

# Installing a Langstroth Nuc into a Top Bar Hive

Installing a package of bees into a top bar hive (TBH) is pretty easy. You suspend the queen cage between two of the bars, and then shake the bees from the package in next to her. Make sure after a few days that the queen has been released from the cage and you're finished.

With a nuc, it is a bit more complicated. If nucs were sold as TBH nucs it would also be easy but unfortunately we're not there yet. Nucs are produced by bee breeders that almost exclusively use Lang equipment. So here is a method that I have developed. I will show how this works with a "dry run" without bees; and again with an actual nuc of bees.

First you will need three items. Two of them are easy, just sticks that are cut at the angle of your TBH to fit inside the hive.





If you set these the right distance apart, they will support the Lang frames from the nuc.





So installing the frames of your nuc, it would look like this,





Make sure the frames from the nuc are tight together in the centre of your TBH. Do NOT space them out evenly like this,



If you do, you will find that the bees will build extra comb between the frames, which will be very frustrating for you, not to mention a huge amount of wasted time, effort, wax, and energy on the part of the bees.



Up to this point I have made the assumption that your TBH is deep enough (10" or more) to accommodate the depth of the Lang frames. If this is not the case and you have a shallow TBH, then you will have to temporarily "jury-rig" a spacer of some sort to raise the frames so that they hang freely,





Once you have the nuc frames centred, you can then add top bars on both sides to fill in the space. The bees will start to build comb on these bars.





If your top bars are shorter than the 19" Lang frames, drill a hole in each end and temporarily stick a nail in to make them long enough so they don't fall down. The nails should be loose so you can easily pull them out later.





Three styles of top bars prepared with starter strips of natural beeswax foundation or with tongue depressor “popsicle” sticks.



I get my wax foundation sheets at Wicks and Wax whenever I make a trip to Vancouver, <http://www.wicksandwax.com/waxsheets.htm>. Or you can try the bee supply places such as Mann Lake, <http://www.mannlakeltd.com/beekeeping-supplies/category/page24.html>. The sticks are available at any dollar store.



So with top bars on both sides of the Lang frames, it should look like this:



If you are starting from scratch, you close up your hive at this point and leave it for a while, long enough for the bees to start building comb on the top bars. Check them once a week or so to see how they are coming along. Oh and of course you should be feeding them heavily as well so they can make all that wax they need to build.



..... After a while, when you start to see comb on the top bars like this:





You can move these bars to the front of your setup to assume their regular position in your hive,



Replace them with other new bars alongside the Lang frames so that the bees will keep making top bar comb for you.



Once you have some combs built on the top bars, you will now need the third piece of equipment, a queen excluder to fit your TBH.



It should be the same shape as your follower board if you TBH comes with one. This is a bit of tricky woodworking. It needs to fit snugly against the sides and along the bottom so that it is “queen tight” that is, the queen can not get past it. The worker bees, of course, fit through the excluder openings with no problem. Queen excluders come in metal and plastic. It is obviously easier to work with a plastic one, flexible and easy to cut with a pair of strong scissors. If the woodworking is too tricky, and you have an extra follower board, you can cut a hole in it and then staple a piece of excluder over the hole. The idea is that you will move the queen off the Lang frame that she is on, onto one of the new top bar combs that the bees have built and put that in FRONT of the excluder so that she can not get back to the Lang frames. If you are lucky, she may be on one of the top bar combs beside the Lang frames, in which case you can just lift it and position it in front of the excluder.



Now I'll go through the whole process again, this time with bees.

The hive set up with the sticks, frame distance apart. The back of the hive is to the right, the entrance is on the left end.





The Lang nuc close by,





It is a 4-frame nuc,





The frames of bees go into the TBH,





Finding the queen, long black abdomen,





Scooting her off onto a top bar comb. I had some old comb from last year so I could do this right away. If you are just starting, you would have to wait until the bees have built you some top bar comb to do this with.





Adding new top bars beside the Lang frames for the bees to build comb on.







The final set up. New top bars beside the Lang frames to be built by the bees. The queen in front of the excluder so she cannot get back to the Lang frames to lay eggs in them but must start laying eggs in the top bar combs in front of the excluder. Now you wait 21 days until all the young bees have emerged from the Lang frames. Then you can remove the frames and you are then completely.....TOP BAR !!!!!

So this is my first attempt at explaining this transfer method. I am sure that I have not thought of all the possible things that might arise as problems or questions. So please send me your thoughts, questions, and comments so that this article can improve to meet your needs. Thanks.