

DIY – Help for smokers

By Peter Coxon

Do you have a smoking problem – help is at hand.

Yet another manifestation of ‘sod’s law’ seems to be that smokers always go out just when you need them most. Or, more realistically the bees have been nice so far, so you’ve forgotten to pump the smoker for a while, and it has gone out!

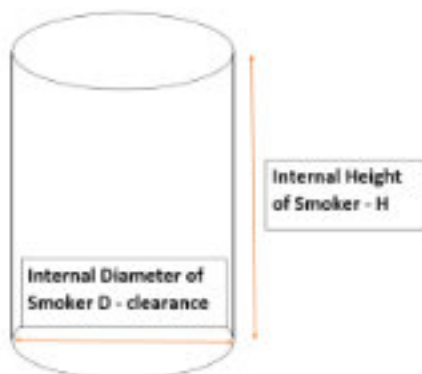
The bees, having noticed that you’ve forgotten about that dreaded weapon - ‘the smoker’- realise it’s ‘game-on’ and time to get you back for breaking up their home or for having rudely shaken them all of them off their nice frames to commit colony matricide by destroying a potential new queen.

Then you have to fuss about emptying the wretched smoker out and trying to get it going again in order to calm the bees who are by now having a field day, egging each other on with a cocktail of isopentyl acetate (IPA), butyl acetate, 1-hexanol, n-butanol, 1-octanol, hexyl acetate, octyl acetate, n-pentyl acetate, 2-nonanol and other alchemy, also known as the alarm pheromone, all in order to guide their pals to get your wrists, ankles or wherever else there is a weak spot in your defences.

Given that heat rises and therefore also fire propagates most efficiently in an upward direction it seemed to make sense to me to try to light a smoker from the bottom rather than reload it from the top and get burnt fingers or worse still melted nitrile / latex gloves on your fingers in the process; so, I made a simple drop in basket which can be loaded with fuel, lit from the bottom and then dropped into the smoker. When it goes out, it can just as easily be lifted out, and re-lit from the base with a blow torch ... of course ... none of this messing about with matches for me! ... 30 secs maximum.

Making such a basket is quite straightforward. In terms of material, it is a good way of using up one of those nasty stamped sheet metal queen excluders, should you have been sold one with a beginner’s kit, or any old varroa floor mesh you might have kicking around... or indeed any other mesh provided it is fairly open otherwise it will clog up with ash or tar. Stainless steel would be ideal and more durable ... but that unfortunately might involve spending money.

With your chosen mesh:



1. Cut a rectangle of width suitable for the internal height (H) of your smoker body ... 150-160mm is typical.

2. The length needs to be $\pi \times$ the internal diameter of your smoker. A typical value might be 95mm but take both these measurements from your own smoker just in case.

3. Now roll the rectangle into a cylinder and provide some overlap to join the ends and make a rigid cylinder. With an overlap of 10-20mm the outside diameter D of the cylinder will be reduced of course such that it fits neatly into the smoker itself. Don’t make it too big /snug otherwise tar and such like will glue it in place.



4. Using QE mesh which has 4.5mm holes, the ends can be conveniently joined together using 4mm pop rivets – see image

5. Cut a circle of the same mesh slightly smaller so that it fits in the cylinder and fasten in place with ...wire ...or whatever you can think of. I cut the end of the cylinder making it castellated, folding alternate tabs to provide something for the floor to rest against and then folding the others on top to hold it in place.

6. It is also useful to have a handle to lift it out when hot. I used an old bit of fencing wire made into a loop / semicircle with the ends folded over and fed through small holes in the cylinder and then folded over again to lock it in place. Obviously, it either needs to be small enough to fit inside the lid or it needs to fold down ... the latter being preferable in order to make filling it with fuel easier... and I have tried both.

BINGO!

7. Fill with fuel

(Continues on the next page)

8. Apply blow torch to the base



9. Drop into the smoker ... job done!



10. When it goes out ... and smokers always go out, simply lift out the basket and re-light from the base - 20 secs.

I noticed about that same time I first made one of these that Thorne sold such an item but being a meanie, I have continued to make my own. It seems now that Thorne or anyone else for that matter has stopped selling these ...unless you know differently? ... in which case probably easier to push the boat out ... buy one and stop all this messing about ... unless you a meanie like me. 