

# Wakeford Method of Swarm Control

You carry out an inspection and find **queen cells**....

You find **only unsealed queen cells** and the queen is still there.

- Remove all charged queen cells, even those with eggs in, as you don't know how old they are. You may need to shake bees off the combs. Look everywhere!
- Add a super, or two if there is a heavy nectar flow. Don't be frightened to over-super early in the season.
- Close the colony.

SEVEN ↓ DAYS

Inspection

There **are** queen cells

- Remove the queen. If she is good, then either requeen another colony, or make a small nuc with her. If the queen is poor, then cull her.
- Remove all the older queen cells that are likely to be sealed in the next day or so. Leave all the younger queen cells.
- Close the colony.

There are **no** charged queen cells

Add more supers if needed and return to 14 day\* inspections.

\*assumes clipped queens (7 days if not)

SEVEN ↓ DAYS

- Fully inspect the colony and see which is the best queen cell to leave. Don't shake frames. Cut out all queen cells bar one (use or dispose of the others).
- Close the colony and leave for 14 days.

You find sealed and unsealed queen cells.

- Inspect the colony fully, but don't remove any queen cells until you know the situation.
- Look for the queen and the presence of eggs. If there are no eggs you can tell how many days ago the queen left by the age of the youngest larvae.
- Is the queen there?

Queen Present

No Queen

- Remove all sealed queen cells and those that are likely to be sealed in 2 days. Leave all the younger queen cells. This is so you don't have queens emerge before your next inspection. Remember you must leave some queen cells, so don't cut them all out before realising there are no younger ones.
- Add supers if needed.
- Close the colony.

You find sealed and no unsealed queen cells.

*The queen has been gone some time, perhaps 6-7 days. In this case, some of the queen cells may be close to emerging or may have already done so*

- If you see any queen cells that are starting to emerge then release them. There may have been others that have emerged, but the bees often replace the cap, making it look as if cells are un-emerged. Touch the tips of all sealed cells to see if any have emerged and how many. If not, then cut out all bar one good one (mark the frame).
- If no cells have emerged, then cut out all bar one good one, preferably closest to emerging, this is in case there are some worker larvae the bees have "held back", that can be converted into emergency cells and sealed before your selected cell has emerged. Your colony may swarm with the virgin queen you left to emerge, leaving the colony with a scrub queen. This rarely happens, but is worth mentioning.
- Close the colony and leave for 14 days.

## Notes from Roger Patterson...

- This is a simple method of swarm control that I have used for well over 50 years. It was taught to me by an old beekeeper, George Wakeford, who had a great influence on my beekeeping handling and management techniques. This is an old method that won't be found in many modern books.
- If a colony makes more than 10-12 queen cells, consider requeening from different stock as the colony may be swarmy. (See [here](#))
- I always add a super early in the season, otherwise a few days of warm weather in spring often means the bees put pollen and nectar around the broodnest, crowding out the queen.
- I use brood boxes of foundation as supers early in the season to give me good brood combs, where bees often make poor combs if foundation is placed in the brood box. This may help reduce swarming in those colonies. (See [here](#))
- As there is a brood break, there is a chance the honey crop will increase because there is little brood to feed. There is also a chance to do some varroa control by inserting a comb of unsealed drone comb that has been prepared in another colony. When it is sealed it can be put in the freezer.
- If the colony is a good one, queen cells can be put in small nuclei to raise queens for requeening poorer colonies, or if the colony is poor itself, a queen cell from a better colony can be substituted. This method opens up many similar opportunities the progressive beekeeper will be able to make use of. (See [here](#) and [here](#))

This diagram is based on the article written by Roger Patterson on the Dave Cushman Website: <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/swarmcontwakeford.html>