

HOW TO INSPECT YOUR BEEHIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME



When approaching your beehive for the first time, being gentle and smooth is best. This will enable you to observe properly, while keeping the bees calm. Do not bang the lid, or lift the frames harshly. It is important not to swipe at the bees. This will make them aggressive.

A sunny, calm day is best for opening the hive. Windy/rainy days should be avoided. By having your protective gear on, smoker lit and hive tool ready to go, you're ready to open your hive. Observing the beehive entrance and noting the flight pattern of the bees (in and out) will give you a general guide to how the hive is working and an idea of the hive population.

Before taking off the lid, give a couple of light puffs of smoke in the entrance and wait for this to take effect. You can use your hive tool to open the lid a little bit or prise it up to see. By doing this, you can also add a few puffs of smoke in under the lid as well. After approx. 60 seconds, gently take the lid off the hive, and rest it against the other side of the hive out of the way. Puff a little more smoke over the top of the frames, and then put your smoker aside. If it does have a convenient hook on the side, you can hang it on the super.

As you will see looking into the super, the bees are busy doing the things that bees do. If you use your hive tool, you can separate and spread the frames so you can remove one for a closer examination. Just remember- this is a gentle process! If the frames are moved calmly, the bees will stay there. Jerking the frames out, will only make the bees agitated. If at any time while you are inspecting frames and the bees do become agitated, a couple of gentle puffs of smoke will calm them down.

In most cases, the middle area of the frame will be covered with brood cells, and some honey cells towards the outside edges. The brood area is quite bumpy and always a brownish colour. The honey cells are flat, and often whitish in colour. If you wish to look at another frame, rest the frame you are holding against the lid, being careful not to squash too many bees.

In the brood box, the centre four frames are the main nursery for the baby bees as this is the warmest part of the hive. If you are inspecting these frames, you are likely to see eggs and larvae in different stages. Be mindful that, like birds eggs, the brood does need to be kept warm – so it is advisable not to have these frames out for too long.

When you are ready to close the hive, replace the frames and arrange them with the brood frames towards the centre. This is to avoid confusion for the bees in the hive. Carefully replace the lid and secure with the hive lock and strap. This will keep the beehive together in strong winds, ready for your next inspection.

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