

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 Bee Gym on top of the brood frames in a shallow spacer ('eke' 12 – 14mm deep) has been successful so far in 2018. It is also possible to turn over a framed queen excluder and place the Bee Gym on top.

With full size colonies place 2 Bee Gyms above the brood frames.

Placing a Bee Gym on the mesh floor, one or two centimeters back from the busiest part of the entrance has also produced good results. 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 Bee Gym on top of the brood frames, above the main concentration of bees.

Before inserting the Bee Gym check that the loops are tight and that the 10 '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. Open mesh floors are 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 encourages wax moths and allows Varroa 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 Bee Gyms greatly boosts the amount of mites coming through onto the sticky boards a few days after they are added. In most colonies it seems to take several months to reduce the overall Varroa mite load.

In order to study this effect it is necessary to ascertain the 'natural' mite fall in the hive prior to the Bee Gyms being introduced. To do this monitor the hives for one or two weeks before putting the Bee Gyms 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 three 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. Please send your results to stuart@beegym.co.uk

Another idea is to repeat the trial devised by Richard Ball from Devon Apicultural Research Group, which can be found on the home page of their website: www.dargbees.org.uk

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

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