

The Shook Swarm Technique

Regular changing of brood frames (and combs) helps to inhibit brood diseases, such as Nosema & EFB. Colonies treated to a whole frame change out often become the most productive in the colony.

Until recently, frame replacement has been advocated on the basis of one third of the frames every year - ie. a full replacement every three years. "The Shook Swarm Technique", replaces all brood frames in a single operation, therefore removing all potentially diseased equipment in a single operation and minimising disease transfer .

This technique should only be carried out on strong colonies because of the stress it creates. It should also be carried out as early as possible in the season, but certainly not later than July. Ideally, there should be a good nectar flow, but feeding will probably be needed to help the bees rapidly draw out the new comb.

Method

You will need the following equipment:

- *A clean brood chamber (with new frames of foundation)*
- *A queen excluder*
- *Crown board and floor (all clean).*
- *Contact feeder with heavy syrup and eke (if necessary)*
- *Roof*

Move the existing hive to one side and place the new hive in its place, with the queen excluder between the floor and the brood box to prevent the queen absconding.

Take out the centre 4 frames from the new hive and place to one side.

Catch the queen in the old hive and place her temporarily in a queen cage or container.

Now transfer the bees from the old hive to the new one.

This is done by taking each frame in turn and shaking it into the space left by the 4 missing frames in the centre of the new hive. Ensure the frame with bees on it is sufficiently inside the brood box so they will not be shaken onto the ground. Any bees left behind can be gently brushed off.

Once all the old frames have been cleared of bees, shake or brush all the bees remaining in the brood box into the new hive.

Remove the queen from the queen cage or container and place her in the centre of the new hive.

Replace the 4 new frames in the new hive.

Put on the crown board, the eke (if necessary) and roof

Feed with heavy sugar syrup - ideally using a contact feeder on the crown board.

Do not disturb for about one week, at which point, brood should be present. Ensure there is enough feed.

Once there is brood on the comb, the queen excluder can be removed.

Continue to feed, unless there is a good nectar flow, until all combs are drawn out.