

# Getting Started

## in Honeybees AND Native Bees

### General principles that apply to both:

- 1 Put simply, buy a hive from a beekeeper to get started. Ensure the bees are disease free, strong and housed in sound equipment.
- 2 Before acquiring bees, also acquire the knowledge necessary for managing bees.
  - Understand the biology and habits of the bees.
  - List the equipment required to house and manage the bees.
  - Talk to people experienced in bees.
  - Attend workshops, field days and meetings.
  - Google! There are amazing Australian sites loaded with great info that is relevant & informative.
  - Also explore some of the overseas sites - there are good inspirations on those as well.
- 3 Ensure you have the right facilities and resources that will satisfy the needs of the bees - suitable site and aspect, solid stand, good sun, closeness to water etc.
- 4 Start early in the season. Here are the general rules :
  - Aug - Dec In Spring, bees are active, nectar and pollen is abundant, activity is high.
  - Jan - May Wet weather does not favour bees, and resources are not as abundant in our area.
  - Jun - July Bees are very quiet. It's the time for creating and/or renovating your equipment.
- 5 Even after acquiring your bees, you should continue searching to expand your knowledge and enjoyment.
- 6 If you keep honey bees, they must be registered with DEEDI. Native bees do not need to be registered yet. Go to the DEEDI web site, and follow the links to bee registration.

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**Keeping bees becomes an attitude to life.**  
**You may own the hives, but you don't own the bees.**  
**Bees and humans have a symbiotic relationship, developed over the centuries.**  
**The benefits of this arrangement are received with gratitude and reciprocated with sacrifice of time, energy and finances.**

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Bees**

# GETTING STARTED WITH NATIVE BEES

## Stingless Bees

The obvious place to start if you want to be a native bee keeper and don't have a hive of your own is finding where to get some. There is a list of hive sellers on the Australian Native Bee Research Centre's website at [www.aussiebee.com.au](http://www.aussiebee.com.au). You should try to get your bees from as close to where you live as possible. It is the best way of ensuring your hive has the best chance of surviving your local conditions. You may also know someone who has a hive already and you could try to negotiate buying a split from their hive . Hives can be bought in boxes or in logs and what you go for depends on

what you intend to use them for. Hives in logs are generally cheaper and make a great garden feature if you want to use them solely for pollination in your yard. Boxed hives will cost more but will generally have the ability to be split when the hive is at full strength and also allows for the addition of a honey super so you can harvest some of the unique 'sugar bag' honey. It is worth looking over any old, dead trees which have fallen after a storm as you may be in luck and find a hive for free. If you come across a fallen hive, and it has not broken open, simply cut the log 500mm above and below the entrance and then seal the top and bottom of the log. If the log has busted open and exposed the nest, get as much of it into a box as you can. Start with the brood mass, then the pollen pots and lastly the honey pots. Do not transfer any leaking honey pots. If you want to transfer a log hive you may have to a box, and are not sure how to go about it, contact your local native bee keeper.



# Raising New Hives

by Athol Craig

## Guidelines

The best time to divide hives is during the swarming season - mid September to end December when the weather is warm and food plentiful.

In choosing the mother hive, look for the following characteristics :

- 1 Temperament - bees stay quietly on frames when being handled.
- 2 Production - produces brood and honey consistently.
- 3 Swarming - swarms seldom (once each year at the most).
- 4 Wintering - hive is strong in late August.
- 5 Size - Queen is large and active, bees large.
- 6 Colour - true to strain or breed.

Bees reproduce when one swarm divides into two swarms. Raising new hives uses the natural reproductive activity of the bees. The beekeeper must be familiar with the biology of bees.

Consider the drones. The new queen may mate with up to 8 drones which will influence their progeny in the new hive. Mating yards must be free of undesirable (and feral) bees.

## Dividing Hives

A strong double may be divided into :

- 1 A double and a single.
- 2 A double and a nucleus.
- 3 Two singles.

Leave the queen in one and place half of the brood, including eggs, in the other. Place the hives side by side or move one to another site.  
(6 km away).

## Nucleus Hives

**Method 1** - In a 4 frame nucleus put :

- 1 brood frame with eggs (covered in bees)
- 1 brood frame of capped pupae (covered in bees)
- 1 partly-filled honey frame (covered in bees)
- 1 frame with foundation only.

The bees will rear a queen which will be laying in 24 days.

**Method 2** - As above, but a queen in a cage is introduced. She will be laying in 4 days.

**Method 3** - Using a queen cell :

- 2 brood frames mostly capped pupae
- 1 partly filled honey frame
- 1 foundation.

Add one or more queen cells. If cells are from another hive, the nucleus must be queenless for 24 hours before the cell is added. This method can be used when queen cells are found in a good hive. Just put a frame containing cells in the nucleus, but leave some queen cells also in the mother hive.



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Photo shows a healthy frame with three capped queen cells.

Just to the left of them is a "dummy" queen cell.



## Hiving A Swarm

Swarms are a good method of increasing your apiary. Inspect them frequently to check their quality and be prepared to re-queen if necessary.

A swarm leaves the mother hive, settles nearby, searches for a suitable nest then sets off to the new site. So there is no time to lose.

### Prepare well :

- 1 A hive is needed (nucleus, 8-frame or 10-frame). It must be easy to seal. Always have these ready as the bees won't wait till you assemble them.
- 2 Have protective gear, smoker, secateurs, saw etc.
- 3 Carefully plan how to get the swarm into the hive. Each swarm will present its own challenge.
- 4 Remove enough frames to accommodate the swarm.
- 5 **Get the swarm into the hive!** Replace the frames and coax the bees into the hive.



The hive may be sealed and removed when most bees are in the hive or left till after dark to pick up. Remove to a suitable site. Check after 6 days for brood, health, and beetle. Place traps. It should build quickly so have hive components ready to add on.

## Building The Hive

In good seasons a new hive will increase rapidly. Be prepared to transfer to 10 frame boxes and double hives. A nucleus can progress to a double in 8 weeks after the new queen lays.

### Be aware of the time frame :

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Day 1      | Egg laid                                   |
| Day 3      | Larva hatches                              |
| Days 3-6   | Queen cells built (with open end)          |
| Day 8      | Queen cells capped                         |
| Day 8/10   | <b>Open hive and check for queen cells</b> |
| Day 16     | Queens emerge                              |
| Days 20-26 | New queen mates                            |
| Day 28     | Eggs laid by new queen                     |
| Day 30/32  | <b>Open hive and check for eggs</b>        |
| Day 50     | Progeny of new queen will emerge           |

**There should now be a rapid increase in population and time will tell if it is a good one.**

*If inexperienced, use gloves*

*Queen, surrounded by workers*



