

The Nuc Option: Making Summer Increase - by Joe Lewis

Whether you want to keep one hive or a hundred and one, making summer nucs is a smart thing to do. It is insurance against winter loss, or any other loss. It insures you have a new queen ready to replace your old one. It gets you a proven queen more able to swing into action the next spring. Making increase in the summer breaks the mite reproduction cycle without chemical treatment. Creating a nucleus colony can be done any time you find a good queen cell in your hive, but can be instigated by the beekeeper at a pre-set time when a reliable source of queen cells is available. (More later on this.)



A nucleus colony is formed by taking one or two frames of brood plus some honey and pollen and separating them from the parent hive. To make sure you don't remove the queen by mistake, if you are not too good at finding the queen in the middle of 80,000 bees, just use the Doolittle method of shaking or brushing all the bees off of the desired frames, then place the frames above a queen excluder in another box. A short time later the bees will migrate up to cover these frames and the queen remains below. Then the frames and nuc need to be moved temporarily AT LEAST 2 MILES away! This is important, as you don't want your nuc bees going back home to the parent colony.

The summer nuc can be fed during the dearth of nectar using a top feeder thereby minimizing the chance of summer robbing. Keeping the entrance small is important on nucs as the smaller entrance is easier to defend against sneak attack from other beehives.

The nucleus should be a 4 or 5 frame box and can be made with any scrap wood material or purchased from any bee supply house. Mann Lake even sells a nuc box made of wax coated pasteboard!



The nucleus colony needs special consideration regarding shade and ventilation, since being smaller it is less able to regulate its own temperature. Place in a location with good shade after 11 AM and give it an extra ventilation hole on the opposite side from the entrance.

