

Coweta Beekeeping Method – Making Increases, Week Two

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It's time to... make splits.

Once we pass the 15th of May the resources in production hives can be used to make splits to establish new colonies in empty hives and nucs.

This article covers setting up splits with brood and queen cells seven days after notching young worker larvae cells in a queenless hive to encourage the colony to raise queens.

Seven days after notching, the queen cells will be capped and ready to make splits. If you wait too many days past seven days the queens will start emerging and fighting and you will end up with one queen in the hive. The queens should start emerging about ten days after the cells were notched.

Each split will require:

- A nuc hive, an 8 or 10 frame hive will work also
- Enough frames and foundation to fill the nuc or hive
- An entrance reducer
- A feeder and syrup

Open the hive with that was notched seven days ago. Look at all the brood frames because the colony may have started queen cells on frames that were not notched. If I find queen cells in the shallow above the deep I will leave two queen cells so the colony can requeen. Leave two queen cells in the hive enabling the colony to raise a queen.

Inspect the frames that were notched seven days ago. You should now have capped queen cells on the frames.

Handle any frame with queen cells very carefully, queen cells are very delicate. Don't shake, jar or jolt queen cells or you may kill the developing queens. Thumping the frame as you set it back into the super can dislodge a queen from the royal jelly causing her to die.

Each nuc or split needs two frames of brood with only two queen cells. If there are more than two queen cells, extra ones will need to be removed leaving only two per split. After placing two frames of brood into each nuc, go back and remove extra queen cells leaving only two per split. Don't remove queen cells from any frames until you decide if you need to swap any frames between nucs.

If you don't find any queen cells after seven days there could be two problems:

- There is a queen in the hive. Some hives have two queens. If you removed the queen seven days ago and another queen was in the hive there is no reason for the colony to raise queens because they are not queenless. There could be a virgin queen which would not be laying during the seven days.
- The worker cells that were notched seven days ago were too old. Expect to find queen cells somewhere in a queenless hive.

If you need to make many splits you can use frames of brood from another colony not notched seven days ago. Each split can be made up with one frame with queen cells and one capped brood frame from another hive. Make sure to leave the queen in the other hive. All the nurse bees on the brood frames need to stay on the frames. They will be fine when combined in the nuc.

Set up the nucs in the same bee yard. Don't move the splits to another location to prevent damage to the queens during transit.

Orient nucs in various configurations and directions which will help queens find the correct nuc when returning from mating flights. For example, make a "V" with two nucs or a "T" with three nucs. See the photo above.

Set up a feeder and do not inspect for 30 days. Reduce the entrance to about a

one inch opening enabling the weak colony to protect the entrance.

After 30 days, inspect the nuc. Look for a queen or eggs.

How much did the queen cost? Nothing.

How much did the nuc cost? Nothing.

How much money did you lose if a queen failed? Nothing.

How much money did you lose if a nuc failed? Nothing.

Keep records of the percentage of splits started with queen cells that result in a queenright colony and what month the split was started.