

# National Bee Unit

FAQ 18



The Food and Environment  
Research Agency

## Swarm Control

### When you can't find the queen

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This system can only be used if the colony is showing signs of swarming, i.e. there are queen cells with larvae in them. If queen cells are sealed it is too late as this indicates that the colony may have already swarmed.

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1. Move the original brood box and floor to one side. A minimum of one metre. This is called the 'Parent Colony'; the younger bees remaining in this box.
2. Place a new brood box and floor filled with drawn comb or foundation on the original site. This is called the 'Artificial Swarm'; the flying bees will fill this box.
3. Examine the brood combs in the original brood box (parent colony) and remove a comb containing eggs and young brood. It must not have any queen cells on it.
4. Place this comb in the centre of the new box (artificial swarm).
5. Replace the vacant space in the original box (parent colony) with a new drawn comb or foundation.
6. Place any supers on the new brood box (artificial swarm) at the original site.

#### ***Leave for seven days then***

7. Examine the new brood box (artificial swarm). If there are no queen cells this is probably where the original queen will be, if so eggs should be visible. If there are queen cells select one with a visible larva and destroy the rest.
8. In the original box (parent colony) if the queen is not present then the queen cells will develop and it is probable that one new queen will hatch and take over the colony. This is because of the decrease in the number of bees, but it is not infallible. If the queen is present then eggs and young larvae will be present. The probability is that due to the reduced number of bees they will break down any queen cells.
9. Later in the season or in the following spring you will need to find the older queen to cull her. The colonies can then be re-united.

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