

INTRODUCING QUEENS.

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I am daily led to wonder why it is that all the bee books and circulars issued by queen breeders, and writers for bee journals insist on the importance of making a colony queenless for three days before a new queen is introduced. I have before me one of Mr. Alley's circulars, in which he says, "I find the three day plan the safest for general use. A colony that has been queenless for three days, or seventy-two hours, will usually accept a strange queen." Now, Mr. Alley is an old and experienced breeder, but notwithstanding this, I venture to assert that a colony that has been queenless three days will not accept a queen any more readily than will a colony which has not been queenless three minutes, if properly managed before, and at the time the queen is released.

Not only this, but I go farther and say that making the colony queenless three days before the queen is released always increases the danger of the bees killing the queen, to say nothing about the loss of the young bees, which is bound to take place if the colony is left without a queen for three days during the time in which queens are busily engaged in laying eggs. Since this method of introduction is absolutely unnecessary, I cannot see why this greater risk and loss should be incurred. I might remark, however, that the above instructions are in full harmony with the general teachings upon the subject, but I think I can show the reader "a more excellent way," and I will endeavor to make it clear to anyone, even though he has never seen a queen in a cage.

When your queen reaches you, if ordered by mail from a queen breeder, she will be enclosed, with some attendant bees, in a small wooden cage divided off into two or three compartments, one of which should contain food enough for her, and the bees which accompany her, for several days. Over the open side of the cage will be tacked a piece of wire cloth, and over this a thin board. Then board should be removed and the queen examined at once to see if she is all right. Then examine and see if there is plenty of food in the cage to last the bees two or three days. Tack a piece of thin wood over the end of the cage which contains the candy, but leave the other end uncovered, so the bees in the hive

where the queen is to be introduced can get at the wire cloth. Pay no attention to the old queen until you are ready to release the new one, as per the directions given below.

Place the cage containing the new queen on top of the frames of the hive containing the colony to which you want to introduce the queen. Place the wire side down, between two of the frames, so that the bees in the hive will have opportunity to communicate freely with the queen and bees in the cage and thus enable them to become acquainted with each other. If the frames are covered with board, it will be better to substitute a heavy cloth for this until the queen is released. Leave the bees and queen in the cage on the hive for two or three days, and then open the hive and hunt out the old queen, being careful to disturb the bees as little as possible. As soon as the old queen is found, cage her or kill her at once and close up the hive as expeditiously as possible. Remove the board from over the candy and turn back the wire cloth just a little ways, so the bees in the hive can have access to the candy, and then place the cage back on the hive the same as before. Some cages have a plug in the end containing the food, so that it is only necessary to remove this to give the bees access to the candy. Close up the hive and leave it alone, and in a short time the bees will eat their way into the cage and release the queen and bees, and the work is done.

A colony treated in this way will not be queenless to exceed two or three hours and but little time will be lost, as the new queen is very apt to commence laying the next day. Queens can be introduced in this way at any season of the year, and there is no danger of loss if these instructions are carried out properly. Dealers, if they so desire, can keep several queens on a hive, in the way suggested above, for a week or more at a time, and then introduce any one of them to the colony whenever they wish, after the third day, as the bees would accept any one of the queens thus kept on the hive.

As to making a colony queenless three days, I simply say, do not do it unless you want to increase the danger of having the queen killed and lose valuable time besides.

I might say, in conclusion, that there is less danger of loss by any method of introduction when the bees are strong honey rapidly and there has not been any robbing going on in the apiary for some days.

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