

Common Terms Used in Discussions of Queen Rearing

Cell Builder – usually a queenless colony that is used week after week during the spring season for the serial production of queens. It must be regularly maintained by supplying it with frames of brood and adhering bees from queen right colonies.

Cell Starter – usually a queenless colony of bees that is made only for a temporary period (maybe just 1 week) for the purpose of starting to feed a set of queen cells during the first 24 hours of queen development. A good example of a cell starter is a swarm box (which will be shown to you today). *Queen cells started under queenless conditions have the highest acceptance.*

Cell Finisher – often a queenright colony used to finish the growth and capping of queen cells that were transferred to it from a cell starter. *Queens cells finished under queenright conditions are often the biggest queen cells* (especially if a crowded colony with good nutrition).

Cloake Queen Rearing Method – a method of queen rearing developed by Arthur Cloake of New Zealand. A cell starter and cell finisher are kept together as a tandem on a single colony. The trick is that a queen excluder and a divider are used to manipulate the queenless cell starting conditions and to then allow a queenright finisher by the simple removal of the divider. Audrey will demonstrate this to you today.

Drone Saturation – a technique of providing drone source colonies around a mating yard in an attempt to gain control of stock matings. A beekeeper can almost guarantee that his or her virgin queens will mate with only their chosen drone stock if they eliminate all unwanted drone sources before locating their own drone source colonies within a 1-mile radius around the mating yard.

Grafting – the transfer of a bipotent female bee larva (ca. 1 day old) from a worker brood cell of a donor colony into a queen cup that will be inserted into a cell builder or cell starter to produce a queen honey bee. Various tools can be used to lift the fragile larva (blades of grass, steel needles, Chinese grafting tools, etc.).

Mating Nuc – a small colony in which queen cells are emerged and from which the queens will fly to mate. Can be made with just 1 frame of capped brood with adhering bees, 1 frame of honey and 1 frame with only foundation.

Mating Yard – often a collection of mating nucs used to mate hundreds to thousands of queens in one location. To help queens find their mating nucs among all of the confusion, it is helpful to paint the mating nucs different colors or with different bold patterns. It is also a good idea to alternate entrances among neighboring nucs so that they do not all face the same direction.

Nuc for Increase – a small colony that is designed to grow through a season and overwinter successfully to become a honey producing colony during the following spring season. Usually made with at least 3 frames of brood with adhering bees, 1-2 frames of honey, and varying numbers of frames of foundation or empty comb.