

Beekeeper's Notebook

Prepared by Dr. Larry Connor,
Entomologist
Wicwas Press
ebeebooks@aol.com

Subject: Queens Without Grafting

A simple method to get queens using Nature's natural cycle!

1. **Select strong colonies** — So you want some new queens? In new colonies? Maybe you want to increase your colony numbers, or you want to produce queens from selected hives. Here is a simple non-transferral (aka grafting) method all beekeepers may use to produce a few queens.

Advantages: This system relies on the natural buildup cycle/swarming of the colony

Disadvantages: You may not have much control over the timing of the production of swarm cells, and if you miss it, you get swarms. Some years are better than others.

2. **Feed these colonies** — You should have notes from your best colonies taken at your last inspection. Select one or two of these colonies for swarm cell production. Add sugar syrup to the hive as soon as possible in the spring. Feed pollen or pollen substitute. Both will increase brood rearing and stimulate colony growth. You want strong colonies.

Advantages: Most beekeepers feed their colonies, so this is not rocket science. Plus, most beekeepers feel that queen cells produced under the swarming instinct are the best bees produce.

Disadvantages: Feeding can be bothersome, and once started, should be continued until the nectar flow. And there is that swarming potential if you get busy elsewhere!

3. **Monitor Swarm Cell Production**— Check these hives for queen cell formation every week. Your goal is to get a **number** of frames of brood with queen cells on them that you may move them to form new colonies.

Advantages: Well-fed colonies usually swarm about the same time in your area. The timing of the actual date is determined by latitude and buildup conditions. Your only way to control this is by feeding and removing brood to slow development.

Disadvantages: This system may not give you a large number of cells, and there may be only a few frames with cells per hive. This is not a good method if you need lots of queen cells.

4. **Make Up Increase "Nucleus" Colonies** — When you see queen cells in development, plan to make up nucleus colonies at the time the queen cells are sealed. Your key job is to make sure you do not damage these cells as you make up the increase nucleus. • Remove frames of sealed and emerging brood from any colonies in your operation. I use four or five frame nucleus colonies, and remove one excellent or two partial frames of brood, (one frame with the queen cells), and a frame of pollen and honey. An empty comb or an frame with foundation give you four/five frames. • Either move bees with the brood — CHECKING CAREFULLY FOR ANY QUEENS — or shake bees off the frames and let nurse bees crawl through a queen excluder to cover the brood. Move to a new site.

Advantages: When you move the bees to a new location, the queens in the cells will emerge, and eventually one of them will head your new colony. Evaluate her performance during the year as the colony builds in strength.

Disadvantages: You may not have to buy bees or queens this year, or next, and you will have money to spend on bees books from Wicwas Press! Like the two mentioned below:

G.M. Doolittle's A Year in an Out-Apiary

2005 Reprint by Wicwas Press. \$20 postpaid

Increase Essentials a new management book by L.J. Connor

At the printers now—\$15 postpaid