

***Apis m. Esoteria* 16**

Queen Introductions

Read these instructions: It pertains to any type queen

Queen introduction

Contrary to what you may have heard, it is not difficult to introduce a Russian Queen or any queen.

Your queen is in an introduction cage. We recommend, no matter what your method of introduction, that the queen remain caged in the hive for 3-5 days and no longer.

First remove the old queen. This can be done 1-3 days before introducing the new queen. Place the queen cage with the candy end up and still covered between frames where there is brood and bees.

Here are two different methods of introduction that we recommend.

1. – Either you go back into the hive and remove the cover over the candy (cork or flipper lid) on the second or third day so that the bees may release the queen slowly with access to the candy. (This will take a few days to eat the candy plug)
2. - Or go back into the hive on the fourth or fifth day and open the cage and permit the queen to walk out onto the top bars and enter the hive. We do not recommend releasing her at the hive entrance. The queen can fly so take care to release her between the top bars over a space so she can “escape” into the hive. I pull one frame to give me room to open the cage into the larger space where the queen will jump into the hive.

Finally, if the caged queen is dead when you go back into the hive to release her; it is almost certain that there is another (second) queen in the hive. In that case, you need to remove the second queen and repeat the above procedure with a new caged queen.

Carl Webb says about 10% percent of the time there are 2 queens in a colony. The books don't mention that very often, do they? My advice would be to look at all your frames when you are getting ready to requeen. Do not stop looking as soon as you find the old queen and kill her. Keep going and look at the sides and bottom board very carefully. What we can learn by associating with experienced beekeepers!

Traditional Method

As you start to work in the hive the queen will be placed in, lay the queen cage on top of the top bars. Watch the worker bees react to the new queen. If they start balling the cage and hunching up trying to sting her don't put her in the hive. Blow off the attacking bees and place the new queen (in cage) in a safe place.

When placing the Package queen in the hive the bees have usually accepted her while in the shipping cage. These bees are just clustered on the outside of the queen cage calmly "attending" to the queen.

When the queen comes in a cage with attendants and candy, it is important to suspend the cage between two frames. Remove the cork in the candy end. Make sure the candy end is up, and available to be eaten. Let the internal and external worker bees eat the candy until it is gone and the queen can exit the cage on her own. Make sure the open sides of the queen cage are in the space between frames so nurse bees can feed the queen.

Most of the time this will take 3-5 days. This allows the queen's Pheromone scent to permeate the hive making her more receptive to the worker bees.

You can make the new queen more acceptable by removing the old queen 3 or more days before introducing the queen. This will get all the old queen's pheromones out of the hive.

There are several things that can go wrong keeping the queen from exiting the cage. If the cage is hung upside down and a worker attendant bee dies it can lay across the exit hole keeping the queen inside the cage.

The candy can be improperly made and it will be hard. This will cause the bees to take longer to eat it through. They may not be able to eat it through.

The cage may be placed between the frames in such a manner that the sides are covered, and the scent cannot permeate the hive.

The old queen is still in the hive, the worker bees, “ball” the queen cage and try to sting the invader queen. They might inadvertently kill your new queen through the screen. If the hive worker bees jump all over the cage as soon as you hang it in the hive, you might want to double check and make sure the old queen is really not there. This is different from just standing on the queen cage and trying to lick the queen inside. The anxious bees are hunching up and trying to sting through the screen. Very visible irritation going on.

By checking the situation on day 3 after inserting the queen cage into the hive you can determine the situation. If all looks good you might even release the queen into the hive instead of waiting a few more days. This will accelerate egg laying.

Plastic queen cages have a cap to remove. Under the cap is the candy. Unplug the end to expose the candy. If you want the queen to come out fast, the top of the cage usually flips sideways. Wooden queen cages have a cork in the end which has to be removed. Some wooden cages have two corks, one at each end. One covers the entrance hole (no candy) and the other covers the candy. You can see the candy through the screen, so you know which end to open. If you want the queen to come out slowly (3-5 days) open the candy end. If you want the queen to come out fast open the entrance hole.

If you are moving a free roaming queen, catch her with the “queen grabber tool”. Then use the “push in introduction cage technique when you put her in the new hive. Make the push-in, queen cage using #8 hardware cloth. Cut a piece 5” square. Snip each corner in such a way that you can bend a ½ inch edge down all the way around making a 4” box open on one of the 4” square sides. Place the queen on the section of the drawn comb that has open cells so she can lay eggs. Push the cage over the queen. Don’t put worker bees in the push in cage. They might ball the queen and kill her. They can feed the queen through the cage.

Remove the cage on day three. The nurse bees can then feed the larvae when they hatch on day four.

CAUTION!

A newly mated queen is somewhat aerodynamic. She can fly, at least 10 feet. As she crashes into the grass you lose sight of her. Uh, Oh! Make sure you release her close to the top bars near a crack, so she scurries into the darkness instead of making the “Great Escape”.

If she does jump into the grass, take 2 frames of bees and shake them off in the area where you think she landed. In a few hours they will cluster around the queen. You can see the cluster, spray it with a mist of syrup water. Pick it up gently, visually locating the queen. If you can, grab the queen with the “queen grabber”. Place the “swarm in a box and take everyone back home. Just place the queen back in between two frames or dump them all back into the hive.