



I HAVE MY BEES, NOW WHAT?

TRANSPORTING YOUR BEES

After what feels like an agonisingly long wait, you have finally been told your bees are ready to be collected! Do some preparation to make sure you transport your bees safely.

The nucleus box should be sealed (usually with duct tape) and ready to be transported. Take some duct tape with you, just in case! Place the box securely on the floor of your vehicle to prevent damage. Ensure the hive stays cool during transport and avoid leaving it in a hot car. Keep vents open for oxygen.

POSITIONING THE HIVE

Once at your destination, place the hive where it will be located permanently. Choose the location carefully as it is difficult to move a hive around once bees have done their orientation flights. Ensure the area is flat and easily accessible. Map the flight path the bees are likely to follow. If in a suburban area, consider the neighbours. Place the hive in a way that forces the flight path upward to avoid bees flying where people and pets will be. Raise the hive off the ground – use bricks, a pallet or a manufactured hive stand. A hive should be placed where it will get at least six hours of sunlight but have some dappled shade during the hottest parts of the day. Avoid areas where bright lights are left on at night as it can confuse and disorient the bees and disrupt their natural navigation systems. The first water source the bees find is usually the one they keep returning to, so ensure that there is a water source nearby to avoid bees becoming a nuisance to neighbours.

OPENING THE HIVE

Once you have placed the (still sealed) nucleus hive in its location, leave it for twenty minutes for the bees to settle before opening it. Wear protective gear when you open the hive as bees may still be unsettled. Expect bees to come pouring out when you open the box as they may have been sealed in the nucleus box for several hours. They will fly around to orient themselves to their new surroundings. Allow bees to settle for 5 to 10 days before transferring them into the brood box that will eventually be their permanent home. Do not leave the bees in the nucleus hive for longer than three weeks.

TRANSFERRING YOUR BEES INTO THEIR PERMANENT HOME

On a sunny day, generally above 18°C, gently transfer frames from the nucleus hive to the larger one. Avoid squashing bees. Remove the nucleus box, clean and store it for future use.

FINDING THE QUEEN

The queen is likely in the colony, but she may not be easy to find, especially if she is not marked. If there are fresh eggs in the frames the queen is there.

MONITOR YOUR BEES

Inspect the colony every 2–3 weeks to track progress and ensure adequate food stores. Initially you may want to consider feeding your bees a 1:1 sugar: water ratio of syrup to boost colony growth, especially if nectar sources are limited. Once they are bringing in a steady stream of nectar, there is no need to continue feeding.