



BAIT HIVES

MAAREC Publication 3.7

Revised March 2006

Bait hives are an easy and inexpensive means of obtaining honey bees to start a new hive. Captured bee swarms might be used for increasing colony numbers, for starting a bee hobby or for bolstering weak colonies. All that is needed is an empty box or an empty hive as described in this leaflet, a location to hang the bait station and the good fortune to capture a swarm of bees.

Information Bulletin No. 187 available from Cornell University has details on bait hives that will supply information helpful to successfully capture swarms. It was written by Dr. Thomas Seeley and Roger Morse of Cornell. The Cornell bulletin recommends construction of an empty box as a bait station. They do not advise the use of beeswax comb, foundation or used bee equipment as an attractant to the bees. The diagram they provide (Fig. 1) can be used to construct a bait hive.

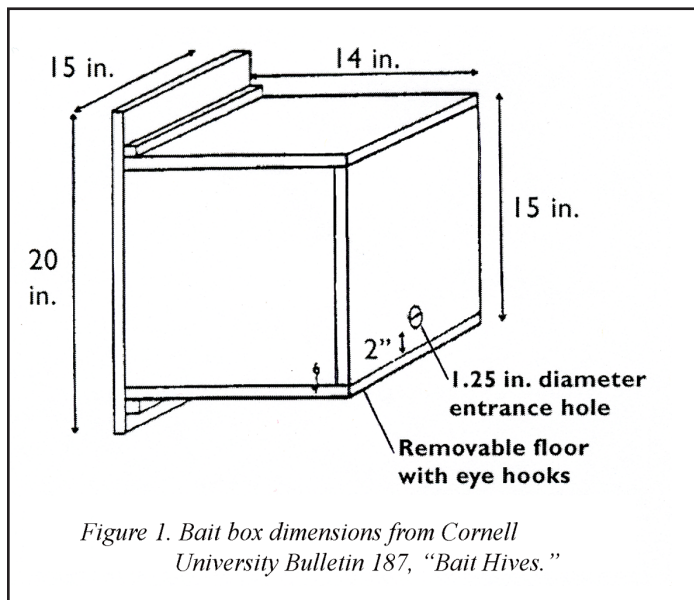


Figure 1. Bait box dimensions from Cornell University Bulletin 187, "Bait Hives."

Some beekeepers feel that a good alternative to a bait hive is an old hive body (standard Langstroth size) with drawn comb. Using such equipment makes transfer of any captured swarms easier. The odor of the drawn comb helps attract a swarm plus gives the bees a headstart on getting established. It also allows for recycling of old boxes. To convert an old hive body into a bait hive you need to close the bottom and top of the box with wood such as plywood. You can use a single frame or as many as 10 but there is no advantage to using more than 3-5 frames. Cover the top of the hive body with a second piece of plywood or something to keep rainwater out. Next drill a 1" inch opening at the bottom of the box; place a nail across the opening to help keep birds and squirrels out. Make slots on the opposite wall to hang your box or alternately construct a platform to hold the trap box. Paint the hive body a dark color.

A precaution when using old bee equipment and drawn comb as a bait box is to be certain you inspect for AFB disease. Equipment and comb you use can be fumigated by ETO as a precaution. Since you are placing comb highly attractive to wax moth in an exposed situation, this bait hive should only be utilized during the spring swarm season (mid April to early June). If comb is left outside longer it may be destroyed by wax moth, especially in the later part of the swarming season.

Yet another alternative is to buy a bait hive. At least one commercial bait hive is available for purchase. It was described in the 1988 NEWSY BEE and is available from Scentry Inc., PO Box 426, Buckeye, AZ 95326-0090. Basically it is a corrugated paper flower pot of 15 inch diameter, 15" inches high that is equipped with a cover and eyelets that allows for easy installation. It uses a pheromone lure in place of comb to attract to bee swarms.

Pheromone lures should be utilized with bait hives, including an old hive body as described above. Pheromone lures replace the attractive herbs and plants that native beekeepers have used for centuries in Africa and other areas where primitive management utilizes bait hives seasonally to attract swarms. The lures use a blend of the chemicals that are present in the worker scent gland. Sentry Inc. will sell the lures separately. Alternately you can obtain the lures from Great Lakes IPM, 10220 Church Rd., N.E., Vestaburg, MI 48891. The developer of the lures Dr. Orley Taylor offers a kit containing 10 rechargeable lures for \$10.00 plus \$1.00 postage. A vial of pheromone only is available for \$5.00. Write to Bee Research Fund, Endowment Association, Univ. of Kansas, c/o Dr. Orley Taylor, Lawrence, Kansas 68045.

MAAREC, the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium, is an official activity of five land grant universities and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The following are cooperating members:

University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia

USDA/ARS
Bee Research Lab
Beltsville, Maryland

Requests for information or publications should be sent to: MAAREC, 501 ASI Building, University Park, PA 16802 Phone: (814) 865-1896 Fax: (814) 865-3048 Web site: <http://MAAREC.cas.psu.edu>

This publication is available in alternative media on request. The mention of trade names or commercial products in this publication is for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium or their employees. The U.S. Cooperative Extension Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture provide Equal Opportunities in employment and programs.

Participants in MAAREC also include state beekeeper associations, and State Departments of Agriculture from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

MAAREC Publication 3.7. Author: Dewey M. Caron, University of Delaware.