

**The Process of Splitting a  
Existing Colony of Honey Bees  
you may use.**

# Reason for Split

Need to Replace hives lost during the winter.

Want to expand my yard.

Selling Nucs for profit.

Hive has become extremely over populated.

Swarm prevention.

# Some methods used to split hives

Conventional to sell (3 broods and a food)

Yard expansion or loss replacement

Doo-little , Walk Away split and Hive Body split

# Splitting a Existing Colony

## Guidelines to aid you in making your split.

Assess the Colony Strength and overall health. What is the reason for making a split?

Is the colony too strong or do you want to increase you bee yard?

# Splitting a Existing Colony

1. The colony must be strong enough and healthy enough to recover from a split.
2. The hive must be 90 to 100 percent populated across the frames and plenty of bees in the winter super.

# Splitting a Existing Colony

3. If hive is single brooded and extra strong it is a must that the colony be split. Adding a brood box is just a band-aid not a fix.
4. If the colony is a double brood with both boxes and the winter super are 100 percent populated across the frames, splitting the hive is imperative for its survival.

This hive is a single brood and is strong  
requiring a split.

The hive assessment was made during a  
spring treatment.



## Other factors to consider.

1. The number of colonies you want to increase your bee yard with is not the most important factor.
2. The main factor is the strength of the colony or colonies in your existing bee yard.
3. A unnecessary split will pull down your mother colony, you are left with weak colonies that will just sputter along requiring a lot of attention to keep them alive.
4. Weak splits may not even survive and will most certainly not make any honey.



## Tools and equipment needed

1. Proper amount of **Hive Bodies, Bottom Boards, Inner Covers, Hive Tops, Hive Staples** and a **Entrance Screens** to make the number of splits required by the strength of the hive.
2. A hive **Entrance Reducer** is needed because of the lesser strength of the hive requires a small opening they can defend.
3. Undrawn Winter supers are of no concern at this time and can be added later after the hive is at 85% colony strength.

## Tools and equipment needed

4. Enough **Frames with Foundation** to replace the ones you removed. Avoid Plastic Foundation in a new split. You need a very strong colony to properly draw out plastic foundation.
5. Proper amount of **Feeders** for all colonies affected by the split, is needed help in drawing out the foundation frames.

## Tools and equipment needed

6. If you are replacing with **Drawn Comb** use caution when feeding. The bees will fill the empty comb with sugar water and the queen will not have anywhere to lay.
7. Proper amount of new **QUEENS** or queen cells.
8. A **Working Box** consisting of a hive body with a queen separator attached to the bottom

# Weather and Conditions

Warm weather above 56 degrees or warmer, not windy and sunny are acceptable.

A sunny day is helpful in finding eggs and the queen.

Do not leave frames with brood, larva or eggs outside the hive for more than a minute to avoid chilling the brood and killing the eggs.

## Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Place your working box on top of another empty hive body, one you are not needing in the splitting process.

The working box will hold the frame on which you have located the queen.

Never set the working box, winter super or any hive bodies directly on the ground. If the queen is onboard any of this equipment she may get out into the grass and be lost.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

1. Remove the hive top and flip it upside down using it as a resting place for the winter super. Garden hives peaked top can not be used for this purpose.
2. Smoke the hive gently, enough to calm the bees but not enough to cause the queen to run making it harder to find her.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Remove the winter super which does not need to be inspected at this time and set it aside on the inverted hive top.

Smoke the hive body gently again. Some folks use Sugar Water with Honey-Bee- Healthy added but it may not be enough to contain the hive while doing this much removal and movement of frames.

If the hive becomes more flighty or overly aggressive smoke them more. If they get out of hand it is extremely and almost impossible to get them back under control.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Smoke down beside the most outer frame of the hive body to drive the queen away from the side. A little smoke will move her but not put her on the run.

Remove the frame to make it easier to get to the brood frames and it may be the honey frame you need to make your split.



# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Move the second frame over to avoid injury to the queen, inspect the frame to find the queen. If she is on that frame put it into the working box if not move it over making room to remove the next frame. If any frames have brood on them they may be subject to filling the split.

Continue across the hive body taking 2 full or at least 75% full frames of brood and 1 frame of brood, larva and eggs for the split along with a frame of honey.

Fill out the new split hive with foundation.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Insert the entrance reducer to constrict the entrance to invaders.

Let stand for 3 hours but not more than 8 hours as long as the temperature is above 56 degrees to insert the queen.

Move the hive to its new location to avoid drifting of the forager bees from returning to the mother hive and over populating it again and under populating the split.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## A Do-Little Split

The **Do-Little split** is mostly the same as the basic split except for a couple of the steps and 2 extra pieces of equipment. A **extra hive body** and a **queen excluder**.

Open the hive and apply smoke. You are not trying to locate the queen in this type of split.

Remove the winter super and set it on the inverted flat hive lid.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## A Do-Little Split

Smoke down beside a outside frame and remove it putting it in your working box.

Move the frames over being careful not to mash or roll the queen.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## A Do-Little Split

When you find brood pull out the frame and shake the bees off down into the hive. This is so you do not transfer the queen. Put the frame in the extra hive body.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## A Do-Little Split

Pull 1 additional full frames and 1 frame of brood, larva and eggs and 1 frame of honey. Shake off all the bees and put them down into the extra hive body.

Put the winter super back on the hive and put the queen excluder on top and insert the queen excluder.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## A Do-Little Split

Put the box with the brood and honey on top of the queen excluder. After 4 to 6 hours the nurse bees will have come through the excluder and cover the brood. Remove the box and finish it out with frames of Foundation, put it on a bottom board apply an entrance cover, an inner cover and top.

The queen application and later inspection and all other steps are the same as in a basic split.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Installing the queen is the next step but the task is not complete even at this point.

When installing the queen you should look for the greatest gathering of bees in the new split. Pry between 2 frames separating them or if in a full box you can pry a frame up and insert the queen cage in snout or opening upward.



# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Place the cage between the frames and push the frames over to tighten the space so as to support the queen cage. If the cage has screen on the front always place the cage with the screen accessible to the nurse bees.

If you cover the screen she will die. Cages that have openings all the way around may be placed between the frames snout upward.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

The reason for pointing the snout of the queen cage upward is if the cage contains attendant bees or nurse bees and they may die and cover the snout opening and the queen would not be able to exit. Snout up allows them to fall out of the way leaving the queen an open path.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

Waiting for the queen to exit the cage and being accepted can take at least 10 days. It may take only 2 to 3 days for the bees to release the queen.

You should not enter the hive before this time or the bees may become stressed and kill the queen.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

## Reasons for a queen not being accepted.

1. There may be a queen cell present on one of the frames of brood.
2. The queen may be poorly mated and they will kill her and draw a new queen cell out.
3. Some hive may even prefer there own stock and kill her and make there own queen.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

If the queen is rejected check for queen cells, cut them out and introduce a new queen. If you leave them their own queen cell it will take 30 additional days for her to start laying eggs and she could be inferior.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

**Finally the day of inspection comes.**

Open the split colony and remove the outer frame and apply a minimal amount of smoke, not enough to cause the queen to run.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

**Finally the day if inspection comes.**

Move through the frames until you get to the frame area where the queen cage is located moving them over one by one.

Remove the empty cage. Always check the cage to make sure she has exited. If she has not exited release her and put her in the hive.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

**Finally the day of inspection comes.**

Look for evidence of the queens presence. She should be laying eggs by now. Mature larva will be from the eggs that were present at the time of the split. You may have some 5 day old larva present but mostly eggs



# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

**Finally the day of inspection comes.**

Upon seeing eggs you need not go any further. She is present and working and it is time to put the frames back in there places, close up the hive and add a feeder.

It may require 3 or 4 gallons of feed to draw out fresh foundation which may take a month only hindered by the population with in the split.

# Basic Steps to Splitting a Colony

The time has come where you can either leave the colony in its new location or return it to the original yard.

**Always Remember never take away from a hive more than you leave.**

**Congratulations you have just made you first split.**