

Stahlman beekeeping notes for 2021

16 Issue – Some beekeeping equipment that have special uses!

One issue that gets overlooked in the spring is equipment. Beekeepers are influenced a lot by items listed in bee supply catalogs.

I would not think of going to my bees without a smoker, hive tool or protective bee equipment! But there are some pieces of equipment I consider important and should be discussed. I am not advocating the use of any of these pieces of equipment, but I own every piece of equipment I am going to discuss. One can do without them!

Each piece of equipment has a special use in the management of bees.

If you (You Tube) each item, you will get more information than I can provide and you may consider these notes as just an introduction. A beekeeper may find the specific item useful in their own beekeeping activities.

#1) A Snelgrove Board or sometimes called a double screen.



This is a device that has many uses on a hive of bees.

- It has been used as a means of swarm control.
- A method to separate two hives such as a weak hive and a strong hive or create a two-queen hive.
- It can be used to make increases.
- It can also be used to raise queens.

A double screen in the center of the board when placed between two hive boxes prevents bees from fighting or in some cases communicating with each other. This center screen also allows warm air from the hive below to rise and help a weaker hive maintain a warmer nest.

The board also has another function. Along both the top and bottom are pivoted entrances to allow the beekeeper to control flight either into or out of each box the board has separated.

An entire book has been written to describe how to use the board. I am going to touch on one of its most valuable uses.

Swarm Control/hive increase:

Using the Snelgrove board does require a number of hive manipulations. It also gives good results!

Two deep boxes are used for the hive's brood chamber. (Because frames are interchanged between the two brood boxes it is best if deep frames are used in each box.) Early before the swarming season, the beekeeper creates a "vertical split". Two colonies are created in this process. Rather than operate as a single hive the double screen separates two groups of bees.

The queen is located and kept in the bottom box below the double screen. Most articles about the Snelgrove method will talk about Method 1. Accordingly, as suggested by Snelgrove, the queen is placed in the bottom box with several frames of bees and brood. All frames from the bottom box with brood are then placed in the box above the Snelgrove board.

Because heat from the bees in the lower box rises-- the upper box will always be warmer. It will also be queen-less. In time it will raise a queen – thus the hive will become a two-queen hive.

Once established, the system will require the beekeeper to bottom super the hive. This means a queen excluder will be placed above the bottom brood chamber and the honey supers are added above the queen excluder but below the Snelgrove board and the brood box above it.

Now you may think that the box above the Snelgrove board will become quite congested. But the idea with Snelgrove board is to separate the nurse bees from the foraging bees. This is done with those pivoted entrances.

The brood box above the Snelgrove board with a new queen will produce a lot of bees. To control this excess bee population the pivoted entrances are at times opened to allow bees to fly from the side of the hive orientation 90 degrees from the bottom board landing pad. If this side pivot entrance is closed the bees that habitually flew from it will learn to enter the hive entrance at the bottom.

In operation, this system moves the foraging bees to the bottom entrance thus opening up room in the top box. The honey supers are between the bottom box with a queen excluder and the top box sitting on the Snelgrove board.

Making splits in cold weather --

More often the Snelgrove board is used to make spring splits. The weaker hive with a new queen above the Snelgrove board can build up bee population over time--because heat rises. The upper hive can have fewer bees to keep the brood area warm.

Many beekeepers use the double screen technique to make splits.

#2 The Queen Excluder

A queen excluder does exactly what it says! Worker bees can pass through but drones and queens cannot

If a queen excluder is placed on a hive body and another hive body is placed above the queen excluder, the queen is trapped in the lower hive body.

There are reasons why a beekeeper may want to keep the queen from other parts of the hive.

But if mis-managed, it will lead to a congested brood nest and swarming. I will follow up in later articles -- the management techniques I have used with queen excluders.



#3 A slatted Rack --



A slatted rack is useful where bees are kept in hot weather conditions. If you want to use a slatted rack, it is placed above the bottom board and then the bottom brood box is placed on it.

The slatted rack provides an area under the frames of the hive for bees to gather rather than hang on the front of the hive – Bees hanging on the front of a hive are called bearded bees. A slatted rack does not prevent swarming but it will provide better ventilation during hot summer days. Early versions of slatted racks were designed to be used on a deep bottom board and the racks were slid onto the bottom board and removed when needed. See "50 Years among the bees" by C.C. Miller on how he used slatted racks.

I will be reviewing the use of slatted racks when we get to hot weather beekeeping.

4 Cloke Board – It is a highly specialized piece of equipment used by those wanting to use a queen right hive to raise queen cells.



A cloke board is placed above a brood nest to keep the queen in the lower part of a hive. Note the bottom of the board has a queen excluder. It also has a landing board for bees flying into the upper part of the hive.

The metal insert closes off the queen pheromones in the upper hive allowing young bees to build queen cells on grafted queen cell bars.

If a person is interested in raising a large number of queen cells, they should investigate this piece of equipment. Occasional use would not justify the expense.

#5 Drone Trap

A drone trap is designed to stop drones from taking from the hive. It is specialized and could be harmful for

hive of bees. The only valid use I can see for this devise is to prevent drones from a certain hive in a bee yard being able to leave the hive to mate with a queen. If this were to be placed



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on the front of a hive, the drones trying to leave the hive would eventually block all traffic into and out of the hive.

One other use often cited for this device is to prevent the queen from leaving a hive – such as trying to stop a swarm. If that is the intended use, I think clipping a queens wings so she cannot fly would be a better solution.

6 Robbing screen/

Moving Screen



Unlike the other items shown above, a robbing screen may be a good device to have but if all hives are kept strong, one may not need it. Often an entrance reducer which most beekeepers own is good at helping a weak hive protect itself. Sooner or later, one may come upon a hive with a large riot of bees attacking a hive. That is when this device becomes useful – before robbing bees do their damage.

The screen shown has a dual purpose and can be used as a moving screen. Holes on the side of the device allow bees to enter or leave. Robbing bees try to fly into the hive from the front landing board. When the side entrances are closed off, bees can not enter or leave. When a hive is moved, air flow into the entrance is important. Another moving screen is often used like a screened inner cover. It replaces the top cover and inner cover to allow more air flow and the heat to escape.

More will be discussed on these items as we move into the summer beekeeping season.