



Doug Anderson
(804) 501-8266

Keith White
(804) 690-9904

info@HoneyandtheHiveVA.com

www.HoneyandtheHiveVA.com

Using a Quilt/Feeder Box

The quilt/feeder box is a multi-purpose hive accessory that can be used year-round. It is used instead of an inner cover and has multiple uses and benefits, depending on the time of year.

From early Spring until late Fall while nighttime temperatures allow for the feeding of sugar syrup (generally above 55 degrees F), the quilt/feeder box can be used as a hive top feeder by placing one or more jar feeders on the screened openings in the quilt/feeder box and closing the hive by placing the telescoping cover on top of the quilt/feeder box. The bees will feed on the sugar syrup while remaining below the screen. This allows you to change/refill the jar feeders without opening the hive or exposing yourself to the feeding bees.



Feeding sugar syrup using a mason jar feeder in an 8-frame quilt/feeder box

Feeding in this “closed” condition also reduces the chances of creating a robbing situation (something that entry/Boardman feeders are known for). Even in cases where robbing bees are present in the area, they are often attracted to the side vents of the quilt/feeder box (they are attracted by the smell of the colony and its resources) and are somewhat distracted from the hive entrance.



Hives with quilt/feeder boxes installed and closed with telescoping lids

From late Fall through early Spring when nighttime temperatures no longer allow for the feeding of sugar syrup (generally below 55 degrees F), the quilt/feeder box can be used as an insulated attic above the colony by adding a two to three inch layer of wood chips to the box. Pine, cedar, or aspen pet bedding works well. Not only does this layer of “insulation” help retain heat in the colony below the quilt/feeder box, the warm, moist air generated by the colony will vent upwards through the wood chips. Any condensation that forms on the bottom of the telescoping cover that drips will be absorbed by the wood chip layer. (You will find that while using the wood chips in the quilt/feeder box, the top of the wood chips will feel damp but the chips nearest the colony remain dry.)



A 5-frame quilt/feeder box with a layer of pine shavings

And since the openings in the bottom of the quilt/feeder box are screened, most of the wood chip material stays in the quilt/feeder box. To prevent any small particles or dust

from falling through the screened openings, wood chip “pillows” can be used. These pillows also make it easier to remove the wood chips in the early Spring when you begin using the quilt/feeder box as a feeder.



An 8-frame quilt/feeder box with quilt pillows for insulation and moisture absorption

Whatever material you use for the insulating/moisture absorbing layer, make sure the side vents of the quilt/feeder box remain unobstructed. Air flow through these vents will allow the warm, moist air generated by the colony to exit the hive and keep the top of the insulating layer drier.

Another benefit of using quilt/feeder boxes is that you can take a quick peek into your colony without opening the hive. During Spring, Summer and Fall, you can get a quick sense of colony strength by observing bee numbers at the top of the hive. And during Fall and Winter, you can check on cluster size and/or location by looking through the screened openings while minimizing the colony’s exposure to the cold, outside air. You can also check on the status of supplemental food reserves (winter patties, candy boards, fondant, etc.).



Viewing bees through screened openings in quilt/feeder boxes