

Using and Trialing the Bee Gym Slim and the Bee Gym

How to use the Bee Gym Slim

Results from 2019 indicate that using at least 3 Bee Gym Slims per hive is preferable.

With full size colonies place 3 or more Bee Gyms Slims on top of the brood frames. The Bee Gym Slim is 4.5mm high allowing it to fit into bee space (7 – 9mm) with enough room for the bees to pass over the frame. Ensure that there is no excessive comb on top of the brood frames or hanging from the frames above, otherwise the wax may block the bee's access to the grooming surfaces.

When the bees form their winter cluster move the Bee Gym Slims so that they are above the main concentration of bees. In spring move the Bee Gym Slims close to the new developing brood.

How to use the Bee Gym.

It is important to get the Bee Gym onto a busy part of the open mesh floor, this is probably 2 – 3cm back from the entrance.

Before inserting the Bee Gym check that the loops are tight and that the 10 'flippers' are located in their sockets. The 'wires' and small plastic flippers point upwards. Please be aware that the Bee Gym uses bee-sized engineering, this means that the parts are delicate.

To maintain the Bee Gym Slim and the Bee Gym soak them in a bucket of soda solution until the waxy deposits come off.

If the Bee Gym is reintroduced after a clean up, it boosts the mite fall again.

Open mesh floors are more effective if the inspection board is left out, unless actively monitoring mite fall. A large build up of debris on the board encourages wax moths and allows Varroa mites to climb back into the hive.

Trialing the Bee Gyms

Our previous tests have produced very positive results. In most hives the introduction of Bee Gyms greatly boosts the amount of mites coming through onto the sticky boards a few days after they are added. It seems to take two to three months to bring down the overall Varroa mite population.

In order to study this effect it is necessary to ascertain the 'natural' mite fall in the hive prior to the Bee Gyms being introduced. To do this, monitor the numbers of mites on the inspection boards, below the Varroa floor, for one or two weeks before putting the Bee Gyms in. Then count mite drop for a further 3 months. These counts could be every day, every few days or weekly, as long as it is possible to see the mites amongst the debris on the board. Once the Bee Gym or Bee Gym Slim is added there seems to be a particularly active period for about three months. Many of the mites coming through will be alive, so it is necessary to have something sticky like a very thin layer of Vaseline on the board, to keep them in place.

If you don't have time to do all these mite counts, it would still be of great value to the project if you could count the mite drop in your hive, before and after introduction of the Bee Gym, with occasional counts when you do have the time. Please send your results to: info@beegym.co.uk

Please check the Bee Gym blog for all the latest results: <http://beegymblog.blogspot.co.uk/>