

What Is A Double Screen?

A double screen is just what its name implies, two screens divided with a wooden frame in between. Double screens are useful for swarm prevention and to create a cell building unit above a queen right hive. Double screens can be used to cure a colony of laying workers.

A double screen has 3 closable openings, allowing the bees above it access to the outside world. Two nucleus colonies can be placed above it, or in one ten frame box. The openings will allow this option.

Swarm Prevention

Signs of swarming activity may include:

- The construction of queen cells positioned on the bottom parts of brood frames
- The freshening of queen cups with new white wax, visible on the outer parts of these cells
- A pollen and/or a honey bound brood nest
- A reduction in foraging activity

If these signs are observed, your colony is probably going to swarm.

If Your Colony Has Gone Into Swarm Mode

Set a box next to your colony; remove the frame with the newly constructed queen cells. Examine the cells to determine if they contain larvae. If capped queen cells are present, remove all but the two best looking cells (the other cells may be used if needed in other boxes or splits). These cells will be the largest with the most stippling on their surface, probably indicating they had the best food and care, prior to being capped over.

Be sure to do a close examination of this frame and make sure your queen is not on the frame. If she is, either cage her temporarily (hair clip queen catchers work good for this) or move her to another frame. Move this frame (with the queen cells) to the center of the box that will go on top of the double screen.

Select two other frames containing brood in various stages (with clinging nurse bees) and place these in the box as well. Next move two more frames with pollen and honey and place these on the outsides of the other frames. Finish filling this box with frames of drawn comb if available, blank foundation if not. Select some frames with clinging nurse bees and shake these into the new box as well.

You want a high ratio of nurse bees in this box. This box will need to be fed as you will not have foraging bees present. This can be done with a division board feeder placed in the box on the wall, or with the addition of some kind of top feeder. Replace the frames in the box you took the resources from; use either blanks or drawn comb. If you confined your queen during these manipulations, release your queen back into the box she came from.

Place the double screen on top of the queen right colony below and set your newly constructed box on top of the double screen. Open the entrance on the double screen that is 180 degrees opposite the box below. Any foraging bees you have moved to the top box will return to the colony below, and the nurse bees will stay with the brood and queen cells.

The first queen to emerge from the cell will kill the other queen that has not emerged. She will harden over the next couple of days and then take one or more orientation flights. Finally, she will fly to a drone congregation area to mate with 10-20 drones. She may take mating flights on successive days depending on weather conditions and her success in mating. When she returns to the hive she will begin to lay eggs. This colony is now ready to move to its own bottom board.

Now you have a new colony without having had to chase it when it would have swarmed. You have also tricked the parent colony into thinking that they have swarmed. If something happens to the virgin in the top box and she does not return from her mating flight you can simply remove the double screen and recombine the colony, while still having prevented the swarm.

Double Screens For Cell Builders

If you graft queens you will need a place to put the cells so that nurse bees will feed and care for them. A double screen can be used to create a cell building unit over a queen right colony. The box over the double screen is stocked much in the same way you do it for swarm prevention, but without the addition of naturally occurring queen cells. To be safe you should not stock this unit with eggs or young larvae either. The reason being; if you have larvae that are between 4-20 hours old, the bees may decide to construct an additional queen cell on a frame below your grafted cells. If this happens, and this queen emerges before you remove your grafted cells, she could kill your whole graft.

This unit also needs to be stuffed with nurse bees and fed heavily. You may also consider not opening the door to the cell building unit for two days. Grafts are introduced 24 hours after construction of this unit.

Double Screens To Cure A Hive Of Laying Workers

If you come across a hive that has become hopelessly queenless, the workers may have taken it upon themselves to begin to lay eggs. Of course these workers carry no sperm, having never taken a mating flight and can only lay unfertilized eggs, which will emerge as drones.

You might think you can easily just requeen this hive but you would be wrong. The colony believes it has a queen due to the activities of the laying workers, and will quickly kill any introduced queen.

One way to cure this would be to provide frames of eggs and brood in various stages every week until they make their own queen. Another way would be to place two sheets of newspaper over a queen right hive and place the colony of laying workers above them. In a few days, the bees will have chewed through the newspaper and will have combined. This colony can be split later. Or you could place a double screen over a queen right colony, and then place the colony of laying workers above it for a couple of days. It is thought that the pheromones from the developing brood below will dry up the ovaries of the laying workers above.

As you can see, double screens can be a good tool to have around.