

Betterbee®

Beekeepers Serving Beekeeper

The New Betterbee Observation Hive

As any new or experienced beekeeper knows, a lot goes on in the hive that we don't know about. Observation hives let you peer into the world bees inhabit, and can help you gain a better understanding of the ways they build comb, establish hierarchies and create their own queens.

This observation hive has Plexiglas viewing panels on both sides and one is hinged for easy access. The hive can hold up to three frames (two deeps or three mediums) and has a screened feeding station that fits a boardman feeder cap.(Jar not included) The hive includes a sliding Plexiglas entrance closure to allow bees to be isolated in the hive or pass in and out freely. The hive can be adapted to accommodate a PVC pipe entrance, which can then be attached to another pipe which leads outside. The top cover is removable to allow for extra ventilation in hot weather or when transporting the hive.



Setting Up The Hive

Locate the observation hive near an outside wall. We recommend using an 1 ¼" outside diameter pipe through the wall for the bees to use as an entrance and we include a blank plate for you to drill to match your tubing size. Be sure to tip the entrance tube down slightly so it does not fill with rainwater.

Adding Bees

Pick a frame of bees from a donor hive with a large population of emerging brood and install in the lowest position of the observation hive. Add new frames with foundation in the remaining positions. Either include the queen from the donor hive or install a new queen in the observation hive 24 hours later. After installing the bees, attach hive to the entrance tube and be sure to raise the Plexiglas entrance closure to allow the bees to exit. Fill the boardman feeder jar with sugar syrup and place on feeder station.

Maintaining the Observation Hive

Observation hives can fill quickly with bees which will cause a tendency for the bees to swarm. This can be dealt with in a couple of ways. 1. Remove a frame of brood with bees as needed when the hive becomes crowded and replace with an empty frame with undrawn foundation. Be sure not to remove the queen! The removed frame of bees then can be placed into another hive. 2. Let the observation hive swarm and have the bees produce a new queen. This is an interesting way to follow the natural progression of a colony as they raise a new queen. Feed the colony as needed, with a small workforce the bees will need to be fed when there is little to no nectar flow.

Tip1- When transporting in hot weather remove the outer cover for additional ventilation. There is a screened inner cover to help ventilate the hive.

Tip2- Feed sugar syrup using 1 part water/ 1 part sugar by weight. Be sure to dissolve the sugar in hot water (hot water from the tap should be hot enough)

Tip3- Use marked queens. Having a marked queen in the hive makes her easier to find and helps you determine if the hive swarmed or superseded the queen.