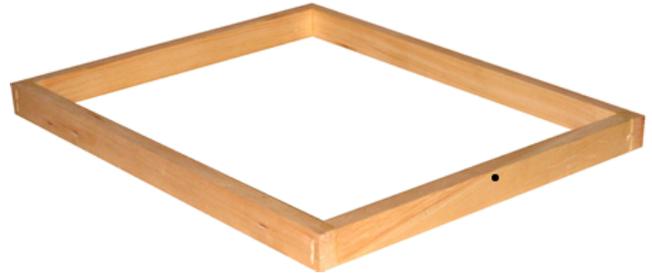


Easy Candy Boards

from New Moon Apiary.com

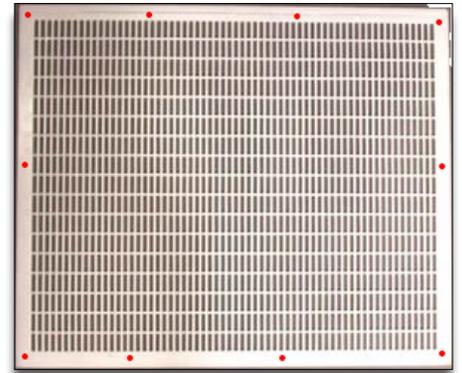
rim/shim
plastic queen excluder
bag of sugar
drill + 1/16 bit
18 gauge 3/4 nails
tissue paper
two 6" sticks
duct tape



For years now I have used a simple candy board method that doesn't require cooking. I start with a rim or shim as some call it. A rim is used to get extra space under the inner cover for feeding and medication so this is a piece of equipment I already have.

In the front of the rim drill a 3/8" hole at the top for ventilation and a bee escape. This can be covered with duct tape when you want to use the rim again for feeding or medication.

Next I need a queen excluder, I like plastic ones the best. The plastic queen excluder is made from brittle plastic so I drill holes with a 1/16 drill bit to prevent cracking. I have put dots on the excluder below to show where and how many holes I drill. The bit is 1/16 since I use 18 gauge 3/4" nails to tack the excluder to my rim. I use small nails because I want to easily pry apart my rim and excluder when I want to use them again as separate pieces of equipment.



Next I line the inside with thin paper so when I put in the damp sugar it doesn't fall through the queen excluder. The thin tissue paper that separates sheets of wax foundation can be used. I do not overlap the paper much to make it easier for the bees to chew through. I like to have the paper up the sides of the rim about 1/2" to help keep the sugar contained.

Now I mix my sugar and water, each of my rims are for ten frame hives and 1 3/4" deep. This size rim will hold 10 pounds of sugar. How much I put in it depends on the frequency I will check that hive through the winter. For each pound of sugar I mix in one ounce of cold water. Rubber gloves are handy for this job, I guess I do not have to tell you why. Mix the sugar and water really well, it should look like wet sand. Add the wet sugar a little at a time so you do not move your paper around.

After you have all the sugar in you will want to pack it down good taking care you do not cover the 3/8" hole in the rim. Then it needs to dry and get hard. Depending on the heat in your room it can be 1 to 3 days. I will trim the overhanging paper from this rim off before it goes on a hive.

If I am putting the candy boards on late in the winter I may add feeding supplements to the sugar mixture. Also I may put a pollen substitute patty on top of the sugar to feed protein.

I stack the candy boards with sticks between them to give air space so they dry faster. Notice there is no sugar or paper blocking the hole in each rim: you want it to be open for ventilation.

When you go to the bee yard to put on the candy board bring two sticks about 6 inches long (the depth of the bottom bar of a frame) and duct tape. I put the sticks on the frames so I do not crush bees, and it gives them space to get under the candy board. These bees are on the top of the frames so using the shim sticks to hold the candy board off them is important. The sticks cause a gap between the hive body and the candy board so I use duct tape to seal the gap.



I have put a pollen substitute patty on the candy board to feed the hive protein. By the time the bees eat through the sugar they may like the protein for brood rearing. Replacement of winter bees can start happening as early as January in some hives so I want the bees to have everything they need to help the queen do her job. This rim has 5 pounds of sugar in it, if I had used 10 pounds of sugar I would have hollowed out a place for the pollen substitute patty. So if you plan to add a pollen substitute patty when using 10 pounds of sugar to be sure hollow out a place for it while the sugar is still damp.

Do not open the hives to add candy boards when the bees are flying, you want to open them on cold sunny days when they are in a cluster. The candy board goes on the hive with the inner cover on top. I like to put the duct tape where the candy board and brood box meet before I put the telescoping cover back on.

This hive is buttoned up and should be fine for the rest of winter. My method to check the weight of a hive is to go in back of the hive and lift it from the bottom board, any hive I can easily lift needs food. If you do not have a candy board ready you can put some sugar on the inner cover until you can get a candy board made. Sugar on the inner cover is not the best solution though because the bees will not cluster up on the inner cover where the sugar is but they will cluster under a candy board.

Another thing I really like is that there is no waste, in spring I take any left over sugar and turn it into a 1:1 syrup. I do have to strain the syrup through an old piece of screen to get out any bits of paper.

