

SUCCESSFUL BEEKEEPING

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KELOWNA BEE BREEDER CIRCLE: A group of beekeepers in the Kelowna area who wish to keep and rear Vernon stock honey bees.

My cardiologist told me that my heart is fixed and can last another 10 years, but he also told me that I have to give up physical labour while keeping my mind busy. What I am proposing is not a queen rearing course but an extension of what I, Bob, Key, Rick, Smiley and others did for many years. I can teach, manage, and mentor but you will have to do all the work, provide the bees and some equipment.

This year we will start in April around 15th by unwrapping my 85 wintered colonies. We will select 24 possible breeder “mothers” by evaluating how well they wintered and factor in last summer’s performance (honey production, brood pattern, temperament). These 24 hives will be given drone combs to also produce mating drones. They will be marked accordingly and packed for pollination. Grafting combs will be selected from these hives in mid May. Participants will be able to buy these breeders, winter them, and make mating nukes from them in order to have breeding stock for next year.

Moving Colonies to One Location (prior to day zero):

For many years, Bob has been providing all the hives and bees for conversion into starters, finishers, incubators, and mating nukes. For this year and future years, participants will bring their strongest two high colonies (donor hives) a week before day zero to a common bee yard. Don’t worry about your hives as you will get them back on day zero-1 with your queen, swarm control done, and ready to produce honey. Participants will bring as many hives as they wish to produce cells, bringing one hive for every 30 cells desired.

Donor hives are brought a week prior to day zero and placed in a breeder circle in groups of 4 to establish colony location and flight patterns. We want to get the hive settled.

Breeding and Grafting Preparation Day – One Day prior to Day Zero (0-1):

On this day, in good flying weather, two donor hives facing same direction in each four pack will be removed and in their place (in the middle) will be placed my equipment to create the starters. From the bottom up, the starters consist of a single bottom board, a queen excluder, a wet honey Dadant box, and a standard box that will contain 6 combs and 2 inner feeders with thin feed. The field bees will soon start populating this new starter. Meanwhile, the queens are found in the donor hives and stored on the comb where they are found and placed in a screened nuc box. Then, each donor hive gives one comb of open honey and one of pollen to the starter. Then, 60% of the nurse bees are shaken from the donor hives into the starter. All of the combs except for the one honey and pollen comb are put back into your hive. Two frames of foundation are placed in the top box of your hive to replace the donated comb and the queen is returned to the lower box. Your donor hive is screened and loaded for transport back to your yard.

In the end, the starter will have bees from two different colonies and two combs of honey and two combs of pollen. The remaining two comb spaces in the starter will be filled by grafting combs same day from my breeders. Also, on each pallet where there were four donor hives will now be two starters.

This year we will find the grafting combs in my master hives and next year we will find them in your hives. Your work and two frames per hive is the cost of your participation.

Grafting Day - Day Zero (0):

Three years ago I perfected my grafting system. I converted my honey house into a temperature and humidity controlled space that accommodated up to 6 grafters in comfort. You will need to bring a head lamp, two Chinese grafting tools, and glasses to see well. Magnification glasses or lenses are also helpful. I will teach you how to graft and help you improve your grafting. Also, there will be experienced grafters grafting so you are guaranteed a successful graft. I have had two people who have never grafted and after one "test and show" bar were able to graft 15 cells out of 15 cells consistently. Bob's wife Kay improved from 9 to 14 out of 15 very quickly!

The graft comb and grafted frames with 3 bars of 15 cells are stored and transported to and from the yard in heated and humidified boxes insuring success. Each grafter grafts only 3 bars of 15 cells from each comb to eliminate inbreeding. Frames are numbered and bars named so results of each grafter are accurate. When we distribute the mature cells, we take a maximum of 10 cells from each bar ensuring that cannot be more than 10 sisters.

Graft Day + 4 Days (0+4): Cells are ready to go into nukes in cell protectors at same time as nukes are being made.

Graft Day + 9 Days (0+9): All unused cells are caged and placed in frames that accommodate these cages. The virgin queens are born on day 10 or 11. They can be sold direct or mailed for mating in anyone's nukes. Also on this day, a virgin bank is created to store any excess caged virgins. Also, the starters are converted into mating nucs and can be sold. That is where pay for my involvement come: 1/3 of proven stock cells will be available to all beekeepers to rear they own new queen for wintering at reasonable cost.

Graft Day + 12 Days (0+12): On this day all nucs are checked to make sure the queen has emerged from her cell. If she has not, replace the cell with a caged virgin

Graft Day + 14 to 17 Days (0+14 - 17): By now cells and virgins must be used.

Graft Day + 17 Days (0+17) The virgins are ready to mate Watch for nice com sunny afternoon.

Graft Day + 24 Days (0+24) If there was nice weather they shod be mated and Laying.
But give her another week to prove it.

Graft Day + 38 Days (0+38) If not laying she is stale and its time to unite it with mated one.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PARTICIPATE:

Generally, we will work between 9 am and 1 pm on the breeding days (-1, 0, 4, 9). Also, not everyone will be required to help on all days. Further, about 2-3 hours of your time will be required to help prepare and clean up. Tasks will include: setting up and cleaning the honey house and equipment, washing queen cups and other small jobs. These 2-3 hours can be done at a time convenient to you.

Please fill out the following form indicating your interest and availability and send to Bill so he can plan the program. Send it by email to billruzicka@mitgone.com or by fax to 250-762-8156.

Name:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Number of Hives Supplied:	
Number of Cells Needed:	

DAY	Available Times	Notes
Saturday		
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		