

NORTH LONDON BEEKEEPERS

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Information Sheet no.1

Changing from Standard Brood to Deep Brood

Mainly appropriate for National and WBC hives

The traditional brood chamber of 10 or 11 BS (British Standard) standard brood frames size (14"x8") normally proves inadequate for a good strong colony and beekeepers often add a super to it (thus the term a "brood and a half") or even a double brood, to give the queen more space to lay in. This results in 22 frames being examined at each inspection. It is time consuming and consequently causes disruption to the bees. The brood chamber is also split horizontally which leads to a broken pattern of brood laying when the hive is opened. Many beekeepers are using deeper brood boxes that hold 14"x12" frames. These provide a much better, uninterrupted brood space. To achieve this, carry out the following steps:

1. Convert a standard brood box by adding a 3" extension to its bottom or top. This can be either made of 18mm (12mm for a WBC) softwood to match the style of brood box or bought from "Thornes" – ask for a **14" x 12" eke** costing £14.50 each (2002). Cheaper to make your own!
2. Prepare 11 frames (14"x12") with wired foundation. (10 for a WBC hive). 14 x 12 frames and foundation are available from Thornes and other beekeeping suppliers and are British Standard.
3. Early in April, move the super without the queen, if using brood and a half, to above the queen excluder for 3 weeks and place the new 14 x 12 box with frames on top of the original brood box **with the queen**. You should now have a hive made up of:

Roof
Crown board
Super
Queen excluder
14 x 12 brood box (new)
Standard brood box (original)
Floor

4. After a few weeks (check weekly after 2 weeks) the bees will have started to draw out the new foundation and the queen will have started to lay in it. Move the old brood box and place it above the crown board, but leaving the queen in the 14 x 12 brood box. You now should have a hive made up of:

Roof
Standard brood box (original)
Crown board
Super
Queen excluder
14 x 12 brood box (new) with queen
Floor

The original super should be removed when all brood has hatched. The bees will continue to look after the brood in the original brood box until it hatches in about 3 weeks time. After this it should be removed and combs disposed of and the box extended for 14x12 frames for the next colony.

5. You will find that your new deep brood box will be more than adequate for any colony and have plenty of space for winter stores & brood. (each 14 x 12 frame can hold approx 5lb of stores)
6. This conversion will renew all your brood comb. It is now considered good practice to change brood comb every 1 or 2 years to combat EFB & AFB. All this may seem a bit of extra expense and bother, but if beekeeping is to be a long lasting hobby, you will find the effort worthwhile and the 14 x 12 a pleasure to use for years to come.

Post note: National and WBC hives take the same size frames, but the brood boxes are of different construction and take 11 and 10 frames respectively. The above process can be used if you want to

reduce from a larger brood box to smaller one, also the process can be followed when you provide new foundation every year or two. The only disadvantage is the extra weight of a larger brood box.

Alternative method is to use the Shook Swarm method – see information sheet No 2.

Prepared by John Hauxwell (revised November 2006)