

No Cook Sugar Boards

Hopefully, all your hives are doing well currently. I had three hives that died already. All were due to losing their queens and then being robbed out. One was after a treatment of MAQS. She was my oldest at 3-year-old. She disappeared, and their attempts to raise a new queen were unsuccessful.

For the last 3 years I have been using sugar boards –

These are different than candy boards

Candy boards can use the same recipe, but the water is boiled, and the sugar added to it. It's then heated to 245 F. You then pour into the board or a form. If using a candy board then it is usually turned upside down. If you are using a blanket box on top, a vent hole is left in the center of the candy.

This is the sugar board that I use

Elevated $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " hardware cloth $\frac{1}{2}$ " off bottom

Front entrance

Placement

I remove the inner cover and place the board right over the cluster. This just makes sure that there is nothing impeding them from getting to it. I.E. inner cover

On top of that I have a blanket box.

Recipe

The basis for this recipe is 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of vinegar for every 5 lbs. of sugar. You will have to vary this depending on what size sugar you buy. 4 lbs. bags seem to be the new norm.

(Volunteer to Mix)

For this demonstration we will be using 10 lbs. of sugar, which will require 2 cups of water and 1 Tablespoon of white vinegar. The vinegar is to help prevent mold.

Once this is all mixed together, you want it to clump together when pressed.

You can also use a spray bottle to more evenly distribute the water over the sugar or to add a little more water if needed.

You will want to place a $\frac{1}{2}$ " spacer (this could be a cookie tray, magazines whatever works, and you have on hand) under the hardware cloth so I can press firmly without reducing the $\frac{1}{2}$ " space below

Lay parchment or wax paper over the hardware cloth. You don't want to leave any space between the paper and the walls of the box. Overlapping the paper up the sides is better. You can always cut it off later if you like.

Install vent opening blocks (2x4 blocks) to allow moisture to move up and into the blanket box. Location of these varies depending on who you talk to. I have seen the vents place in a variety of locations: all four corners, just in the back, center and back, just a center vent etc. I place mine in the front on either

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side of the upper entrance. My reasoning is so that cold air entering the hive does not have to cross the cluster.

Place the sugar mixture into the sugar board in an even layer and press in place.

Remove the vent spacer blocks. I general do not use the spacer blocks and just form the hole with the spatula.

Allow to dry 24 – 48 hours it will turn hard.

Remember to remove the paper over the vent holes prior to placing it on the hive.

There are quite a few variations of this recipe all over the internet adding ingredients such as: Honey-Bee-Healthy, essential oils, Honey, pollen etc.

I don't use any additional ingredients so after these boards come off in the spring, I gather the leftovers in a bucket and then convert them into 1 to 1 sugar water to feed the bees in spring.

You can use this same recipe and form this into other forms I.E. pie tins, glass pans etc. Use cooking spray on your forms to make it easier to remove. These can be placed directly on top of the frames. You will need to use a shim box to allow for the thickness of the sugar.

FYI: the cheapest place, that I found, to buy sugar (unless you want 100 lbs. bags) Walmart 25 lbs. bags for \$9.00 (that's .36 cents a pound)

Benefits

1. The sugar in the board absorbs moisture from the hive (one of my hive, had plenty of honey and didn't need a sugar board, the blanket box was soaked with moisture where the ones with a sugar board were only slightly damp)
2. You don't have to open the entire hive to check on how much the bees have eaten
3. You can always add additional sugar (cake) to the part of the board they have eaten
4. In February or March, you can also add a pollen patty in the area that they have already eaten or (with the ½" space) place directly on the top of the frames if they are not clustered over the top of the frames
5. Leftovers can be reused in the spring for sugar water

Trying to purchase a sugar board.

The major suppliers don't seem to offer this type of sugar boards. They do have candy boards though.

I have found them on-line

Beverlybees.com \$40 each plus shipping (bent up hardware cloth)

Found another one on ebay for \$34 each includes shipping (hardware cloth stapled to bottom of box)

Funnybugbees.com \$20 each plus shipping (bent up hardware cloth)