

Summary of Artificial Swarming Method Recommended by Wally Shaw

(Based on the process described in Wally Shaw's booklet "An Apiary Guide to Swarm Control")

This is a two stage method that can be implemented using an additional hive on a separate stand or by placing an additional brood box on top of the original hive separated by some form of splitter board.

This summary is based on the use of a separate hive.

Stage 1

1. Move original hive (the parent colony) at least three feet to one side and turn the entrance away from the original site.
2. Place the new stand, floor and brood box on original site. The brood box to be populated with frames of drawn comb if possible or the best mix available.
3. Transfer two bee-free frames of brood from the parent hive to the middle of this new box (the artificial swarm).

These two frames must contain eggs and young larvae from which emergency queen cells can be made but must not have any queen cells (or the queen) on them.

4. Place the remaining brood frames in the parent colony together and make up the numbers at the outer edges with drawn comb or foundation.
5. Replace the queen excluder and the original supers on top of the artificial swarm.
The parent colony on the adjacent stand will lose its flying bees back to the artificial swarm and amongst these will be the bees that are running the swarming process.
For this reason, the parent colony loses the impulse to swarm, the queen cells will be torn down and the queen will resume laying. In the queen-less artificial swarm the bees will start emergency queen cells – and this appears to be an important part of the process leading to a loss of the swarming impulse.
6. Dependent upon the size of the parent colony, the weather forecast and the stores accumulated in the brood box(s) etc, it may be necessary to provide supplementary feed.

Stage 2

This should take place 9-10 days later (12 days is the absolute safe limit).

1. Destroy all the emergency queen cells in the artificial swarm.
2. Find the queen in the parent colony and transfer her (on the frame where she is found complete with any brood and bees that are on that frame) to the centre of the artificial swarm.

Because the queen has been removed from the parent colony the bees will start emergency queen cells using brood that the queen has recently laid.

Following the repatriation of the queen, the artificial swarm will settle down and produce a new colony.

Inspecting

The artificial swarm can be inspected after 10 to 14 days to confirm the queen has resumed laying etc.

The parent colony should be inspected after 10 days to confirm they have produced capped queen cells and then they can be left for 3 to 4 weeks to give time for a new fertilised queen to start laying.