

Transitioning deep frame nucs to medium boxes

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There are 2 basic ways this can be done. Each way has benefits and drawbacks which need to be taken into consideration in your particular situation.

Please read this document carefully. A dry run before you do it with live bees is suggested, as that will show you that all necessary gear is available. Before thinking that such preparation is not necessary in your case, please see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZgl2BfCsBg>

Note that normal hive maintenance protocols should be followed. Smoke the nuc lightly before working it. If you have left the nuc open and allowed the bees to fly for a few days before transferring bees, make sure the new hive is placed exactly where the nuc has been so returning workers find their hive and hive mates properly. Doing the transfer later in the day is preferable. Lastly, after the transfer is completed, continuously feed the bees a 1:1 sugar/water syrup for a week or two. This will encourage comb building.

Method 1:

This method takes the longer time and may be less disruptive to the bees.

Required:

- 3 medium boxes with frames. New foundation is Ok
- 1 deep box or 2 mediums, no frames
- Queen excluder

Set up 3 medium boxes on a bottom board. This will be your hive going forward. In the bottom box, allow all 10 frames (8 frames if you are using this sort of gear). In the two boxes above this, allow only 5 frames in each box. Move them to the sides (3, 2 with a space for the 5 deep frames in the middle)

Step 1: Smoke the nuc box bees. In the assembled 3 boxes, insert the deep nuc frames in the center of the top box. These will project into the lower box with remaining space below them (The bees will eventually draw comb on the bottom edge of the deep frames). Once empty of frames, shake the cardboard nuc box over the hive to get more bees into the hive. Place the now empty cardboard nuc box very near the entrance of the hive, preferably touching the hive; the remaining bees will walk in over a few hours. Close this hive for 2-3 days, just so the bees can move in and get comfortable.

Step 2: (In the following we are guarding against queen loss during manipulation. Please follow these directions or you risk losing the queen in the grass) Remove the telescoping cover and invert it on the ground. Place an empty hive body in it. Remove the top box of the hive which has the deep frames in it. Set it apart directly on top of the empty box and cover. Carefully move the deep frames to the edges (3, 2). Move the 5 medium frames to the center of the top box. Then rearrange the frames in the middle hive box to accept the projection of the deep frames now at the edge. Reassemble the hive. Check the empty box carefully to see the queen is not there. Shake all loose bees in the empty box and cover back into the hive. Close the hive for another 2-3 days.

Step 3: Take each deep frame out of the mediums and either brush or shake all bees off it into the mediums. With your hive tool cut off any comb the bees have built below the deep frames. Discard this. Place all the deep frames into the empty deep box (or in two mediums). Place a queen excluder on the

hive and place the deep or two mediums with the frames above that. Add medium frames to fill the space vacated by the deep frames.

Close the hive for 2 weeks. All remaining brood in the deep frames will hatch out during this time, leaving the frames open. Bees may store nectar, however.

Step 4: Remove the deep box (or the two mediums) with deep frames. Shake all remaining bees into the bottom boxes. From this point on, manage the hive as you would any hive. Leave the deep box with deep combs partially covered for 24-48 hours at some distance from your hives. The bees should rob out this nectar, leaving you 5 clean and dry deep frames.

Total time for Method 1: 3 weeks +/-

Method 2: Slightly rougher on the bees, but they get into their new home more quickly. This method works very well if you have some drawn medium comb in which the queen can lay immediately. This method requires supplemental feeding for 1-2 weeks after the transfer. This will encourage comb building.

Required:

- 3 medium boxes with frames. New foundation is Ok, but better with drawn comb
- 1 deep box or 2 mediums boxes, no frames
- Queen excluder

Step 1: Set up 3 standard medium boxes on a bottom board. Have all frames in place (i.e. 30 frames).

Step 2: Smoke the bees in the nuc box. Carefully shake or brush all bees from the deep frames into the medium boxes, being careful not to damage the queen. Cover the medium boxes with a queen excluder.

Step 3: Place the deep frames in a deep box (or two empty medium boxes) and place them above the queen excluder (Nurse bees will come up to tend any open brood; no bees lost). Close the box for 3 weeks. All remaining brood in the deep frames will hatch out during this time, leaving the frames open (Bees may store nectar, however).

Step 4: After 3 weeks, remove the box(es) holding the deep frames. Shake or brush all the bees remaining on the deep frames into the medium boxes. From this point on, manage the hive as you would any hive. Leave the deep box with deep frames partially covered for 24-48 hours at some distance from your hives. The bees should rob out this nectar, leaving you 5 clean and dry deep frames.

Regardless of which method is used, be aware that nucleus colonies build up fast. Particularly in the spring, make sure your hive has adequate empty supers above the queen excluder for honey storage.