

5 Easy Tips to Stop a Hot Hive

1. Place Them in a Land Far, Far Away

To start out the process of dealing with a hot hive, you need to consider safety first. Begin by placing them as far away as you can from any residence. We live on 10 acres.

Unfortunately, half of our property is still wooded, and we let our neighbor keep her horses on our dry pasture.

So the farthest we could put them away from our house is about 2 acres back. Believe me, this isn't far enough in my opinion because a hot hive is really nothing to mess with.

With them being that distance away, we've still been stung working out in our garden, chased in from our berry patches, and harassed at our garage. When a hive becomes hot they let you know it.

As a matter of fact, we were working out in our garden a couple of days ago and my youngest was picking squash.

Well, these bees think they own my squash plants (though my squash are doing beautifully this year!) He was picking and three of our hot bees attacked him. There was no fly by. It was 3 pops in his chest. Thankfully, his shirt cost most of the stingers, but I was not a happy mama.

Then we were back out in our garden last night and my husband was picking green beans. Suddenly, a bee comes by and pops him right in the head. Naturally, this draws more bees, and he was chased from the garden to the house.

So trust when I say, if you have a hot hive get them away from you!

Also, be sure to always suit up when going through a hot hive as well. I know some people are brave and don't wear bee suits when working with bees. You will need to when working with a hot hive. It takes 1,000 stings to potentially kill a human with beestings.

If you are dealing with a hot hive, this could potentially be no problem for them at all. Please use great caution.

2. Down with the Queen

The next step to dealing with a hot hive is to kill the queen. It is usually her genetics that makes a hive hot.

So you'll want to put a stop to that genetics as quickly as possible. You'll do this by going through your hive and pulling the queen out.

Then you'll literally squash her, to end her life.

Now, your hive will quickly notice that they have no queen and start raising queen cells. You don't want this because then you are carrying on the same genetics.

So you'll have to be vigilant to go through your hive every few weeks and cut out those queen cells. Otherwise, the 'hot' genetics will keep spreading through your hive making beekeeping (and life with bees) less enjoyable.

Also, my husband used to laugh at me when I told him to requeen every year or at least every other year, but now he knows it is no joke.

In reality, as a queen gets older, she gets hateful.

3. Bust Them Up!

Once you've done away with the queen spreading those hot genetics, you'll need to bust up the hive. When you have a hive that is moody or irritable, it is good to take some of the stress off.

So you'll take this hive and spread them into multiple nucs.

Then you'll want to pull queen cells from other hives that have better genetics. If you, like us, raise a lot of bee hives, then you'll just go to some of your nicer hives and pull queen cells from there.

But if you only raise a single hive, then you could always purchase a new queen. You can usually choose between a mated queen or a virgin. The difference is a mated queen has already taken her mating flight. This means that she has stored up enough sperm for her lifetime and is now laying new eggs.

However, a virgin queen will still need to take her mating before she can begin laying new eggs. Which you choose will probably depend upon your budget and how big of a hurry you are to have a new queen laying new eggs with new genetics.

But I will say to use caution if purchasing a queen. You'll want to make sure her genetics are more desirable otherwise, you could end up with a queen breeding more poor genetics. So do your research.

When your major hive has been dispersed into multiple nucs with a new queen, they will eventually grow into more larger hives. Hopefully, they'll have better genetics and produce a gentler hive than what you had to deal with previously.

4. All Hail the Queen!

I mentioned above that when you bust up the hive you'll have to have a new queen per nuc. I said you could purchase a queen or create your own. If you choose to raise your own queen it is actually pretty simple once you learn the basics.

First, you'll need to locate a queen cell in one of your other hives. You'll notice it because of its shape. The drone cells are larger, the workers are just basic round cells, but a queen cell is an oblong shaped cell that protrudes from the comb. They are hard to miss.

Then you'll cut the cell from the comb and place it inside a new frame with the new hive. The hive will realize it is a queen cell and begin to nurture it. By the time she hatches the hive will have accepted her.

However, you need to be sure to kill off and remove any other queen cells that the nuc was otherwise raising because if two queens hatch at the same time, they fight to the death. The strongest queen will win.

Sadly, if you have a queen that is born with hot genetics, I dare say there is a good probability she will kill off your queen with the more desirable genetics. So remove any other queen cells just to be on the safe side.

Once the new queen hatches with better genetics, she will take her mating flight so she can get all of the sperm she needs for her lifetime.

Then she'll return home to lay eggs.

5. Twiddle Your Thumbs

Finally, you'll have to just wait for this new genetics to take over. A summer bee's life span is only a matter of weeks.

So you'll have to wait for this new queen's eggs to hatch and take over the hive while the bees with the old genetics die off. It usually takes around a month to begin noticing a difference in the hives.

In our case, we just killed off the queen of the hot hive a week ago. We noticed that the hot hive is beginning to calm down some, though they are still feisty.

But they are also in the process of raising their new queen. So we are hoping to see them progressively calm down over the next three weeks or so. It is all a waiting game in the beekeeping process.