

Apis m. Estoteria 20

“The Shook Hive”

This is not named after Mr. Shook. It is more like Elvis Presley. It is a shaken hive.

This technique for stimulating a colony should create a fair amount of discussion.

You have a colony on the verge of swarming. Sometimes you can't stop the swarming urge, and you wind up losing the swarm creating a weakened colony left behind.

So, go ahead and create a simulated swarm.

Treat your colony for varroa mites.

Get another hive body, top and bottom board ready to go. Get enough frames with new foundation to fill the hive body. Set the new hive 20-30 feet from the full colony. Close the entrance with screen for ventilation. This can be done as close together as the other end of the row of hives within the bear fence of your apiary.

Smoke the dickens out of the full colony. You can just about barbeque them. Let the colony set for 10 minutes and smoke them again. Let them set for another 10 minutes. Smoked bees engorge themselves with honey. Bees getting together to fly away in a swarm also engorge themselves with honey.

Find the queen. Catch the queen in a queen catcher clip. Remove an entire frame with only open brood on it and place it in the center of the new brood box. Place the captured queen in the new hive body. You do not want to move any queen cells. For now, you don't need any other frames in the new brood box. However, have them ready. These other frames can be foundation or a mixture of drawn comb, but you do not want comb with honey and pollen in it. This new brood box is going to simulate a hollow tree that the swarm will arrive at. You want the new location to need lots of work. To get the loose bees to stay in the new hive body better, spray some sugar syrup all over the inside of the box before installing the bees. Close the entrance with screen to help hold bees for a few days. You may also want to use a Bordman entrance feeder.

You have spent another 15-20 minutes doing this work. Smoke the hive a little bit again. You want the bees to be as engorged as possible.

Take the frames from the losing hive one at a time over to the gaining hive and gently shake most of the bees off into the new hive body with the queen. Return the frame back to the old hive. Start with the outer frames that probably have honey and pollen in them. Leave the frames with brood on them in the old hive. You want to move about 60% of the bees leaving lots of young nurse bees to tend the capped brood in the old hive. Once you have a bunch of bees in the new "Shook Hive" release the queen. Insert frames as necessary and close the hive.

You have moved mostly nurse bees and wax builder bees.

Remember that all the foragers will still be returning to the original hive. You would be lucky if you moved 50% of the flying bees to the new colony. You want to move lots of bees but not too many. Can I be any more specific?

Place some frames in the new hive. You can do any number of frames but at least 5. If you place one pulled comb frame next to the queen, that will help her have a place to lay eggs.

You want all the honey that the engorged bees moved to the new hive to be used to pull comb. That is what the bees will do if they have moved into a new home after swarming. You will be surprised at how fast this new colony will pull comb. Think about how fast a package pulls comb. This process works a little more smoothly than a package because the queen is laying well.

You can put a feeder on the new hive or not. If there is a good nectar flow going on you can just let the bees act naturally. After the hive is settled in (3-5 days) you can add pulled comb (with or without honey) and it will not disturb the colony.

One of the main advantages of the "Shook Hive" is to make new comb real fast.

The old hive will draw a new queen cell or hatch a queen cell left behind. If you want to keep the old hive performing to the max, you can introduce a queen. Even if there were no queen cells left behind the old colony will start drawing queen

cells in 3 days. If you need new queens in other hives, you can move some of the frames with queen cells from the old hive to the needy hive.

If your shook hive is your champion queen, this is a good way to quickly get strong daughter queens that you can use in the needy hives.

If you are a bold beekeeper and have the time (correct time of the nectar flow) that you want to play with a shook hive it is interesting to see what happens.

If you only have one hive and you want to go into the winter with 2 pretty strong hives the shook hive gives you the opportunity to make a split and stimulate the new hive to work harder than just moving half of your bees to a new box. Wait until you rob the honey off your hive. This will create a situation where there are too many bees in the remaining space, and the queen will start thinking about swarming. The shook hive helps the queen make up her mind about what to do without her stopping egg laying.