

Betterbee: Good morning, Herman! Today we want to teach people about the new Hogg Halfcomb Frame, and we figured “Who better to tell us about it than the inventor?” So let’s begin with the design. Can you just describe how this new Hogg Frame works, and fits together?

Herman: The Hogg Halfcomb Frame will fit four Hogg cassettes in one side, four cassettes in the other, and then click together. It takes the place of two frames, or in my case, I take three out. (I like thicker combs to uncap on my regular frames.) Depending on how you run your frames, the Hogg Frame takes the place of either two or three frames, so the smaller beekeeper can make eight honeycombs for friends or family, and not lay out the bigger investments for a Ross Round or the full Hogg Halfcomb system.

Betterbee: Now, this Hogg Frame is a new product but it’s really still within the Hogg Halfcomb family, right? Are these cassettes different in any way from the ones that folks might be used to in the “classic” Hogg Halfcomb system?

Herman: Not at all. They’re exactly the same cassettes from the regular Hogg Halfcomb system. And I should mention that all Hogg cassettes are pre-waxed with capping beeswax. That gives us an edge over other, unwaxed comb honey systems.

Betterbee: So you're putting these frames in supers between regular, standard, extractable frames, and then just having the bees make a little bit of comb honey within that standard super. Is that right?

Herman: Correct. I have plenty of drawn comb because I've been in business for so long. So the bees go in the honey super, and they go right on that drawn comb, of course. But as the spring honey flow progresses they don't like that empty space in the middle, and they make eight nice honeycombs in the Hogg Frame. Now, I've never tried it surrounded by foundation, but it would be just the same. It might even be better if you had foundation. They might start more symmetrically on the Hogg Frame and the foundation. Either way, I'm confident that would work.

Betterbee: And you find that the bee space in your new design is just as precise as it is in the existing Hogg Halfcomb? That the bees aren't building crazy comb as they jump from natural, already-built drawn combs over into the Hogg Frame?

Herman: Right. That's why what I call the “fence” is incorporated in this frame. The front part, where the four slots are? That's the fence. That prevents them from drawing the frame opposite of it deep into the Hogg cassette. And when the bees are working on the comb honey, it stops them at the right place, so you get uniform capped comb.

Betterbee: So it's sort of simulating the opposing-frame surface?

Herman: Yes. The fence is important. I don't want to, you know, say anything negative about anybody, but other comb honey frame designs don't incorporate a fence, so you get very

un-uniform comb. The bees might get started on one side and draw it all the way over to the other side or something like that. Or they may draw the frame side of it all the way into the cassette and not even touch it. So the fence has real significance.

Betterbee: What a great way for someone to try making their first comb honey! So is this frame not very useful to someone who is already using the larger Hogg Halfcomb system?

Herman: Not at all. A lot of times, when you try to make your 40 Hogg combs [using the complete system], there's eight or so of them that the bees didn't quite finish. You can throw those in a Hogg Frame and put them back out there and get those eight finished in an extracting super. So it has value even if you already use the full Hogg system. I've already been selling frames to some of my colleagues so they can finish off cassettes that are not quite finished in the full system.

Betterbee: Oh, great! I find with the Hogg system that folks are used to, it always leaves those extras that I call the "mother-in-law combs". (It's not fully capped, it's not ready, so it's not something you're going to try to sell to a customer. So maybe you'll give them to somebody as a gift, but it's not a great gift, so you don't give it to your best friend, maybe you give it to your mother-in-law.) But now I can turn those into saleable combs by just waiting for the next honey flow and popping those into a Hogg Frame and throwing it in the middle of an extracting super?

Herman: Yeah, so it has some value in that area too.

Betterbee: Great. So this is useful for an established comb honey producer who knows all about using the Hogg system. But you also think it's a good way someone can test the waters for making their first comb honey?

Herman: Absolutely. It's a very affordable way to see if they want to continue to try to make comb honey. A common problem that we've got is folks will buy the Ross Round system, or a Hogg Halfcomb system, or a comb honey super with thin foundation, but then they struggle to manage the bees to actually make comb honey. It's a big task for bees to draw a whole Hogg super of comb and then fill it up during a flow. Now a newer beekeeper isn't going to have to be doing quite as much very technical beekeeping if they just want to get eight combs, eight cassettes drawn out in a single frame.

Betterbee: Herman, while I've got you here on the record, can you just give a summary of your credentials as a comb honey producer?

Herman: Oh, I don't like bragging about myself.

Betterbee: I know, that's why I asked! How many years have you been making comb honey and selling comb honey? And, if you're comfortable, how many Hogg cassettes did you sell last year?

Herman: Well, we produce about 4,000 a year. But that varies of course with honey flow. You're too young to know Richard Taylor, I would think. He's deceased many years. He was my mentor 40 years ago. He was writing and he talked about comb honey constantly, and he was such a good writer, so I decided to do it. And as time went on, I met John Hogg and I liked this system. So we make lots of comb honey, but effort must be put into it. It's not just throwing on a super. People can learn to do it well, they just have to learn and recognize that it's going to be a slightly different art form than just asking the bees to fill a normal super for you.

Herman and Betterbee have made a one-page handout that explains the basics of managing bees to get them to make comb honey, linked [here](#). Another important resource is Herman's [YouTube video](#) on the Modified Juniper Hill Split (also known as the Danenhower Split).

Betterbee: Let me ask a more general question. Why did you come up with this design? What drove you to creating these new frame units?

Herman: Well, I was visiting another beekeeper, and he showed me there's nothing new under the sun. He showed me an old frame. He had a whole pile of old junk he got out of a barn. There was a frame made up with the basswood sections from a hundred years ago. And you could make eight basswood sections and put it in the middle of an extracting super. So somebody thought about this a hundred or more years ago. He showed that to me and he encouraged me to do this. That was the start of it all. Seeing the way it had been done ages ago, that's often the way. The best beekeeping techniques get inspiration from what past beekeepers did successfully. And I think we tend to forget things so easily. It's such a weird tribe of people: I have my mentor, and he had his mentor... and if those mentors didn't know how to do something, then now I have no idea how to do it. So I think there's a lot of rediscovery that can be done profitably in beekeeping.

Betterbee: Is there a word that you use for that space at the bottom of the medium Hogg Frames? That little half-inch of dead space, dummy space?

Herman: The Hogg Halfcomb really fits perfect in a shallow frame. But we've got to support beekeepers with medium depth supers too. I didn't really give that bottom part a name. It just prevents the bees from putting burr comb from the bottom of the Hogg Frame to the top bars of the one below it in a medium super.

Betterbee: So it's just a "bee space occupier"?

Herman: Yeah, basically.

Betterbee: How interesting. You just taught me that the Hogg fits perfectly in a shallow super. That's something I didn't know!

Herman: It really does. The top bar, the bottom bar are all the exact right thickness. There's no buffer there. I hear that shallow supers are picking up in sales. That's good. Because I'm an old

man. I'm converting my system over to shallows. And there's so many women beekeepers, not to insult them, but they generally don't have the same upper body strength as men. So the shallow has its place, I think. But this frame in the medium works just perfect too. It works just as well.

Betterbee: I absolutely agree. I have a bad back. I'm thrilled for any option I get to use a shallow super instead of a medium or even worse, a deep super!

Herman: Right.

Betterbee: So these sell as two half-frames, that hold 4 Halfcomb cassettes each, and the half-frames click together to make the one Hogg Frame, is that right?

Herman: Yeah. The frames are clicked together. I taped the end bars together. That isn't necessary, but I didn't want them falling apart when the people get them out of the box. That little bit of tape really holds it together nicely.

Betterbee: And, and you said that's more concerned with getting it out of the box and putting it into the super. Once the bees are there, they're going to be propolizing and sticking stuff so that you're not going to have the two half-frames popping apart. Anything else you want to share?

Herman: I don't know how important it is, but some people have bought them from me and they pry the top bar loose and just try to bend it right down and they break the pins off at the bottom. So when you split this frame open, encourage folks to go around and get it a 16th of an inch broke free on all four corners. Then it all just falls apart. If you just break it open from the top and not the bottom, then you can break the pins. Don't open it like a book, you know, separate the two halves and then take it apart. I just go around with a dull knife and, and as you get it a 16th away on all four corners, it falls apart.

Betterbee: Herman, I've got one last question that I suspect people will have, which is, I'm looking at this and you're describing putting a single Hogg Frame in the middle of a bunch of extractable combs. But that naturally makes me think, well, could I put two Hogg Frames in? Could I put three Hogg Frames in? How many Hogg frames do you think could be put into a super and still get good comb honey out of it?

Herman: Well, certainly, you can put in as many as you would like to try. I have complete supers with only these frames in, that we experimented with and they work well. The entire super is basically the Hogg Halfcomb system. Before I make any kind of sales pitch on that, I'm going to put in a lot of time this coming spring testing that method. And I almost think it could possibly replace the existing full Halfcomb system. That super for the Hogg Halfcomb system is a special super with corner tins, follower boards. In the future, I mean, I'm not ready to promote this just now, but the future could be a shallow super with just these frames in it. I was very successful with a whole shallow super of these frames. I think it's going to work fine, but I don't like to sell or promote something until I've done it myself.

Betterbee: I think people appreciate that when a new product comes out, somebody's not there saying it can do this, and that, and this, and that, you know: "Give me all your money and buy the thing." But you're saying: "No, I'm a comb honey producer myself. And I'm going to make sure that I know what I'm talking about."

Herman: Right. And maybe other people experiment and give me feedback too, and that's all good.

Betterbee: Okay. So we can tease that idea, but we won't push it yet. We can say if folks want to try it, they're more than welcome to buy multiple frames and try it in their hives while you're doing your own testing, and see what results they get and report back to us. But for now we encourage most beekeepers to use just one in a super.

Herman: Sounds good.

Betterbee: Herman, thank you very much for sharing all of this. This has been very informative, and a lot of fun. I hope beekeepers will enjoy hearing you describe this new frame in your own words.

Herman: Thank you. And I hope people enjoy trying out these new Hogg Frames.