

Advantages of Porthole Windows

I use these 2 inch diameter porthole windows on all boxes. They are normally closed by barrel bungs (wooden corks) and may be opened for feeding or inspections.

For feeding, the Beeologique bracket is used with a cypress entrance feeder.

- ❖ This provides the safety of an internal feeder with the ease of an external feeder.



For inspections, it is surprising what can be deduced through porthole windows.

- ❖ For a given box you can establish:

1. Whether it is unoccupied or occupied
2. Whether it contains bees or comb
3. The progress of comb building
4. Whether the comb is packed with stores
5. Whether the comb in a fill box is capped (with pen light)
6. The activity level of the bees is (often surprisingly high in winter)
7. A rough gauge of population in winter if the hive is small and mainly confined to one box
8. With empty bottom boxes a good view of the floor can be had (with a flash light) loads can be deduced from this alone (Varroa fall, position of fallen cappings indicating cluster position, presence of corpses, etc)

- ❖ The above may also be determined by separating and tilting the individual bee boxes.
- ❖ With experience, much of this can be guessed at without windows.
- ❖ I find the small portholes an effective, non-invasive and reassuring compromise.

Note: I have not found it necessary, but for prolonged inspections or viewing, an option is to cover these porthole windows with glass or screen in the inside of the bee boxes. Of course, this does not apply to boxes intended for feeding. Still, I am fairly well convinced that almost all that needs to be known about a colony, can be ascertained by observing the entrance.

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