

Bee Gym: Project Update July 2015

The Bee Gym has been live for a whole year now. Hundreds of you are trying out the idea, here are a few comments about the results so far:

"I think this whole design is a brilliant idea! No chemicals! Easy to put in! I've looked through the mesh floor with an old Ford Escort wing mirror to see the bees grooming, it's a heartwarming sight. As are the live tiny mites which have obviously been dislodged, crawling around on the board (but hampered by vaseline). Thanks a lot." Julia Doyle.

"Hi Stuart, I have to say that the device does appear to work - thank you. I normally have a low Varroa presence, and since I inserted the Bee Gym into my three hives at the beginning of April I have noted a very low / zero count of mites on my Varroa boards. I should add that two weeks ago I also applied Thymovar to see if this would affect the mite drop, and again today when I inspected there was a zero mite drop". Graham Pooley



Video showing how many living mites can come through when you are using the Bee Gym. Several beekeepers have found this startling as they normally see just a few live mites.



Over the winter I tried placing the Bee Gym on top of the brood frames. This led to a huge mite drop the next day, then a reassuring decline in mite drop numbers. It seems that the frame is best placed where the bees are most active. At present mine are just behind the hive entrance.



Bee Gym above brood frames. When I added the supers I moved the Bee Gym to the hive floor, just 1 cm back from the opening in the entrance block. This led to dozens of extra mites coming through. There was a small increase in pollen drop, but this has now returned to normal.

Bee Gym News

There are now hundreds of beekeepers trying out the Bee Gym in the UK. We are well spread out in general, but the highest concentration is in Kent! Some of your results are now being added to the Bee Gym website, please send in more data if you have it.

If any beekeepers have 2014 Bee Gyms and the bees have chewed off the plastic tapes, please get in touch so that I can arrange to refurbish them FOC. The 2015 frame is virtually the same but these parts are much tougher.

The cost of the Bee Gym has been an issue for some beekeepers, especially those with dozens of hives. Discounts are now available for larger orders of Bee Gyms. This is to encourage large scale take-up and experimentation with the idea. Please get in touch with your beekeeping association, as they will be able to buy in bulk and get the price down. I am trying to encourage as many people as possible to try the Bee Gym at the same time as keeping the project sustainable. We have become a crowd funding group, which is keeping the idea going on a grass roots level.

Self-assembly is an option which would make the frames much cheaper for larger orders. This was suggested after a talk I gave to the Blagdon Beekeepers Association.

I have now given talks to various beekeeping associations, these are worth doing because the Bee Gym idea does need a bit of time to explain, in terms of where it came from and how it works. One picture that helps to tell the story is this image of the first version of the device which was a Varroa trap. It knocked off 119 Varroa mites on the first day after fitting to a hive in North London. These were definitely 'kills' as the entrance box was located outside the hive. Away from 'natural' mite drop.

The first ever incarnation of the Bee Gym idea, the 'Varroa trap'



Below are the latest results from an ongoing Bee Gym Trial by Deryck Johnson of Saffron Walden Beekeepers. Although the change in the Bee Gym hives seems subtle at first, after 4 months they have boosted mite drop by at least 2.5 times and at most 14 times more than the other hives in the apiary.

Honeyhouse Varroa counts 2015

Date	Hive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	S1S2	
09-Jan		0	10	14	150	113	124	125	17			
21-Jan		0	1	0	3	4	21	38	4			
28-Jan		0	0	0	1	1	2	3	0			
12-Feb		1	0	2	3	1	2	0	0			
25-Feb		0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1			
11-Mar		0	0	1	2	4	X	4	0			
25-Mar		0	1	2	4	5	2	6	2			
08-Apr		0	1	1	2	2	X	7	0			
15-Apr		0	2	1	0	4	3	3	3			
22-Apr		2	1	0	5	0	2	7	0			
29-Apr		0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2			
06-May		0	0	2	0	0	2	1	3	0		
13-May		0	0	3	0	0	X	6	0	0		
20-May		1	4	3	0	4	1	5	4	0	0	
27-May		2	1	2	0	1	0	5	0	2	1	
03-Jun		1	1	1	2	0	1	3	1	0	0	
10-Jun		0	0	1	0	2	4	7	3	0	0	0
17-Jun		0	3	4	1	4	0	3	9	1	1	1
24-Jun		0	15	0	2	2	2	7	20	14	0	1

01-Jul	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	7	0	2	2
08-Jul	X	8	4	0	3	1	23	36	0	0	0
15-Jul	4	5	4	0	4	2	15	37	X	0	3
22-Jul	10	4	3	0	8	3	16	67	X	0	2

Hive 7

Beegym installed on 25th March

Bee Gym moved to hive entrance on 22nd July

Hive 8.

BG inserted 17 June

Moved down to floor 23 June

United with another on 9th June and reduced to one brood box on 17th June; all the brood being put in this one remaining box.

Please go to www.beegym.co.uk for more information

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