

A Variation of

The Curry Method of Swarm Control which includes Varroa Mite Control in the summer months

By Michael Birt

This method which if done correctly, enables you to: -

1. Go on holiday for 6 weeks at the height of the swarming season, if you wish without losing a swarm.
2. Obtain a good crop of either Heather, Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb
3. Automatically provide a new current year mated Queen to be very easily united directly i.e. without the need of the newspaper method.
4. Produce extremely strong colony of Bees of foraging age for the Heather, Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb- I have never failed to obtain even in very poor seasons, because there are sufficient Bees of the right age to take advantage of the short period of the yield. My colonies are so strong that they will even produce excellent sections at the heather moor or bring in a good crop of the Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb.
5. Treat the bees with oxalic acid in the summer which will avoid having to treat in the winter months, which in turn will give you strong virtually Varroa free bees during the honey flows.

Additional equipment required for each hive.

1. Spare Brood Box with 6 frames- they can be with Foundation but preferably built out and better still with some Honey.
2. Double Skin Screen Board with a flight entrance of 2". The gap between to 2 skins should be 0.5inch and a 9 inch square hole square should be cut should be cut out of the centre of each skin with the holes covered with perforated zinc. The gap is to prevent communication between the colony above the screen board and **the colony below (described later)** and the perforated zinc is to enable both colonies to have the same odour which facilitates the direct uniting as referred to in 3 above.
3. Wide Dummy Frames- wooden frames covered with hardboard- to fill up the vacant space in the spare brood box, but leaving room for one more spare frame.

Method

1. Where the colonies are strong, either with or without started Queen Cells- but preferably between the 20th and the 27th of May, to provide the bees for the right age for the Heather Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb -take off the supers and the Queen excluder
2. Remove the original Brood Box.
3. Place a new Brood Box on the original flight board.
4. Go through the original Brood Box, find the frame with the Queen on it, (she will be more easily found if she has been already marked. But if not mark her now)
5. After ensuring that there are no Queen Cells on that frame, place it with the adhering bees into the centre of the 6 frames of the new Brood Box on the original stand.
6. Put on the Queen Excluder and Supers.
7. Put the original Brood Box on a new stand with an open mesh floor or a varroa floor at the side of the original stand.

8. Go through the original Brood Box you have moved to one side and: -

(a) If Queen Cells are already started, select a good one which is still open, (so you know that there is a Queen Larvae in it), in a protected position if possible, e.g. in a recess in the bottom corner. Do **NOT** shake this frame whilst you are searching for any more Queen Cells, but examine it carefully by moving your fingers or blowing on them. Mark to position of the selected cell by inserting a drawing pin in the top of the frame above the perpendicular line of the Queen Cell. Then and only then shake all the Bees off all the other Frames to ensure that there are no other Queen Cells. This will cause all the Bees that are capable of flying to take to the air and those which are orientated will re-enter the new brood box and re-join the Queen. This will be the equivalent of a very strong swarm because it will have all the flying bees instead of just some of them. The original Brood Box will have no young mouths to feed and will have a foraging force which will continue to store Honey in the Supers with renewed vigour. It is common knowledge that nothing works harder than a swarm.

(b) If there are no Queen Cells started, proceed exactly as above with the exception that (1) there will be no Queen Cell to be marked with a drawing pin on top of the frame. (2) Shake the bees off all of the Frames when looking carefully for queen cells.

(c) When all the bees are settled in the Brood Box on the original flight board., say after a few days you can treat with oxalic acid as this brood box is free of any brood and can be safely treated. This treatment will knock down 90% of any mites that are on the bees.

8. 6 or 7 days later – NO MORE go through the original brood box you have move to the side carefully.

(a) Check to see if the Queen Cell marked with a drawing pin as described in 8(a) is sealed and undamaged, and then carefully destroy any other Queen Cells on that Frame. **(DO NOT SHAKE IT)**. Then shake all the bees off all the other Frames and destroy any Queen Cells on these frames.

(b) If there were no Queen Cells found as describes in 9(b), carefully examine all Frames before shaking any of them and select a good Queen Cell, which is still open and mark its position with a drawing pin on the top of the Frame. Do not shake this Frame but remove the Bees with the fingers or blowing on them to enable you to find and destroy any other Queen Cells. (NB) The reason for selecting a Queen Cell which is still open is because the Queen Cells are not sealed until the 8th day which means that if it is still open on the 6th or 7th day it will have had the full Queen treatment from its very early stages- Queen Cells which are already sealed on the 6th or 7th day must have been started from eggs are larva more than 2 days old and would make inferior Queens.

(c) Now shake all the bees off the remaining frames and destroy all other Queen Cells. There cannot (if you have done all the foregoing efficiently) any eggs or larvae young enough for further viable Queen Cells to be made, so you can go on holiday for 6 weeks if you wish and your swarm control is over for another season. No more weekly inspections which are a waste of time in any case if you happen to miss a Queen Cell., that is unless you are checking for Varroa and carrying out Integrated Pest Control (IPC) but if you check for Varroa with the use of an open mesh floor and a catching drawer and the count is low you need not go into the Hive. Regular inspections only stresses your bees and (your neighbours) and also interrupts Honey gathering.

(10.)

(a) 21 days after you have carried out the above, which should give time for all the brood in the **original brood box that you have moved to one side** to have hatched. The queen that has emerged will not have started to lay which means you will have **no brood** in this brood box. **Treat with oxalic acid the same as you did with the Brood Box on the original flight board...** You will then have treated BOTH the brood boxes with oxalic acid and rid any Varroa mites. This will save you treating the bees in the autumn and winter.

(b) A week after you have carried out the oxalic acid treatment to the Brood Box on the original flight board put on the special Screen Board with the entrance to the front onto the Brood Box on the original flight board

(c) Put the original brood box you have move to the side above the screen board, so that you will have both hives together. This will give time for both brood boxes to obtain each other's pheromones so that when the time come to put them back together you will have no fighting amongst the 2 colonies

(11)

(1) At least 3 or 4 days before you want to unite the bees, which will be around early August, go through the top Brood Box to ensure that the new Queen is laying intact. If not already marked as described above, mark her NOW so that she can be easily found when repeating the system next year or if you need to identify her at some later stage or in spring next year to see if she is present or if she has been superseded or lost over the winter etc.

(2) Take off the Top Brood Box, Supers and Queen Excluder.

(3) Go through the bottom box and destroy any Queen Cells (I have never found any). Remove the wide Dummy Boards.

(4) Give away or destroy the old Queen (essential) you will now appreciate why she should be marked in the earlier paragraph No 4.

Remove all Frames not containing Brood Larvae or Eggs and keep covered to prevent robbing. These with similar Frames from the top box will provide the Frames as suggested earlier in No 1. Leave this Brood Box in position on the floor and put all the remaining Frames in it to the side of the box.

(5) Go through the former Top Brood Box and remove all Frames not containing Brood, Larvae or Eggs, (making sure not to remove the New Queen). I play it safe by placing on a Frame in a separate closed box when finding her as described in 11(1) above. You can also use a Queen Cage to keep her on the Frame but be careful not to damage her. Keep them covered to avoid robbing.

(6) Put at least 2 Frames of Brood, Larvae and Eggs directly into the Brood Box on the floor, followed by the frame with the new Queen and Bees, followed by more frames of Bees , Eggs and Larvae from the Top Box. This ensures that the new Queen is surrounded initially by her own offspring.

(7) Shake or brush in (with a Goose Feather if available) the Bees from the empty Brood Box.

(8) Put on the Queen Excluder and Heather Supers if going to the Heather or blossom Supers for finishing. These Supers will need to have plenty of room in them for the larger quantity of bees from 2 laying Queens.

To re-cap

This Method of Swarm/ Varroa control

Let's you go on holiday for 6 weeks at the height of the swarming season, if you wish without losing a swarm.

Obtain a good crop of either Heather, Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb Honey

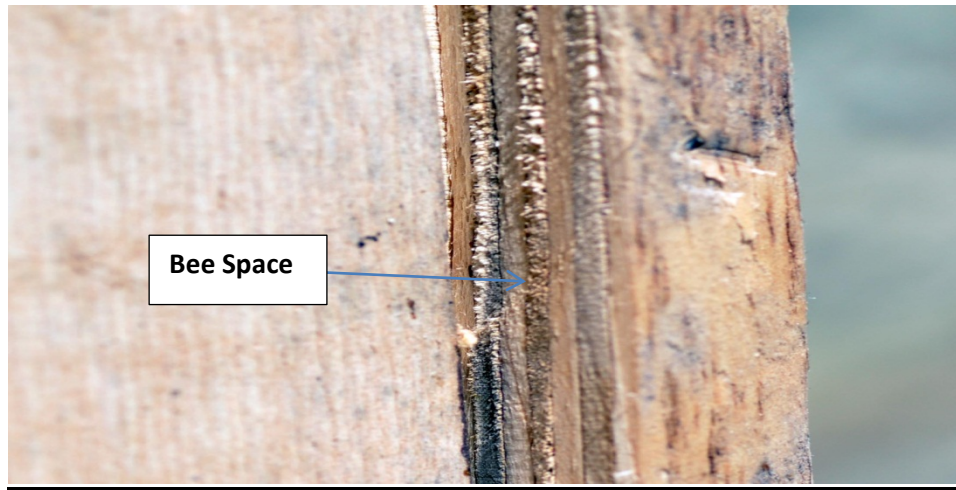
Automatically provide a new current year mated Queen to be very easily united directly i.e. without the need of the newspaper method.

Produce extremely strong colony of Bees of foraging age for the Heather, Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb- I have never failed to obtain even in very poor seasons, because there are sufficient Bees of the right age to take advantage of the short period of the yield. My colonies are so strong that they will even produce excellent sections at the Heather Moor or bring in a good crop of the Himalayan Balsam and Rose Bay Willow Herb.

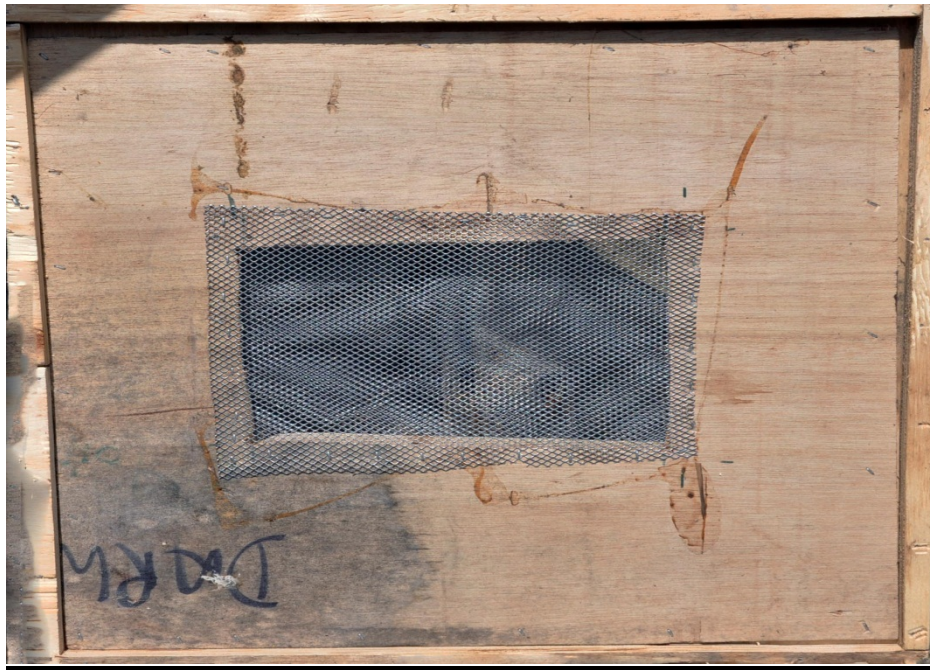
Treat the bees with oxalic acid in the summer which in turn will give you strong virtually Varroa Free Bees during the important honey flows.

Avoid having to treat in the winter months. Treating in winter can douse the bees and put dampness into the hive which is not at all recommended at that time of the year.

Photos of Curry Board.



Top plan of Curry Board showing the entrance, Bee Space and Mesh Gauze which will allow the bees to receive each other's pheromones.



Underside of the Curry Board showing Bee Space and Mesh Gauze which will allow the bees to receive each other's pheromones. Notice on this side there is no entrance as this is in the bottom hive.



Front view of the Curry Board. **This is how the board is positioned onto the hive with the entrance to the top**, allowing the bees to enter the new hive and the bottom part sealed so that the other bees will enter through their original entrance.



Another front view of the hive just to show the bee space to the underside. **The Curry board will be positioned the other way onto the hives as shown on the previous picture.**