

# Know Nucs

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- Why make nucs?
- When is the best time to make a nuc?
- What preparation is needed?
- How is a nuc made?
- What about care and feeding?
- Has the new queen been accepted?

The program explores making nucs. It would take me longer than tonight's meeting to cover all the aspects of making nucs. I strongly recommend that you look at the references, especially Increase Essentials by Larry Connor and Beekeeping at Buckfast Abby by Brother Adam. They are both excellent references and they both include the many uses of nucs.

Bottom line nucs are the beekeeper's way of making a new hive. The first question is, what is a nuc? Nuc is short for nucleus. You may also hear it referred to as making a division, divide or split. We'll explore why you might want to make a nuc, when to do it and how to go about it.

## **Why make nucs?**

- Swarm control
- Increase hive numbers
- Raise queens
- Strengthen weak colony
- Sure fire queen introduction
- Save money
- Source of early season queens (raised in fall; used in spring)
- Helps control varroa; sets back cycle

## **When is the best time to make a nuc?**

Queen availability dictates the calendar for making early season nucs. Make your divisions as soon as queens are available. You can purchase queens from a breeder in the southern part of the country or you can raise your own in late fall and bank them in nucs over the winter. May and June: good time for present season increase while July and August good time for early queens for next season.

## **What preparation is needed?**

- Decide on a queen source
- Make a calendar
- Select a hive
- Gather your materials
- Decide to either leave nuc in same yard or move to another location > 3 miles away

## **How is a nuc made?**

Note: You do not want the old queen in your nuc box. Make sure you know where she is so she does not end up in the nuc. The bees will NOT accept a new queen if the old queen is in the nuc.

1. Select a strong, healthy hive with a very low mite load
2. Block entrance of empty 5 frame nuc box with a screen
3. Place frames in nuc
  - 1 frame of honey and pollen
  - 3 frames of mostly capped brood in the center of the nuc
  - 1 empty drawn frame
4. Add a caged queen in the center brood frame
5. Add a protein patty and a shim (provides space for patty) to nuc
6. Move or keep nuc in the same yard
 

Note: If you decided leave your nuc in the same yard, half the bees will return to the donor hive. To compensate you will need to add some extra bees to the nuc; roughly 3 frames worth of bees. Spray these frames of bees with a little sugar water and HBH and brush the bees into the top of two nuc boxes separated by a queen excluder. Since you don't want to add the queen from the donor hive, by placing a queen excluder in-between the boxes, she will be prevented from going into your nuc box. Note: before brushing the bees into the box, look for the queen; there is always a slight chance of damaging her if she got brushed into the box in the first place.
7. Use ant control method of your choice
8. Replace screen on nuc box with entrance reducer preferably after sunset or at least after the bees have settled down

**Care and feeding of the nuc:** Make sure the bees have a protein patty and sugar syrup for at least the first two weeks.

### **Has the new queen been accepted?**

**DAY 5:** Your first inside look at how things are going. How you deal with what you see, will ultimately influence your success.

**What you want to see** is the bees feeding the queen in the cage without balling it. If the bees are feeding the queen and there are no queen cells present, you can remove the candy plug protection (do NOT poke the candy; it is designed to be a timed release)

**What you do NOT want to see:**

- Emergency queen cells: They have not accepted the new queen and are trying to make their own queen
- Balling the cage: another indicator they have not accepted the new queen

If you see eggs in the cells, there is a queen in your nuc. How could this happen if you already found and removed the queen when setting up your nuc? The answer is that apparently there was a mother/daughter queen combination in the donor hive. This can happen in the spring.

What to do?

- If there are queen cells present, cut them out! This CRITICAL
- If eggs present, find and remove the old queen
- If they are balling the cage, DO NOT remove the supplied candy plug protection

**DAY 8:** If you had "problems" on day 5, then recheck on day 8. It is unlikely the problem will extend beyond this date.

**Day 24:** Graduate to a standard box if the new queen has been accepted and is producing brood.