

# Removing Honey Bees from a Building or Compost Bin - Cut Out

Andrew Wootton, Jan 2017

## Introduction

A “cut out” is really for more experienced beekeepers to tackle.

Sometimes the bee colony has established in an inaccessible place (eg high in a tree) and they more or less irretrievable. In typical building operations, it requires a beekeeper who is sufficiently motivated to do the cutout at the top of a ladder and requires juggling combs of dripping honey and bee brood one handed while being touched up by the occupants.

Make sure before you start that the householder knows there will be some building damage and that they not you are responsible for restitution.

The process is to remove parts of the building structure (eg weatherboards, eave linings) until the nest is exposed. Then remove each comb one at a time and strap the ones with brood into Langstroth frames with rubber bands (it's possible but very difficult to do this with top bar style frames using chicken wire – not recommended). Put them in a hive body and leave the flying bees (there will be a lot!) to find and return.



The bees are usually quite defensive at first as you are destroying their nest. Often towards the end they seem to get demoralized. But you should expect to get quite a few stings.

So it is often prudent to leave cutouts to the pest controllers who will nuke them. Sorry bees.

Don't do this too close to winter, the bees will need time to rebuild their nest and establish stores.

## Equipment

- Bee veil (preferably a suit, this can get stingy) and bee smoker.
- Gloves, rubber washing up gloves are a good idea. You will get a few ½ stings through them, but it is a very sticky business and will probably ruin your leather ones.
- Hive tool and a long carving knife to cut combs.
- Empty brood box, base and lid and an emlock or ratchet strap.
- Rubber bands to hold the comb and a complete set of empty frames (no foundation).
- Several buckets with lids for waste brood and honey comb (this one should be clean as you will crush and strain to retrieve honey).
- Appropriate building and demolition equipment to expose the nest (eg saws and crowbar, ladder and worktable, as necessary).
- A bee vac (modified vacuum cleaner) is a great help but not essential. There is lots of information on the Internet about making and using these.

## Procedure

Set up the empty hive on its base as close to the nest site as reasonably possible.

Use plenty of smoke, the bees are going to be defensive!

Dismantle building structure to expose the combs for removal.

Remove bees with bee vac if used and then cut out the combs one at a time.

Honey containing combs go in the bucket. They are too heavy to support in frames.

Brood combs are cut to fit into the frames and held in place with 2 or 3 elastic bands. Retain the vertical orientation. If you don't have a bee vac, try and keep the bees on the combs.

Place the brood frames in the brood box as you work.

Ensure all the combs are removed from the nest so there is no incentive for the bees to return there.

Shake bees from bee vac (if used) into hive.

Place the lid on the hive and leave the entrance open. Straggler bees should locate and return to the colony.

Close up after nightfall and take the hive to new location.

Check after a week for the presence of eggs (you saved the queen) or queen cells (you lost her and they are making a new one, in which case check back in another 3 weeks to ensure the new one is mated and laying).