the centre of the 'new' hive*) on the 'original site' (*you should destroy any queen cells that exist on this frame*). Put on the queen excluder and place the original supers on top. If they are very full, consider adding another super.
8. It is a good idea to put a frame of drawn comb either side of the frame containing the queen so that the queen can start laying straightaway.
9. Continuing with the 'parent' hive, (*box with the frames of brood*) remove the crown board, close up the frames and insert at (*back and front*) the one/three frames of foundation that were removed from the new hive. Replace the crown board and roof.

All the flying bees will return to the 'new' hive thinking it's the 'parent' or original hive.

The nurse bees will bring on the queen cells in the 'parent' hive until one is hatched or selected.

We now have two colonies that can be described as the new or "swarm" and "parent".

The one ('swarm') has an old queen, stores of nectar and honey, an abundance of flying bees and almost no brood.

The other ('parent') has brood of all ages, queen cells that are about to "hatch" and a recently depleted number of bees.

This is very similar to the circumstances that prevail in a swarm situation.

Do not feed straight away. Wait a couple of days. Feeding sugar syrup immediately could cause robbing.

For brood promotion use a 50/50 mix.

The 'parent' colony will reduce the number of queen cells to that which its smaller number of bees can properly support, (*usually two*), and much of the sealed brood will be emerging to give an increase in the population of adult bees.

On the seventh day, before a queen emerges, and with a view to prevent the hive throwing a cast, swap the 'parent' hive from the right side of the 'swarm' (*new*) hive to a similar position, but on the left of it. Our returning foragers will return to find their home missing they will go to the nearest hive which will be the 'swarm' (*new*) hive and enter there instead (*this balances the numbers*).

The reverse can be done a week later.

Check the 'swarm' (*new*) hive to see if the old queen has continued laying and there are no queen cells.

After another fourteen to twenty-one days check the 'parent' (*original hive*) to see if the new queen has been mated and is laying.

If the weather had been bad or there is no sign of eggs or larvae, be prepared to re-unite the two hives. This can sometimes happen if the queen cannot fly to mate. Once you know the queen is laying in the

'parent' (original hive) you can either unite the two hives and remove the old queen or increase your number of colonies.

The nuc.

Remove a frame containing a couple of queen cells, a frame of emerging brood, a frame with brood of all ages and two other frames taken from storage... one with sealed stores and the other with foundation that has been partially drawn. Put these 5 combs into a 5 frame nucleus box with extra bees shaken in... The nuc is then removed from the site to another apiary beyond flying range. The "small" hive (nuc) has less occupied frames but the emerging brood will soon bolster the numbers.

You may get more helpful information on other websites! Listed are a few:

<http://www.beeworld.co.uk/page/The-Artificial-Swarm.aspx>

<http://www.cornwallhoney.co.uk/bees.htm>

<http://diary-of-a-beekeeper.blogspot.com/2010/05/dividing-swarming-colony.html>

<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/newhome.html>

<http://www.honeyshop.co.uk/>

This piece of information is compiled to help our members (Westport Beekeepers Club) to deal with the new situation we are faced with this year 2011, resulting from the setting up of a new club in 2010 and members owning their first hives. (55 new hives, 55 swarms!!!!) alot of bees?

Use at own risk, we the writers of this article (wbkc) have not used or proven this method as 100% effective and will not accept any loss or damage incurred by the users of this advice.