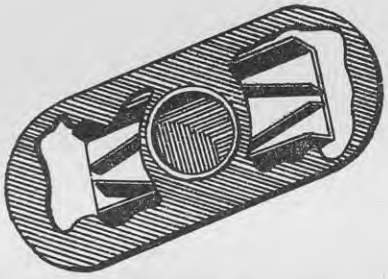
Use of Bee Escapes for Removal of Honey

BEE escapes have been used in the beekeeping industry for many years for the removal of honey from the hives, but do not appear to have been brought into general use. In this article J. E. Rodie, Apiary Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Hawera, explains how bee escapes can save time in handling of equipment and give other advantages.

THE Porter bee escape is a device which will allow bees to pass through a self-closing gap which is made up of two V-shaped flexible spring prongs that spread under the slightest pressure and allow the bees to pass through at the apex. After the bees pass through the springs the points fly back into position and prevent the bees from returning.

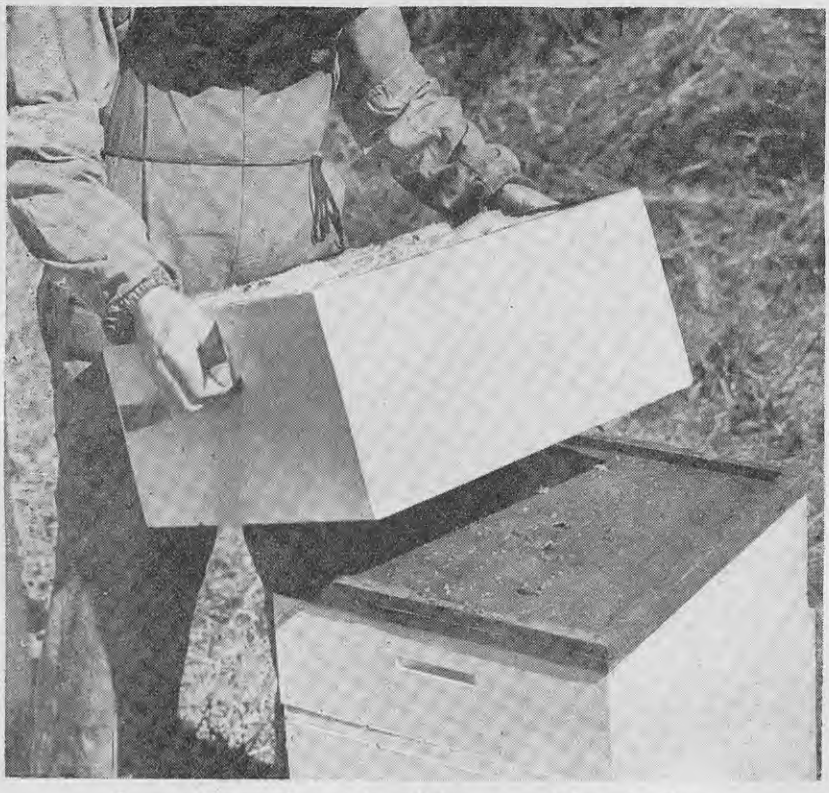


Double-end Porter bee escape.

Bee escapes are made with single and double ends and may be used singly, but usually two are mounted on a board. The board has the same measurements as the supers used on the hives and is usually made of some type of hardboard with narrow ⅜in. timber nailed on one side only, at the ends and sides, so that when the board is placed in position a bee space is provided on the upper side.

Advantages

Bee escapes have advantages over any other method of removing the honey crop. They are clean, do not impair the flavour of the honey, are quick in use, and cut down working hours and costs. When properly used they overcome the problem of flying bees in the honey house, which are usually taken in when honey is removed from hives by other methods.



Super of honey clear of bees being removed for extracting.

Method of placing escape board in position.

Disadvantages

Placing bee escapes on hives in out apiaries may involve the beekeeper in more travelling, though if apiaries are situated in a confined area extra milage can be practically eliminated, as will be explained later. If there is any brood whatsoever in the supers which are to be removed, the bees attending this brood will not pass down through the bee escape, which then becomes ineffective. This fault may be caused, however, by the beekeeper over-supering his hives, so that the brood nest is extended into the supers, or by adverse climatic conditions at critical periods after supers have been added to the hives, so that the queen has extra unnecessary top space in which she may lay eggs.

Good beekeeping practice—adding supers only as required to accommodate the bees and providing room for surplus honey only when a steady nectar flow is imminent or in progress—will keep the queen down in the brood nest area and overcome this fault.

Use of Bee Escapes

The usual practice is to place escapes on the hives in the evening or late afternoon of the day before the honey is removed for extracting. They may also be put on in the morning when most of the field bees have left the hive; either method appears to be satisfactory.

Extra travelling may be avoided when honey is removed from out apiaries by placing the escapes on hives on the furthest apiary first and using them again on the following day