

Top Bar hive instructions

Thank you for purchasing one of our Top Bar hives. Below you will find start up instructions and a brief background to help you get the most out of your hive.

Brief background of the Top Bar hive

This type of hive is used extensively in Africa and the Caribbean and is mostly believed to have come from Africa in the 1960s. However, its principles have been used for hundreds of years. Its simple design means it is popular in developing countries where manufacturing complex hives might not always be an option. Top Bar hives are horizontal boxes with bars placed across the hive for the bees to build comb from, rather than using frames and foundation.

Description

- Made from 20mm English cedar
- Includes 24 simple bar frames cut with a groove for a wax starter strip
- Comes with a mesh panel for removing debris, including a simple varroa drawer



How to set up your Top Bar hive with bees

Pre-setup note – it is a good idea to get your top bars ready by putting starter strips of wax on before you put your bees in the hive.

1. Find a flat, sheltered space for your hive to be situated, preferably protected from the wind.
2. If you have purchased a Top Bar hive stand, place this in position. If not, you will need to set up the hive off the floor, using bricks for example. Using a concrete slab may help with stability too.
3. Set the hive down facing the way you want your bees to fly out. If you don't have bees yet, put the roof on and leave for now, however you can still wax your top bars if you are hoping to catch a swarm. If you do have bees, continue to follow the instructions.
4. Place a dummy board about 10 frames across so that the hive appears smaller to the bees. This makes them feel at home and gives them less space to keep warm in the beginning. Over time you can move the dummy board out to give them more room.
5. Fill a Top Bar hive frame feeder with syrup and hang inside the hive, near the dummy board.
6. Remove the top bars near the entrance (hopefully now with wax starter strips) so you can get the bees into the hive. If introducing a package of bees, place the queen

in her queen cage inside the hive on the floor with the seal broken and candy exposed (some people prefer to hang her in the cage off a frame, particularly if it is cool when introducing her). If introducing a swarm, you won't be able to do this unless you find her and place her in a cage.

7. Gently tip your bees into the hive. If there are any stragglers left in the box you are tipping them out from, simply place it in front of the entrance to the hive and they should find their own way in once they can smell the queen inside.
8. Once the bees have filtered their way in, replace the top bars and then the roof. Leave the bees to settle in and draw some comb.

Notes and tips

- Feeding bees when moving them into a new hive with no comb will be greatly beneficial. Top bar hive frame feeders hang from the rebate inside the hive, just like the top bars themselves. The feeder should be filled with syrup with the wooden float in so that the bees have somewhere to stand whilst drinking without drowning.
- Top Bar hives are hard to manage with a standard hive tool, so make sure to get a Top Bar hive tool which will make inspecting frames a lot easier.