

## Installing Package Bees

### Packaged Bees

Most beekeepers purchase their bees in what is called a package. Bees are sold by the pound in a package; the most common size is a 3-pound package of bees. Each pound has approximately 3,500 bees so in a 3-pound package of bees there is around 10,000 bees. You can usually pick up your package from a local supplier or through the mail. Make sure you order far enough in advance to assure there are packages available for delivery when you need them. You want your bees to arrive before the fruit trees are about to bloom so if you live in the northern states or Canada you want them to arrive in April or May. If you live in the southern state you want them to arrive around March or April.

### Receiving Your Bees

Once you receive your bees you want to make sure you get them home as soon as possible. They will be stressed, as they have been away from their home for several days with a limited amount of food and a strange queen. You want to get them into their new home as soon as possible. If the weather is below 40° F you may want to wait a day. If you have to wait, store your package in a cool, dark place like a basement or garage that has a temperature of 50-70°. You will need to feed them if you cannot place them into their new hive right away. Get a new, unused spray bottle and mix up one-third sugar to two-thirds water; that is one cup sugar mixed with two cups warm water. Spray the sugar water directly onto the bees through the



screen. Don't saturate them, just moisten as many bees as possible through both sides of the package. Do this at least a couple of times a day while in storage.

Your hive equipment should be ready for your bees before they arrive. The most common set up for a new hive is a hive stand, bottom board, hive body, inner cover and outer cover. The best time to install your bees is in the late afternoon or early evening because it helps your bees remain calm and they will settle in for the evening.

### Installing Your Bees

Put on your protective clothing and take off the inner and outer cover of the hive. Take out 4 frames from the hive body. Spray down the package of bees heavily with sugar water (a mixture of one part sugar to one part water). Pry off the package lid, remove the feeder can, find and remove the queen that is suspended in her cage and set her to the side. Shake the package of bees into the hive. If your bees were packaged 3 days or more before installation gently spray down the caged queen, lower her down into the hive and gently remove the screen and release her. Carefully observe the

queen so she doesn't fly away. If not use the standard release method by removing the cork from the candy plug of the queen cage and suspending the cage down from the frames, allow the bees to release the queen.

Carefully replace the 4 frames, the inner cover and outer cover. If there are still some strays in the package that the bees came in, just leave it next to the hive. They will leave the package for the hive. Entrance reducer should be in place utilizing the smallest opening. Provide the colony with at least one gallon sugar water or syrup. You will want to make sure you continue to feed sugar water or syrup until nectar is available in the field. Return to the hive in 4 to 7 days to inspect the hive and make sure the queen was accepted. 🐝

### QUICK TIPS

- **Packaged Bees** are sold by the pound. The most common size is a 3-pound package.
- **Spray Down** your package of bees with a sugar water mix of one part sugar to one part water before putting them into the hive.
- **Install Your Bees** in late afternoon or early evening.

