

Installing a Nuc (Nucleus) Colony in a Full sized Hive

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Equipment needed:

Full sized hive complete with Bottom Board, **Deep** Hive Body, Inner Cover, Top Cover
Frames with new foundation (all wax or plastic coated with wax) or frames of drawn comb
Feeder
Ratchet Strap
Protective Veil (Gloves are optional)
Smoker
Hive Tool

Set the hive in the final location, ideally a sunny spot with room to work around the hive (including at least 4 foot of space behind the hive). The hive should be set at least 8 inches off the ground (cement blocks are often used). The hive should be level. Ideally the entrance would face south and east for the early morning sun.

The hive body should have space for 5 deep frames from the Nuc.

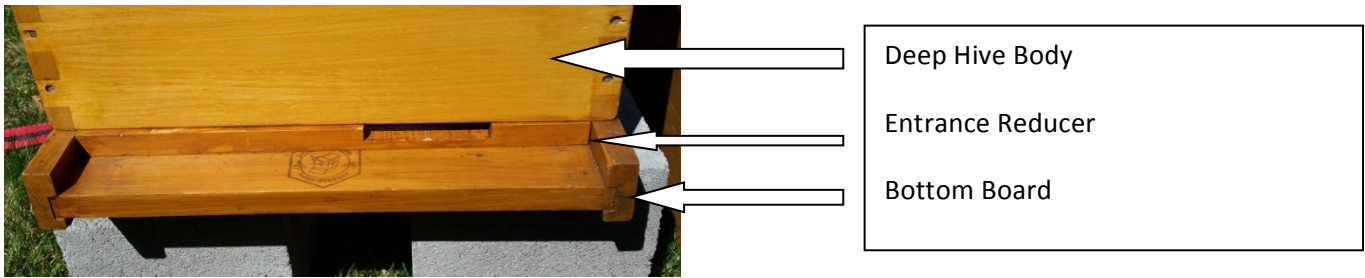
Before moving anything, apply a little smoke to the Nuc. (Bees sense vibration; a little smoke will help keep them calmer.) Place the Nuc beside the full-sized hive.

This is a wooden Nuc box.
Yours may be corrugated plastic or waxed cardboard.

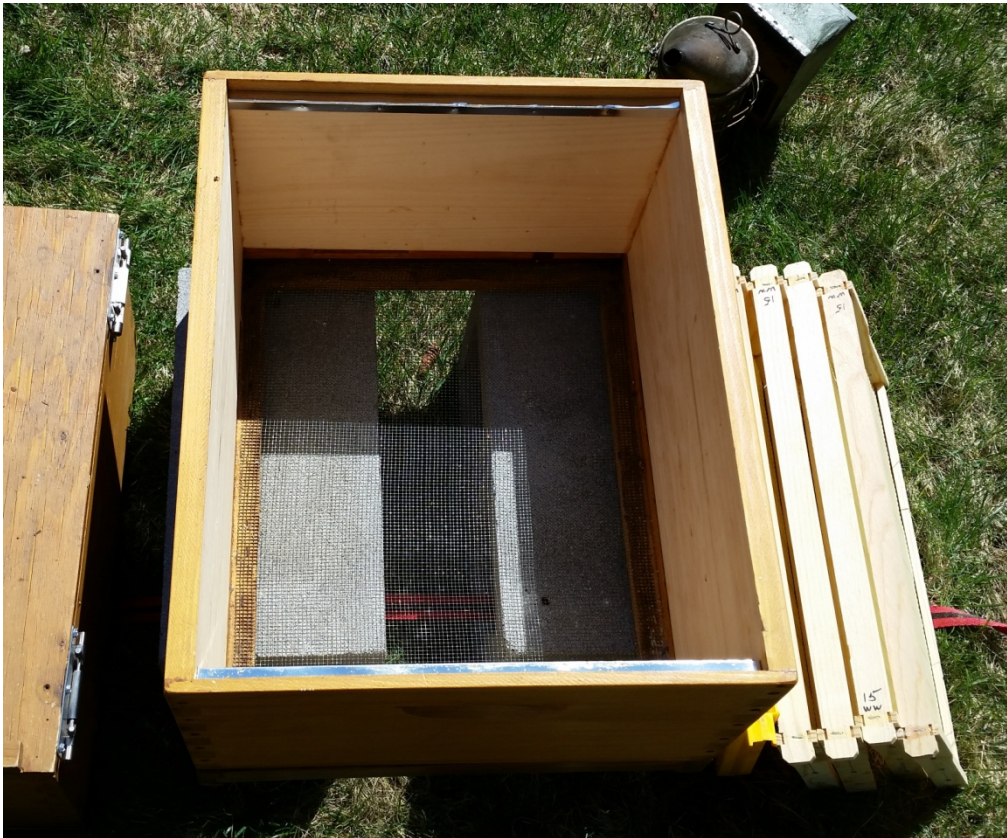


The smoker is ready!

The entrance reducer should be in place as shown below.



Remove all the frames (and frame feeder if used) from the new hive body.



Transferring the 5 frames from the Nuc to the Hive should be done carefully. The time from opening the Nuc to closing the Hive should be no more than 5 minutes, with the actual transfer of the five frames done in less than 3 minutes. Work deliberately, being gentle with the Nuc, hive and each individual frame. If frames are stuck together, it is fine to transfer two at a time. Transferring two frames at a time will speed up the process (especially important in cool weather) and cause fewer disturbances to the bees, including the queen!

Give the Nuc a “breath” of smoke and open the lid slowly. (Give the bees a few seconds to adjust to the open lid.)

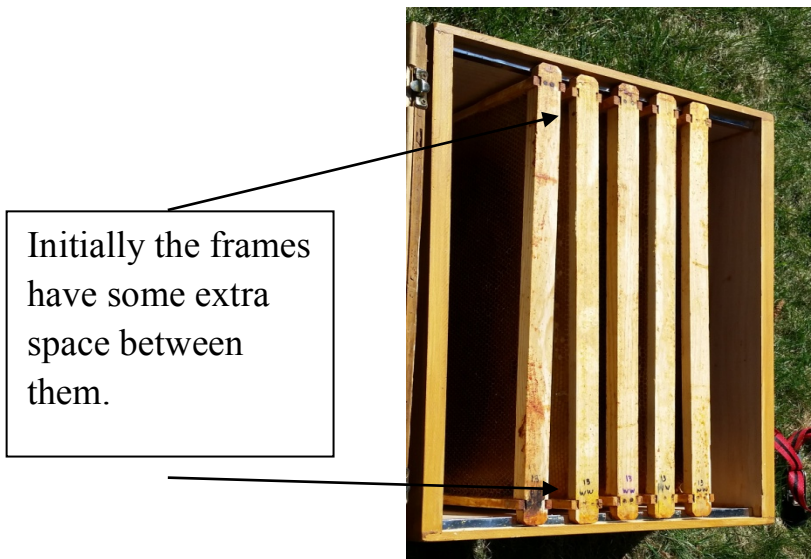
Note that the frames were moved to one side, allowing a little space to remove the first frame without squishing and rolling the bees.



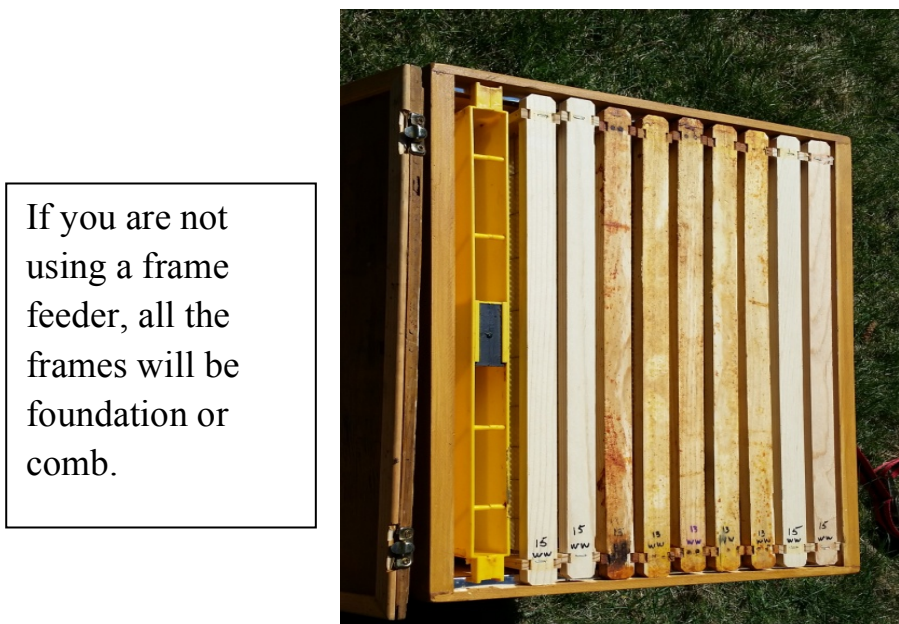
Place one or two frames at a time into the new hive body in the same order and orientation as the frames were set in the Nuc. Give the bees a little smoke just before you handle each frame.



As you move frames, you can briefly look at the frames and make a mental note what is on each frame (e.g. Honey, Pollen, Uncapped Brood, Capped Brood, Eggs). You may see the queen, but do not spend time trying to find her. Handle each frame as if the queen was on the frame (keep the frame over the box, do not jar the frame and do not squish or roll any bees). Leave a little space between each frame as you put in the hive body.



After the 5 frames from the Nuc are in the hive body, place two more frames (foundation or comb) between the nuc frames and the outside of the box. Then gently and slowly move the 5 nuc frames together and toward the new frames. Then insert the remaining frame(s) and/or feeder.



If there is a mite treatment in the Nuc, place it in the same position in the new hive. For example, an ApiVar strip should be inserted slowly and carefully between two frames in the brood area. (If it is stuck to a frame, just leave it in the same place.)

Shake any bees remaining in the Nuc box into the hive. You can leave the Nuc box outside the hive so any stragglers can find their way to their new home. Make sure the queen is not left behind in the Nuc box.

If you have a jar feeder or pail feeder, place the feeder directly on the frames or above the handhole in the inner cover. Be sure to keep the feeder filled! Use an empty hive body to enclose the feeder with the outer cover on top.

If you are using a top feeder, place it on the frames. If you are using a top feeder, you can leave the inner cover off. Do not overfill the feeder. It is difficult to handle when it is full.

The Mann Lake Top Feeder has plenty of storage capacity

If you are able to feed frequently, only fill one side at a time. When the first side gets low, fill the other side and late the first side empty. This procedure reduces the risk of the syrup spoiling due to mold and fermentation.



Mann Lake Top Feeder on top of the hive

Place the top cover on the hive. A ratchet strap helps hold the cover on and may help hold the hive together if a pest tries to knock it over.

The ratchet strap runs through the core of the concrete blocks.



Record the date and your observations: Number of frames of Brood (Capped, Open Larva, Eggs), Amount of bees (number of frames covered with bees), Any unhealthy looking brood or bees, Queen if seen, Amount of honey and pollen.

Feeding the New Hive

The colony must be continually feed sugar syrup to enable them to draw out the comb on the foundation. They also use the sugar syrup to feed the young brood. The bees will consume a thin syrup (1:1) or thick syrup (2:1) and draw out foundation equally well on thin or thick syrup. Thicker syrup has several advantages; only half as much feeding is needed and the syrup is less likely to spoil. A thicker syrup is less likely to ferment. The addition of HoneyBeeHealthy or similar product helps reduce fermentation in thick or thin syrup. Once the colony only has one or two frames of foundation left to draw out, a second hive body with foundation can be added.

In Northeast New Jersey, there is typically ample pollen sources for the new colony so supplemental protein is usually not needed. Monitor the bees returning to the hive and verify some are carrying pollen back to the colony. In areas or times when limited pollen is available, supplemental feeding of a protein patty (UltraBee or similar) may benefit the developing colony. Only feed a small amount of patty at a time; the amount the bees will consume in a week to prevent Small Hive Beetle infestation.