Swarm Control Pagden/Heddon method

The first thing to do if you discover queen cells in your colony is **"DON'T PANIC"**. Swarming is a natural occurrence and we should work with the bees and use it to ours and their advantage.

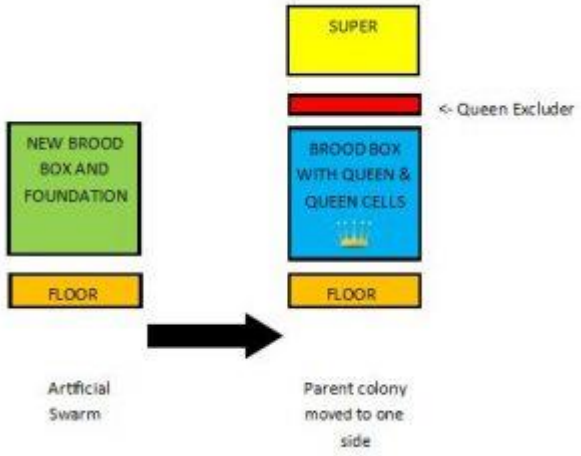
Do not start tearing down queen cells in the first instance. This does not deter them from swarming and ultimately, they will end up using older eggs past the optimum age for rearing the best queens, so work with the bees…the bees know best! Step back and take a breath.

Make a plan, even rehearse with empty boxes and be comfortable with the method you are going to use. Have your kit ready and take your time.

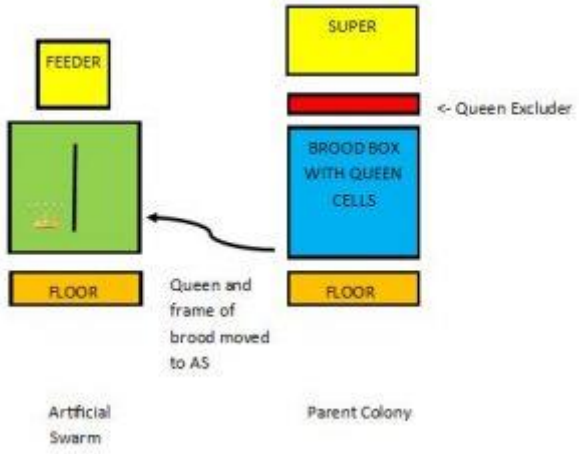
On finding queen cells in the colony….

1. Place the new stand 1-3m to the side. Then move the whole hive with queen, house bees and swarm cells to the new stand.

2. Place a new Brood Box with frames of foundation on the old stand, take out a central frame. Foragers will return to the New Brood Box on the old stand, that leaves fewer bees in the old brood box.



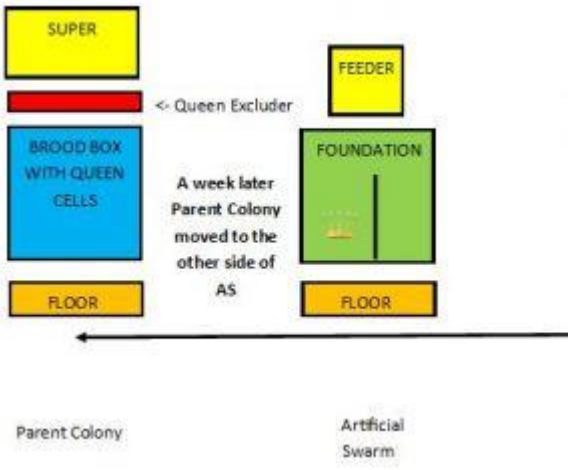
3. Find the queen in the parent colony. Transfer her along with a frame of brood in all stages of development and the bees covering it into the centre of the new brood box. I try not to use a frame with eggs in it and make sure there are no queen cells on the frame. I tend to shake a couple more frames of bees into the new brood box, to increase the number of nurse bees that would be there in a swarm.
   Cover the brood box with a crown board and feed with 1:1 syrup if there is no nectar flow, so the bees can draw out the foundation. Finally add the roof. The flying bees will return here and form the artificial swarm. You may wish to put a queen excluder between floor and brood box for 3 or 4 days to prevent them from absconding.



4. Go through the parent hive and select one or two large open queen cells with larvae and lots of royal jelly in. Mark the frame with a drawing pin on the top bar above them. The reason we choose open queen cells is that we at least know something is in them. Destroy any sealed queen cells. You may need to shake or brush the bees off the frames but do not shake frames with your selected cells.
   Close up the frames and replace the missing frame with a frame of foundation at the side, but do not split up the brood area. If there were supers on the hive then these should be placed on the parent hive, over a queen excluder, as they will have lost all their foraging bees to the swarm on the original location. Finally add a crown board and roof.

5. Four to six days later, go though the frames in the parent hive. From your previously marked queen cells choose the largest dimpled one, or at this point you could make up 2 nucs and make further increase, otherwise remove all the rest made in the meantime. Make sure they have enough stores or add supers if needed.
   Make sure the old queen is laying in the New Brood Box. Over the next week or two, she should be re-establishing the colony. The swarm should be drawing out foundation. Continue to feed if there is no nectar flow. When they have drawn out at least 9 or 10 frames you can start adding supers as required and stop feeding.

6. A week later, move the whole colony in the Old Brood Box to the other side (Heddon variation) of the artificial swarm. Foragers again migrate to the New Brood Box and reduce the chance of a cast swarm.



7. It may be as long as four weeks after the artificial swarm was made for the new queen to be mated and to see signs of laying, so don't disturb during this time.