

BAILEY BOARD COMB CHANGE

This week I thought we would talk about the Bailey Comb Change. Brood comb should be used for no more than 3 years. The comb becomes damaged and may contain the causative organism of many bee diseases, such as EFB or AFB. Used comb should be rendered or disposed of rather than being used in a different colony. For the small cost involved of buying new frames, it is not worth the risk of using on another colony.

There are other methods of changing comb, but I am highlighting the Bailey Comb Change as it is a more gentle way of changing frames on mass and you are not sacrificing any brood. It is most easily done with colonies that are being run on a single deep brood box and is best done early in the season when there are no supers on the hive but, not before the colony has enough bees to complete the task quickly. The only extra bit of equipment I have found useful is a Bailey Board which is basically a queen excluder with an entrance, easily modified or you can buy purpose built from a supplier.



You could also make an entrance in an EKE and sit on top of a queen excluder.

- 1. Prepare a clean brood chamber filled with frames of foundation.*
- 2. Place this brood box over the existing brood box. Unless there is a strong nectar flow feed with winter strength sugar syrup i.e. 1 Kg of sugar to 650ml of water. A point of note, if you already had one good quality, empty drawn frame on which the queen can start to lay immediately then you could go to straight to step 4.*

- 3. When the bees have drawn out some of the foundation, find the queen from the and place her on this comb.*

- 4. Put a Bailey Board or modified queen excluder over the old brood chamber and under the new brood box, trapping the queen in the upper chamber. Nurse bees will look after the brood in the lower box and the other bees will move up to the queen. Arrange a new hive entrance between the two brood boxes and close off the old entrance This helps to reduce the amount of pollen stored in the old lower combs. You can also bruise the capping's on any honey in the lower box, to encourage the bees to move it up and use dummy boards to fill the spaces of any removed frames at this stage.*

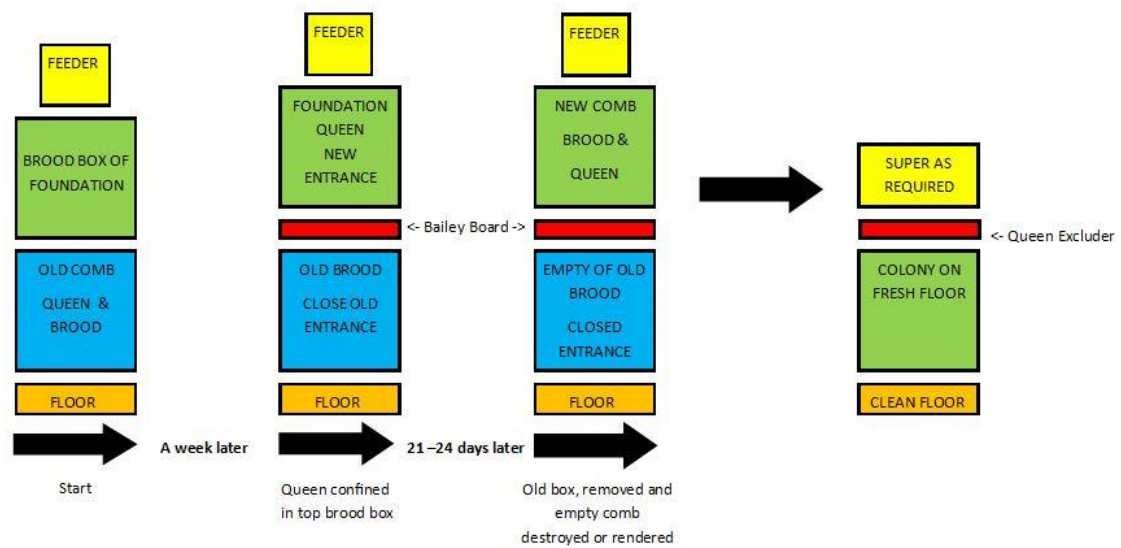


- 5. Continue to feed to allow the new brood box of foundation to be drawn out. This should be mostly done after about 2 weeks or 3 weeks. You may need to move the outer frames in to the centre of box to get them drawn out, remembering to look after the brood pattern. As I said, this method is best done early in the season when there are less drones about but if there are some drones you can open the old entrance for a couple of hours every few days to let them out.*

6. After 24 days (allowing for the drones to emerge) the bottom box containing the old combs will be brood free and can be removed altogether. The box of new combs, which by now should contain a substantial amount of brood, can now be lowered onto the floor. The feeder can be removed, and your normal seasonal management can continue.

I know in the past I have been put off by my wrongly perceived thoughts about “interrupting the season” when it comes to changing comb and losing brood. But for those of you who are thinking about changing comb I have found this method in the past to be a good, simple and effective method, that does need doing at some stage.

BAILEY COMB CHANGE DIAGRAM



Barrie