

## Uniting Colonies

There sometimes comes a time when it is beneficial to the bees, or the beekeeper, to join two colonies together. Some of the main reasons are as follows:-

- To make a colony, from two or more that will be strong enough to overwinter that otherwise will not have survived as they were too small.
- To requeen a colony with a younger queen or that has more desirable traits
- A colony that is hopelessly queenless through failed mating or been killed
- To reduce your colony numbers, to a more manageable level for you, where manipulations have resulted in extra colonies



One of the easiest and a really successful method involves the use of sheets of newspaper. This is a relatively simple operation, requiring the minimum equipment. The principal is to place one colony on top of another separated only by newspaper.

If you placed two colonies directly together on frames they would both be on the defensive and fight and possibly the queen would be killed. So, for uniting to be successful it must be done in such a way as to disguise the odour, and reduce the risk of putting the bees on the defensive.

**\*\* If you are requeening, then before you unite, you need to find the queen from the weak or poor quality hive and permanently remove her!!\*\***

**\*\*Never unite a colony showing signs of disease as all you are doing is risking the healthy colony\*\***

So where to begin...



I normally leave the strong colony and queen in its position in the bottom box, although I don't think it matters.

One or two sheets of newspaper are placed between the boxes of bees to act as a barrier which will slow down the integration of the two groups of bees. It can be pretty windy and wild most days where I am, so I normally hold the newspaper in place with a queen excluder.

The newspaper is pricked a few times in the area that will be over the centre of the box. Don't make large gashes in the paper as this may result in the different bees meeting each other too early before their odours have had a chance to mingle and result in fighting. Just a few holes with a pin will do.

The bees will slowly chew through the paper, giving time for the odours to mingle and the bees to calm down and be no longer defensive. The bees can then pass through the hole and mingle.

I generally leave them for a week before inspecting and rearranging combs into one box if needed. They will have removed most of the newspaper and it will be seen shredded in front of the hive entrance or under the hive.

