



STRUCTURE OF A HIVE

A standard beehive consists of a bottom board, a brood chamber, a honey super, a lid that straps or clips to hold it all together and a colony of honey bees.

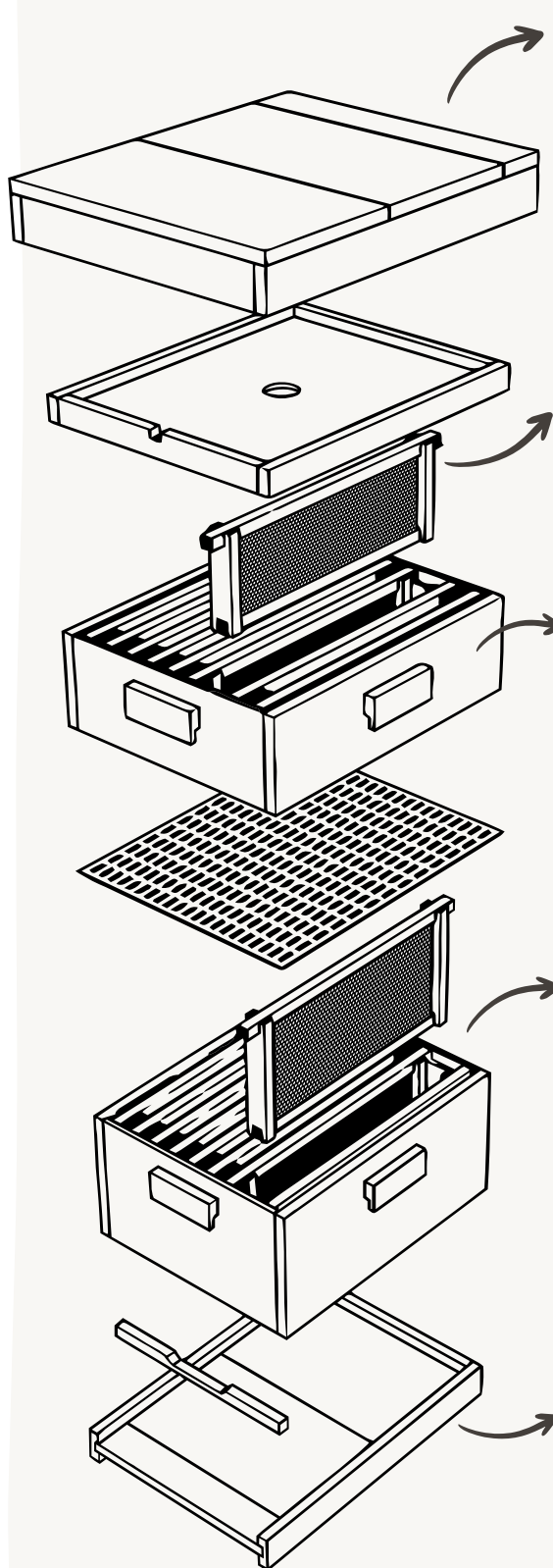


ABOUT THE BEEKEEPER

From the hive to the jar, beekeepers play an integral role in the quality and sustainability of Australian honey.

Modern hives are based on the 'Langstroth Hives' after Lorenzo Langstroth who discovered that honey bees fill spaces smaller than 6.4mm and larger than 9.5mm with propolis or wax. The space between these measurements is now known as 'bee space', the space bees use to move around the hive.

The hive is designed so the frames can be easily moved. The structure is created to prevent the honey bee from connecting the frames to one another with beeswax or propolis, or connecting the hanging frames to the outer walls of the hive.



LID

The lid seals the top of the hive from the weather. Beekeepers can use a ventilated or unventilated type of lid depending on the climate. Ventilated lids have holes drilled in them which are covered by bee-proof gauze.

FRAMES

The brood chamber and honey super are boxes which sit on top of each other and contain frames. Usually there are between eight and ten frames in each box. The frames are four thin pieces of wood put together to make a rectangle. They are placed side by side in the boxes, giving the honeybees a framework on which to build the honeycomb. Each frame has three or four strands of wire running from end to end to help support the honeycomb. Beekeepers put a wax or plastic foundation sheet in each frame to help the bees build the honeycomb.

HONEY SUPER

The honey supers are where the main honey action takes place! The worker bees store most of their honey in the supers which allows the beekeepers to take out the frames and collect the honey without disturbing the queen. The lid seals the hive to protect it from the weather. The honey supers are stacked on top of the brood chamber. The number of supers depends on the size of the colony and how much nectar is available for the bees to collect.

BROOD CHAMBER

The brood chamber is where the queen lives and lays her eggs. The brood chamber is the part of the hive containing eggs, larvae, and pupae. The brood chamber sits on top of the bottom board and is the bottom box of the hive. A queen excluder can be put on top of the brood chamber to prevent the queen from entering and laying eggs in the honey super. Worker bees are able to pass through the excluder, which is often a piece of wire mesh placed on top of the brood chamber as they have smaller bodies than the queen. Beekeepers rarely take honey from the brood chamber because the colony use it for their everyday food.

BOTTOM BOARD

Usually made of metal or wood to prevent water damage, the bottom board is the base of the beehive. Bees enter and leave the hive through a space at the front of the bottom board. Often there is a protruding piece of wood along the entrance to the hive to enable more bees to land at the hive during peak season.



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Centre for Bee Education is a collaboration between When Bee Foundation and Bee School by Beechworth Honey and provides a wealth of learning resources and tools on the important role bees and other pollinators play in the environment and food production systems.

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