

Rapid method of building a nucleus into a full-size colony

By Sean Stephenson

The conventional approach for expanding a nucleus colony to become full-size is to move the frames from the nucleus to a brood box, pad it out with fresh foundation and feed. This can take some time and it can be difficult to get the bees to draw the outer frames. Plus, after a while the bees start to build wax up into the feeder.

An alternative method is to place the foundation above the nucleus and encourage the bees to draw the comb in a vertical manner, which is their natural inclination.

Using a six-frame nucleus, either wood or polystyrene, it makes no difference. The bees are kept in the nucleus until it is brimming and there are elements of brood on all 6 frames.

The bees are then transferred to a brood box and dummied down, a frame with open brood is removed and placed in a second brood box with two new frames of foundation on either side. The second brood box is dummied down and placed over the first one. A feeder is then placed above the crown board.

Whilst the images show fat dummy boards being used, standard dummy boards will work just as well.

After a week or two the upper brood box will be fully drawn and the frames can be merged into a single brood box with the eleventh frame added at the front of the hive.

