

## **Bait Hive User Guide**

Thank you for your help in saving honey bees.

### **About Swarms**

When a colony of bees grows too big for the space they have, they decide to split and start a new colony. This happens to almost every colony every year. They are looking for an old tree with a large rotten hole in it and rarely find one. Only 20% of the swarms find a new home. If they settle in a space that's too small they can't build enough comb to store enough honey to make it through the winter. Most swarms happen in May and June but occasionally there can be a swarm July through September.

### **About Bait Hives**

Bait hives are boxes designed to attract swarming bees. Let's call them vacation homes! What we want is for the swarm to like the space enough to move in. Then the person monitoring the bait box calls a beekeeper who comes and moves the bees to a bigger and better permanent home. Your now empty bait hive is returned to you. The beekeeper can then help the bees survive.

### **Understanding Your Bait Hive**

Your bait hive has had lemongrass oil, a queen pheromone scent, sprayed in it. It also has empty frames for bees to attach the wax combs it builds. It's screwed tightly shut so that even if it falls over the bees won't come pouring out. There are tiny air holes for ventilation.

Bait hives only work if there are colonies of bees within a three mile radius of your location. Don't be disappointed if bees don't move into the new home. You are doing the right thing by putting up a bait hive and trying. Next year you might move it to a new location a few miles away or to a friend's house.

The bait box makes a great way for a family art project. Google "painted hives" to see amazing options. Stenciling works well, too. Also use your bait hive to tell people about honey bees. The Tillamook Beekeepers website is a great place for information on honey bees and the forage that helps bees the most. [www.tillamookbeekeepers.org](http://www.tillamookbeekeepers.org).

### **Setting up the Bait Hive – choosing the best site**

If possible, put your bait hive in a location that gets morning sun. If you have trees on your property setting it near trees is a plus especially if it gives them afternoon shade. Honey bees like to be up off the ground. The easiest thing to do is to place it on a couple of cinder blocks, a table, a tree stump, or the like. Depending on what model you purchased, it works beautifully to bungee cord the hive to the side of a tree at a comfortable height. Do not risk hurting

yourself by putting it up in a tree. Weight down the bait hive so that the wind does not blow it over.

### **Caring for your bait hive**

Bees are attracted to the smell of lemongrass oil. Putting a few drops of that at the entrance every few weeks will refresh the scent.

Yellowjackets live mostly in the ground. So they shouldn't be a problem. It's unlikely but should you see paper wasps going in, shut the entrance down for a few days.

Since swarms only happen between late April and September, take your bait hive indoors for the winter.

### **When a Swarm Moves In**

When a colony swarms, about five hundred scout bees go looking for the best place they can find. At first a few bees will fly into your bait hive and actually measure it! They'll decide whether they like it or not and go back to where the swarm is waiting and tell the other scouts to come check out what they found. So then more scouts will be seen flying in and out. This continues for about 24 hours (during daylight, of course). When all the scouts agree, the entire swarm will come and move in.

It is then that someone needs to come get the bees and move them to their new home. There is a phone number on the back of the hive you can call. We will find a beekeeper in your area who will remove the box, take it for a couple of days, and return the box to you. They will come to retrieve the box in the late evening when all of the foraging bees have returned home.

### **Suppose you decide to keep the bees**

It's possible that as you learn about honey bees you may want to keep your bees. Depending on the type box you purchased, your bait hive can be converted into a regular beehive. We suggest you join the Tillamook Beekeepers Association and take a training class. We'll be happy to help you get started.

### **If you have questions**

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