USING THE FIVE FRAME CONVERSION KIT

Introducing Bees On BS National Frames

If you obtain your bees as a nucleus in many parts of the UK they will arrive on BS National frames. This is not a problem as it is very easy to convert these frames to fit into a Langstroth. Our conversion kit consists of 5 Langstroth Top Bars, 10 Side Fillers and some Nylon Ties to hold everything together. The National Deep kit has extra ties to secure the lower part of the side filler and instructions for this kit are at the end.

STEP 1

Leave the nucleus on the site chosen for the hive for at least 24 hours especially if the weather is cool. Choosing a warm day move the nucleus to one side and replace with your new hive. Ensure the entrance faces the same way as the entrance of the nucleus when it was on the site. If the weather is cold see the alternative technique described at the end of this leaflet. An assistant is very useful for the following steps but the conversion can be achieved alone. There are spare ties in the kit so have a practice first before trying it with bees!

STEP 2

Carefully open up the nucleus and lift out an outer frame. Holding the frame over the nucleus check for the queen. If she is on this frame carefully replace it and lift out the frame from the other side of the nucleus. The conversion can be done with the queen on the frame but the risk of losing the queen is increased and we do not recommend it. Rest the queenless frame vertically on top of the nucleus and lay a Langstroth top bar on top of it, ensuring it is placed centrally with an equal overhang at each edge. Place a side filler on the end of the National frame and fix it to the Langstroth top bar with a tie. **Ensure the thin end of the tie exits horizontally as shown below**

Bottom Tie - 14 * 12
Deep Kit Only

and is not sticking upwards, otherwise it will foul the roof. Ensure the hole is nearest the frame sidebar as illustrated. This is important as the end of the filler bar is cut slightly off square so the tension of the tie pulls it against the side bar. You may find it easier if you loosely fit the tie through the hole first, pulling it tight only when the top bar is in position. Pull the tie fairly tight and do the same at the other end. Check everything is central using the marks on the top bar to align with the ends of the National top bar. Then tighten the tie further with pliers and cut off the surplus.

STEP 3

For subsequent frames shake off most of the bees into the new hive before conversion. If it is a cold day work quickly to avoid chilling any brood but whenever possible perform the conversion on a warm day. Ensure the frames are placed in the new hive in the same order they were in the nucleus.

STEP 4

With the converted frames pushed to one side of the hive introduce a couple of full Langstroth frames with foundation. A dummy board can also be used if available. The gap between the first Langstroth frame and the first converted frame will have to be set by eye as the side bars of the National frame will not align with the side bars of the Langstroth.

STEP 5 (Optional)

The bees will soon glue everything together with propolis but the side fillers can be secured in place more solidly if a frame pin is pushed through with a push-pin tool from the inside of the National side bar into the side filler. Insert the nail low down on the side bar near the bottom bars.

LATER MANAGEMENT

As the bees draw out the Langstroth foundation add new frames until the brood chamber is full. The National frames can remain in place for the entire first season and replaced the following spring either by a Bailey frame change or a shook swarm. We recommend the latter which should be carried out in late March in warm areas or April further North. Alternatively, remove the outer National frames one at a time as they become broodless and replace with a new Langstroth frame on the other side of the hive. The only problem with this method is the queen frequently lays up the outer frames of polystyrene hives.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR COLD WEATHER

If you have to perform the transfer from the nucleus on a cold day the best strategy is to miss out the side fillers. Simply place the top bar on the National top bar and pass the tie under the National top bar and pull it tight. If you have an assistant this can be performed with the National frame lifted only a short distance out of the nucleus. Once both ties are in place holding the Langstroth top bar transfer the frame quickly into the new hive. Repeat for all other frames. A few days later and on a warm day, lift out each frame in turn after shaking off all the adhering bees into the hive. Cut off the old tie and any brace comb the bees may have built and fit the side fillers. You will need additional ties to do this, which can be obtained most easily from motor factors or some electrical shops.

BS NATIONAL DEEP 14 * 12

The 14 * 12 kit is similar to the normal kit but the side fillers have a second hole drilled at the bottom of the side filler. The fillers are reversible and can be used either way up but after fitting them as described above a second plastic tie is fitted to the bottom of the side filler to help secure it. The side filler is correctly aligned if the hole for the lower tie is further away from the side bar than the upper tie. To fit the second tie thread it through the lower hole in the side filler and then push the narrow end of the tie through the comb as close to the corner of the frame as possible, i.e. in the lowest corners on the frame formed by the bottom bars and the bottom of the side bar. It should be possible to easily push the tie through the comb but if there is any difficulty, due perhaps to crystallised stores or old and brittle wax, make a hole for the tie in the wax with a small screw driver. Tighten the bottom tie with pliers and adjust manually if necessary the position of the side filler so it is central over the side bar. Cut off the surplus as close to the head of the tie as possible.

SMITH HIVES

The conversion kit also works with Smith frames but the gap that would have been filled with the longer lug of a National frame should be filled with a suitable piece of scrap wood, perhaps cut from an old frame.