How to checkerboard a hive

Why

Checkerboarding is done in the honey supers *above* the brood nest for two reasons.

- If the "flow "is on to create space for more honey.
- To lower the swarm risks.

When

It is done in the early spring to discourage the swarm "impulse". Since there is no disturbance to the brood nest, many beekeepers like to do it as early as possible. In any case, it needs to be completed before the swarming season gets to a close and the expanding brood nest starts to contract.

Where

Checkerboarding is done in the two honey supers that are directly above the brood nest. The boxes may be of any size—but they should be the same size.

How

When the first honey super is filling, simply add another empty honey super and alternate full and empty frames in the pattern as explained.

Alternate frames of honey with frames of drawn empty comb.

In the **first super remove frames 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9** (which are all full of honey) and **replace with frames of empty drawn** comb.

In the **second super**, do the same but place honey frames and empty comb frames the other way around.

Why

Checkerboarding breaks up the solid band of honey of the top honey super above the brood nest. This band of honey signals the bees that winter preparations are complete and it's **time to swarm**. When the band is interrupted and more storage areas are created, the bees will **defer swarming** until the empty spaces are filled again.

Eventually, optimal swarming conditions pass and the colony may **not swarm at all.**

Variations

The original checkerboarding model used only empty drawn frames between the frames of honey—and the purists still do. Many beekeepers, however, have had good results using frames of undrawn foundation.

If a colony does not span the entire box, you can just checkerboard the middle frames, say 3 through 8, and leave the end frames alone.

Results

Done properly and at the right time, checkerboarding will:

Prevent or delay swarming

Increase hive population

Produce a larger crop of honey