

# REMOVING SURPLUS HONEY : PRODUCTION OF SECTION HONEY

## Seasonal Notes for the Domestic Beekeeper

**T**HE methods most suited to the domestic beekeeper for the removal of his surplus crop of honey and the production of section honey are described in this article by R. Goddard, Apiary Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Tauranga.

**A** FINE, warm day should be chosen for preparing to take surplus honey and the honey should be examined to ensure that all is fully ripened, that is, all cells are completely capped over. The domestic beekeeper who has one or two hives will find that this operation can be carried out efficiently by using a bee brush. First, the outer frame should be removed from the super and adhering bees dislodged in front of the hive, then in quick succession each frame should be lifted out and brushed separately. Alternatively, by using a little smoke on the bees, the frames may be brushed while in the super on the hive. It is advisable to place an empty super near the hive stand to take the combs of honey which have been brushed free of bees.

When carrying out the above manipulations care should be taken to ensure that

1. The smoke is not excessive, as this taints the honey, and
2. The bee brush does not become clogged with honey, as this will kill some bees and anger others, resulting in excessive stinging.

### Bee Escape Boards

Beekeepers who are averse to brushing bees will find the Porter bee escape, when fitted into a flat, cleated board the same size as a super, an ideal way to remove surplus honey. The success of this operation depends on good equipment and the manner in which the beekeeper does the work. The escape should be examined to ensure that it is in good working order and is not blocked by dead bees, etc. Excessive burr comb, which may block the exit of bees, should be scraped off the top of the frames underneath the super to be removed. Above all, though it seems unimportant, place the escape board the right way up. Carry out this manipulation in the evening and by next morning the super of honey should be free of bees.



A super of finished sections ready for removal.

In districts where cold nights are experienced beekeepers prefer to use the Hodgson bee escape board, which consists of a Porter bee escape fitted into a gauze frame. This ventilated board allows the warm air to rise from the colony below and the honey above is thus kept warm. This type of escape is not a success if it is used on warm nights or is placed next to the brood nest, as the bees seldom leave the super of honey under these conditions because of the proximity of the main cluster below.

### Section Honey Production

Those domestic beekeepers who have not the equipment necessary to extract honey from the comb sometimes prefer to produce section or comb honey. Production of this type is not easy and good crops cannot be gained merely by piling supers upon the hive. Only the best and strongest of colonies should be used, as it is essential that the hive be "boiling over with bees." Although this condition may result in swarming, the risk must be taken.

Sometimes great difficulty is experienced in enticing bees into section frames, but the use of a bait consisting

of partly drawn comb usually helps to overcome this problem. However, if the hive is at the right strength and the super not given until the main flow has begun, the bees generally will work the sections. It is considered desirable to remove all sections from the super as soon as they are fully capped; otherwise they will become "travel-stained" and look most unattractive.

During the past few years there has been a shortage of section frames, and many beekeepers have resorted to the production of cut comb honey. This entails supering in the normal manner, but instead of extracting the honey the comb is cut into three equal sizes, which, when drained and wrapped in cellophane, form quite an attractive pack, provided new combs only are used. However, it is difficult to transport without damage and should be consumed quickly before the honey begins to granulate in the comb.

### Extracting Preparations

Domestic beekeepers who intend extracting their own crop should prepare their honey house for this operation. All unnecessary gear should be shifted and stored, and utensils should be sterilised thoroughly with boiling water. Ensure that all equipment is in good working order.

Supers of honey should not be kept for any length of time, especially in damp surroundings. Honey readily absorbs moisture, and if stored in a damp, heavy atmosphere, early fermentation will probably occur. A good rule to adopt is never take honey from the hives until extracting preparations have been completed.

