

## *The Care and the Installation of Package Bees by Dana Stahlman*



*The mechanics of the package*



*...And here's what it looks like full of bees.*

*The following instructions on package installation may seem like a lot of verbage, but are fairly concise, and good to keep on hand even if you've poured over online videos of the process. Another good idea, especially if working with a partner, is to do a practice walk through before the bees are in the picture.*

There are *thousands* of videos on hiving packages; try this one from Kelly Bees

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHfLUXyTJ44>

Also, when you arrive at this link, you'll see the list of other videos, such as one from Brushy Mountain. Click around and find the one that best suits your experience and makes the most sense to you.

### ***Four important points:***

1. The usual bee feed is sugar and water mixed in a ratio of 1 part water to 1 part sugar, both by weight. This is for spring feeding.
2. Keep entrances reduced to a small size. This prevents robbing and conserves heat.
3. *Do not add supers or a second hive body until the bees fill the box below.*
4. Expect some loss. Some beekeepers report as much as 20% supercedure and queen failure. Be sure to check the condition of the new hive on a weekly basis until the hive is well established.

### ***Care of the package on arrival:***

Warm to room temperature before you install the bees.

### ***Installation of Packages:***

There are two or more systems for installing a package of bees. We recommend the following:

#### ***1) For the first time beekeeper.***

Install the package late in the afternoon--this helps prevent drifting (bees not returning to their own hive). It is well to sprinkle or paint a little syrup on the screen of the cage 15 minutes before you are ready to move them to the hive for installation. This quiets them down and they will be better natured.

Remove five frames from your hive. Store the frames in a dry cool place. These frames will be put into your hive several days later. On the top side of the package cage, you will find a small square lid. Remove it.

Under the lid is the top of the syrup can which has been used to feed your bees during transit from the bee yard to your home. Running off to one side you will see a piece of wire hanging out between the can and the hole in the top of the cage -- the queen cage is attached to this wire. Sometimes the queen cage is attached to a metal strip. *Do not let this wire slip down into the cage!* We recommend that you tip the cage up to about a 45° angle to remove the can from the cage. It is helpful to jar all the bees to the bottom of the cage when you do this. With a firm grip on the can, remove it, pull the queen cage out of the package and

immediately return the can to the hole. This prevents the bees from getting out of the cage. Now that the queen cage is removed, you have some time to study what you are going to do in the next step. Check the queen cage for a cork or plastic cap that prevents the bees from getting to the candy in the queen cage. You must remove this cork or plastic cap. You may be replacing it with a candy plug supplied by the package seller. The bees will release the queen from the cage by eating the candy (it usually takes a day or so for them to do it).

Place the queen cage with the queen in it (Make sure she is alive) on the top of the five frames you have left in the hive body near where the package is going to go. The package will fit in the hive body in the space of the frames you have removed. It is sometimes recommended that you hang the queen cage between the frames where the bees are clustered. However, the bees are not clustered yet in your hive.

### ***Placing the package in the hive:***

It is now time to remove the can in the package of bees and sit it down into the hive body. We recommend that you partly remove the can (bees can not get out of the cage with the can still partly in the cage), set the package cage into the hive and then quickly remove the can all the way out. Place the inner cover over the hive upside down and place the syrup can over the hole in the inner cover. If you have an empty shallow box, place it on the inner cover to protect the syrup can. You can then close up your hive with the top cover.

You will need to feed your bees on a regular basis.

You will need to remove the package cage in a few days. You will want to make sure your queen has been released from her queen cage and during that inspection, you can pull the package cage out and replace the five frames you removed earlier. Don't get lazy. I have seen hives in which the beekeeper waited too long to remove the package cage. The bees will build comb in it, around it, and make getting the cage out at a later time difficult.

### ***2) For Experienced Beekeepers:***

This is really an easy way to install a package and not nearly as frightening for the beginner as he/she might think. It has the advantage of getting it all over at once and eliminated any chance of burr comb being built in the package cage.

1. Follow all steps above except the removal of any frames from the hive.
2. Remove the queen cage as explained above and place it between the frames somewhere in the middle of the hive -- probably between the fifth and sixth frame.
3. Shake the bees to the bottom of the package cage and remove the syrup can. Shake the bees out of the package over the top of the frames and the queen cage. They will quickly move down into the hive. Place the inner cover on the top of the hive (don't crush any bees doing this). You may have to wait for the bees to go down into the hive for a short time.
4. Then follow the same instructions above about feeding and closing up the hive.

### ***Special hints:***

If you are an established beekeeper and can use drawn combs on which to install your package you should do so. If you can just give them two or three drawn combs it is a big advantage. This allows the bees to get to work without have to draw combs from the foundation first.

If you have a frame or two or three of honey and pollen, it is a decided advantage to the bees. You can and should still feed them syrup.

Bees will clean up old moldy comb. Some beekeepers throw away such frames. All you need to do is brush off any dead bees on the comb. They bees will do the rest.