

Using and trialing the Bee Gym

Where to place the Gym.

It is important to get the Bee Gym into a busy part of the beehive. We are experimenting with ways of doing this; placing the frame on the open mesh floor, one or two centimeters back from the busiest part of the entrance has produced good results so far. Orientate the frame so that the Bee Gym name is uppermost and faces the opening in the hive entrance block. If pollen loss becomes excessive the frame can be brought back from the entrance a little. When the bees form their winter cluster move the frame back from the entrance so that it is under the main concentration of bees.

An alternative is to place the Bee Gym frame on top of the brood frames in a shallow spacer ('eke'/mini super) 15 – 20mm deep.

Before inserting the Bee Gym check that the loops are tight and that the 6 'flippers' are located in their sockets. The 'wires' and small plastic flippers point upwards. Please be aware that the Bee Gym uses bee-sized engineering, this means that the parts are delicate.

To maintain the Bee Gym I would suggest an occasional soak in a bucket of soda solution. If the Bee Gym is reintroduced after a clean up, it seems to boost the mite fall again. The Bee Gym seems to be more effective if the inspection board is left out, unless actively monitoring mite fall. This is good practice because a large build up of debris on the board allows mites to climb back into the hive.

Trialing the Bee Gym

Our previous tests have produced very positive results. In most hives the introduction of a Bee Gym greatly boosts the amount of mites coming through onto the sticky boards a day or two after it is added, in other colonies it seems to take several weeks to produce a good effect. In order to study this effect it is necessary to ascertain the 'natural' mite fall in the hive prior to the Bee Gym being introduced. We monitor the hives for one or two weeks before putting The Bee Gym in. These counts could be every day, every few days or weekly, as long as it is possible to see the mites amongst the debris on the board.

Once the Bee Gym is added there seems to be a particularly active period for about six months. Many of the mites coming through will be alive, so it is necessary to have something sticky like a thin layer of Vaseline on the board, to keep them in place.

If you don't have time to do all these mite counts, it would still be of great value to the project if you could count the mite drop in your hive, before and after introduction of the Bee Gym, with occasional counts when you do have the time.

I am developing a tiny version of the Bee Gym, which can be pushed into the actual brood combs. The idea is to complement the Bee Gym on the floor of the hive and target the Varroa mites wherever they are in the hive, these mini Gyms will be ready in March 2017

Please check the Bee Gym blog for all the latest results: <http://beegymblog.blogspot.co.uk/>

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