

# Package Bees

**T**HOUGH the use of package bees is not extensive in New Zealand, some beekeepers in southern districts find their use economical, and more interest generally is now being taken in methods of handling and introducing them. In this article D. W. A. Seal, Apiary Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Invercargill, describes a method for setting up package bees which is very simple, gives wholly satisfactory results, and eliminates the use of sugar syrup or spraying with water to quieten the bees before introduction. The method also largely eliminates robbing, drifting of bees, and possible loss of queens.

**I**N southern districts of New Zealand winters are much longer than in other parts of the country and the toll of bees is inclined to be high; in addition a far greater amount of winter stores is required. To winter an average colony well 60lb. to 80lb. of honey is needed in addition to about 20lb. of pollen. A dearth of pollen in spring is another hazard for southern beekeepers.

The use of package bees procured from North Auckland, where the season is much earlier, greatly minimises these winter problems in the south. Once the crop has been extracted the colonies may be killed and all combs and equipment stored over winter, thus saving at least 60lb. of honey per colony normally used for winter feeding, and reserving the combs of pollen for spring, when they are most needed. It also eliminates the need for periodical winter inspections of out apiaries or the possible risk of damage to colonies and equipment by high winds and storms.

Another point in favour of package bees is that they are a simple and sure method of establishing young queens each season.

## Past Methods

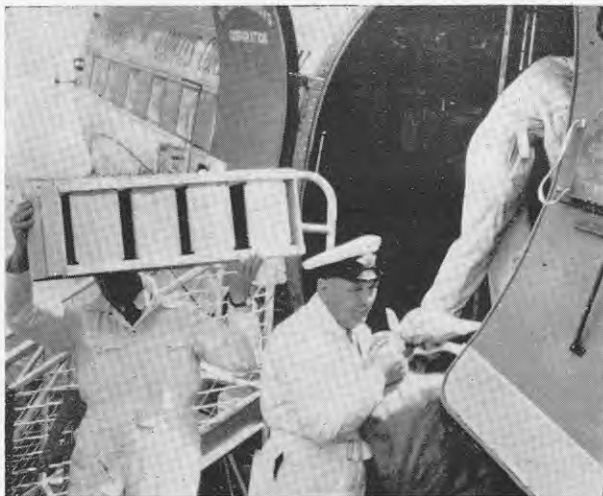
In the past, methods of setting up package bees have to some extent been rather complicated in addition to causing possible losses of queens and creating robbing where packages have been used to fill in winter losses in already established apiaries.

Southland beekeepers have found that a package 11in. x 10in. x 5½in. with wire gauze on the two sides and containing 2lb. of bees travels better than a package containing 3lb. of bees, and the risk of possible suffocation is minimised. Bees thus packaged in sets of four packages with a 2in. space between each package have travelled 900 miles by air and arrived in perfect condition.

Packages dispatched from Kaitaia, North Auckland, in the morning can be set up in their hives in Invercargill district the same evening.

## Establishing Package Bees

Mid-October is considered the best time to establish package bees in



A crate of four packages of bees being unloaded from an aeroplane.



Preparing the hive to establish package bees. Above—After the floor board has been set level the queen excluder is placed immediately on top. Below—The super of combs and stores has been placed above the excluder and the entrance plugged lightly with green grass. Three combs have been removed from the centre of the super to allow room to dump the bees from the packages.

