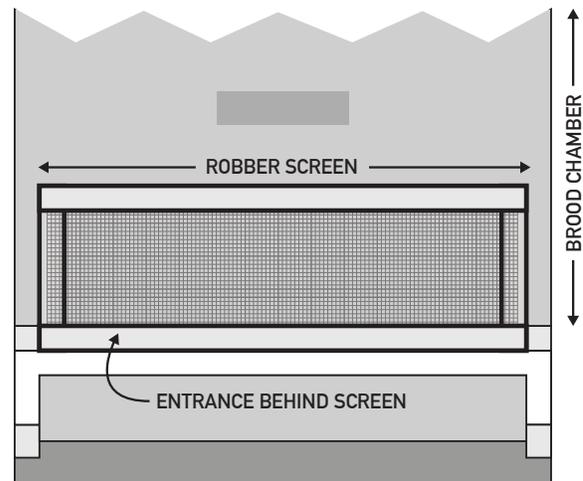


Robber Screens

“Robber Screens” are simple devices which can be affixed or held against the face of a colony to combat robbing behavior from honey bees and wasps. They can be installed proactively when robbing is a concern, or in response to robbing to help rescue a colony.

How Does It Work?

Honey bees from another colony and wasps use their senses (e.g. smell, sight) to enter foreign colonies. They sense the colony entrance behind the robber screen and fail to search beyond the immediate area for an opening, leaving them trapped outside. Your colony’s bees, on the other hand, learn to navigate the obstacle.



How to Install?

A robber screen should be installed at night, bees at home. Exiting bees reorient and begin to learn the obstacle. It may take a few days for the colony to grow accustomed. While learning some bees may spend time outside the screen, confused; the screen can be moved at night for reentry, though individual bees figure it out given some time. Note any foragers which leave without navigating the screen will struggle to re-enter the colony on return.

During a robbing event a robbing screen may be installed to aid in colony defense, but the colony’s own foragers, having never navigated the screen, will be trapped outside as well. Many will remain outside and can be allowed back in at night or when deemed safe.

More Information

It is best to take measures against robbing before it becomes a problem. Robbing screens are typically not needed for large colonies if precautions against robbing are taken (e.g. avoid entrance feeders, or indefensible access to honey stores—single popsicle sticks under the lid provide ventilation). At-risk colonies (e.g. small, struggling, queenless) are candidates for robber screens. Others include a relatively small colonies near a larger beekeeper or small colonies intermixed with large colonies in an apiary (especially if fed syrup).

At-risk colonies should have no additional entrance. Any exception should be well-defended (e.g. to the brood chamber). External access to honey stores or syrup welcomes robbing.

Robbers from a screened colony still struggle with another colony’s screen.

Robber screens can be used when rearing queens. Multiple beekeepers of scale have anecdotally observed no noticeable reduction in successfully mated queens. Screen installation should be completed prior to, not during, orienting and mating flights.

Build a Simple Robber Screen

To build a simple robber screen you need only:

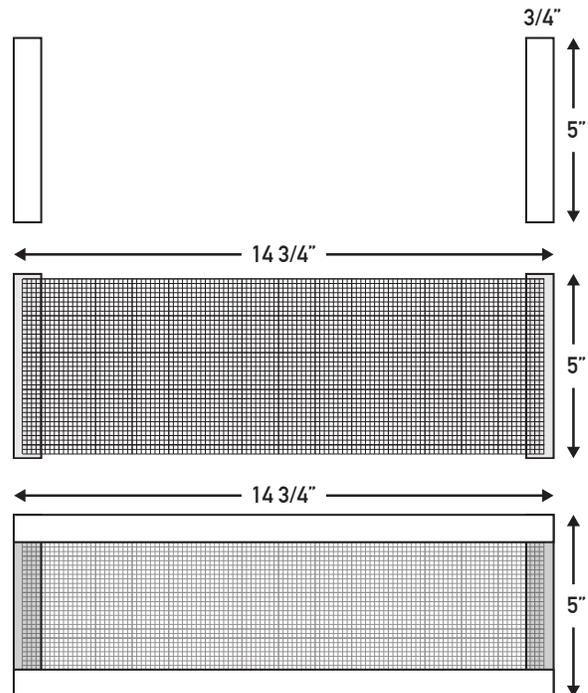
- #8 Hardware Cloth (1/8" openings)
- A length of wood 3/4" deep by 3/4" wide
- Fasteners (personal preference)

#8 hardware cloth is sold in downtown SLC at *The Honey Stop* by the foot, at *Sutherlands* by the roll, online, and at some hardware chains (typically not *Home Depot* or *Lowe's*). Wood can be purchased pre-cut or cut to length on a table saw (this is not a precision instrument).

Step 1: Cut 2x Side Bars

5" length*, 3/4" width, 3/4" depth*

They form the foundation of your robber screen, face the colony, and cover the outermost sides of the main colony entrance.



Step 2: Cut a length of #8 (1/8" openings)

hardware cloth into a piece slightly smaller than the final dimensions of your screen. Rest it over the side bars from step one. It will be covered in Step 3 and the resulting layers fastened.

Step 3: Cut 2x Face Bars

14 3/4" length*, 3/4" width, 1/2" depth*

(Length will be the width of your entrance.)

Rest these pieces over the screen cut to size in step 2 and ensure everything lines up.

Step 4: Fasten everything together. At each of the overlapping corners I apply some outdoor-rated wood glue and fasten with a pneumatic stapler (angles can be adjusted slightly with one staple in), and use a hand stapler for the screen. I then tap everything down with a hammer so clothing, fingers, and bees aren't snagged. You can use nails, screws, etc.

Step 5: Decide how your robber screen will adhere to the face of your colony.

Wooden legs can be affixed behind to hold inside the entrance. I use shelf pins (pictured), pressed into a holes drilled into the robber screen's inside bottom corners, as they can be rotated for a snug fit. Other options include nailing the robber screen to the hive body, or tying with rope or a bungee cord.



* Wood depth and screen height are adjustable; suggestions are those which seem to work well. For depth, 3/4" or more allows room for movement and some bearding. Wood length in Step 3 matches colony entrance width (typically 14 3/4" on a Langstroth).