



Entrance Block and Hive Carrier Poles

When is a stick not a stick? For beekeepers, it is when it's either an entrance block or a hive carrying pole!

Entrance Block:

The standard entrance block sold by suppliers retails at around £4 each. A 2.1 metre length of 20 mm x 20 mm stripwood can be bought at most diy stores for around £5. From this you can get five national entrance blocks which works out at £1 per unit and is one of the easiest items to make yourself.

First, cut the stripwood to length, approximately 420 cm for national hive but check your entrance as there is quite a variation between hives and manufactures. From the centre point, mark about 80 mm either side (160 mm total). Mark 10 mm from the bottom and then connect all marks to form an 'entrance'. If you already have an entrance block, then use this for the template.

Cut out the marked area using a jigsaw and sand the edges smooth.

Repeat the process on the next side this time with a smaller entrance (70 mm total). This will give you both summer and winter entrance openings.

I have found that, when using the metal mouseguards, the bees are unable to get out of the end holes due to the sloping design of the entrance. They are then restricted to using just three or four holes in the mouseguard. If this is a problem, simple square off the entrance and they will have access through all of the holes.

You don't need to limit yourself to using the same style. Polyhive entrance blocks have the same summer entrance but a series of 10 mm holes for the winter entrance. This is a good defensive block but could cause problems with removing dead bees during winter.



Hive Carrier Poles:

When you have to move hives to another location, two people can easily do this over a short distance. However, the person at the back cannot see where they are putting their feet and this could lead to some interesting situations! It becomes more difficult if you have to carry over rough ground or any considerable distance.

One solution is to build a pair of hive carrying poles and transport the hive like a sedan chair (nothing is too good for our ladies). I used to strap the hive on top of two poles and this worked well enough until I noticed someone had submitted their version at the National Honey Show. Unfortunately I didn't take note of their name so I can't give them due credit, but this is my attempt to replicate their design to carry a National hive.

Equipment needed:

Two 2.4 mtr lengths of 2" x 2" carcass
Two 600 mm lengths of 10 mm threaded rods
Respective nuts or wing nuts

Method:

- Firstly, cut the carcass down to an appropriate length (I worked on 1.8 mtrs).
- Using a belt sander or power file, round off the ends to slightly longer than the width of your hand. Trust me, it is more comfortable to carry a heavy hive if the poles are rounded!
- From one of the carcass off-cuts, cut to 400 mm in length then cut down that length giving you two pieces 45mm x 20mm. These will become the supporting braces.
- Glue and screw these braces to the middle of the poles using three #5 x 40mm screws.
- Next, drill one 10 mm hole 350mm either side from the centre point of each pole. This will take the metal rods.
- Secure one end of the rods with a double nut superglued (or welded) in place. The other end will use a wing nut but I am trying to find a better style of securing as the current one is somewhat small. Make sure you use large washers or metal plate to prevent damage to the poles.



To use:

First, make sure the hive entrance is securely closed and the hive strapped to the floor. Two straps across in each direction is best.

Pass one rod through the poles and secure the other end with a large wing nut. Make sure the support braces are on the inside.

Place the poles either side of the hive with the braces within the 'rebated' sides of the hive. Thread the second metal rod through the poles and secure with the wing nut. Double check the tightness and security of all fixings before lifting! You may consider using another strap around the poles and hive but that may not be necessary.

It may sound complicated and seem too much but, if you are carrying for some distance, it's worth the effort.

