

## Artificial Swarm [AS] without finding the Queen

It should first of all be said that finding the queen on regular colony inspections is not usually necessary. As long as we can see the usual formation of eggs or young brood, we can be reasonably assured that the queen is present and doing her job. The problem arises when we want to perform the artificial swarm manipulation, or take a nucleus, and sometimes, in mid-summer, there are no eggs to be seen, and we can't be sure if the queen is missing or simply gone "off lay".

If and when you find queen cells but the colony has not swarmed, it is also possible to create an artificial swarm without necessarily locating the queen [NB: if most or all of the QC's are sealed and the colony has swarmed then simply reduce Queen cells to two, preferably one sealed and one unsealed so you can see the healthy larvae surrounded by royal jelly in the unsealed one and leave them to get on with it, checking for eggs in 18 days].

The AS can be achieved by removing any supers, moving the hive to one side and replacing it with another brood chamber, on a new floor and filled with frames containing drawn comb or foundation.

All the bees are then shaken and/or brushed, frame-by-frame, from the original into the new brood chamber, including any bees clinging to the walls of the old chamber, old floor etc [you can temporarily remove a few frames to make it easier to get all the bees into the new brood chamber but replace them when done].

By doing this, we are ensuring that **all** the bees from the brood area, including the queen, are now in the new brood chamber on the original site. This hive should then be reassembled in this format: - Floor, New Brood Chamber containing all the bees from the original brood chamber together with drawn comb or new foundation, Queen

Excluder, Old Brood Chamber containing the brood, any Supers [subsequently shared between the two hives], Crownboard and Roof.

Within the hour [have a cuppa], all the young bees from the bottom brood box will quickly move up through the queen excluder to cover the brood. This top brood chamber can then be taken away to a new position, on a new floor, only a few feet away [6 ft plus] if space is limited, fulfilling the Artificial Swarm criteria.

So what you should now have on the original site is a hive containing the original Queen and the flying bees [who will always geo-locate to this site (unless moved more than three miles away)], together with any Supers of stores above the queen excluder that you are able to divide between the old and new hives [if you do not have sufficient supers to share out then in preference, put a feeder with syrup on this hive as the bees will have the swarm impulse to build foundation rapidly].

You must be entirely confident that there are no Queen cells left in this hive or the Queen will swarm, check the frame sides etc]

On the new site you have the hive containing all the brood and the young bees, and the Queen cells that were the reason for doing the Artificial Swarm in the first place [there is no need to reduce the number of QC's]. Again, if you have a Super of stores to put over the Queen excluder in this one then do so but if supplies are short then put a feeder on to ensure that they don't starve. It is worth remembering that one frame of brood will make three frames of bees and that is a lot of mouths to feed.

An Artificial Swarm, whether you can find the queen or not is a simple procedure, as long as you do it step by step. There is no need to rush the process.

Good luck.