



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

December 2003  
Number 571

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The Federation, its Council and its Officers cannot be held responsible for  
the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.

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## Future Events

26 <sup>th</sup> April 2004	Spring convention & Trade Fair Stoneleigh	
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**Reminder: - There will not be a January edition of the newsletter**

## In the Apiary - December

**THIS MONTH** -This is the time of the year for minimal effort in the apiary and maximum in the shed and the armchair. The occasional visit to the apiary is in order but minimise the disturbance to the bees. A check on the entrance (few dead bees) and a sniff at the feed hole (warm, sweet smell) is all that is needed.

-There is, of course, plenty of work to do in the shed, getting everything ready for next year. If you must have New-year resolutions, let 2004's be "Have everything ready in good time".

-Plan improvements. Try something new next year; - sell a bit of your honey, try a little queen breeding, change to a more practical hive, get some new frames into your brood boxes. It's going to be just as good a year in 2004, so take advantage of it. There are plenty of books in your Association library to tell you how.

-Relax and enjoy a rest before they all start flying again. It'll all happen sooner than you think.

**MAIN TOPIC Hive types.** I'm grateful to Richard Miles for helping me up onto my favourite hobbyhorse for this, my last (cries of "thank god for that" from all parts of the house), main topic. I hope (forlornly) that this will promote a bit of controversy. Richard is entitled to have more than me raving at him.

I've seen too many beginners go to twelve (or so) hives this quickly, get caught out by a bad swarming year, and give up in confusion. So my first suggestion is NOT to expand in 2004. Get really comfortable with what you have now. At the most, shift half of your hives to an out-apiary and get some practise with that. You see, your big problem now is not what hive type to operate, it's learning how to fit your beekeeping in with the legitimate demands of your family, employment and home (in that order). In my experience 20 hives are all you will EVER be able to accommodate under these terms -unless your work gives you substantial free time during the day (you aren't an airline pilot, are you?).

If the seasons continue like the last few, one of your first problems is going to be what to do with your honey crop. Your wife won't tolerate you extracting 40 supers in the kitchen (mine wouldn't tolerate 4 -thirty years ago). After that decide how are you going to get rid 1000lbs of honey. And then the wax..... ..

try operating the rule this year's profit pays for next year's improvements. This will keep your expansion under control. Your ultimate aim is for your profits to buy any beekeeping materials you want AND to pay for the family holiday. Anything more than that takes you into the area of making your living from the craft. YOU NEED to have spent some serious working time with a professional beekeeper before you even consider taking such a dangerous leap in the dark. Professional beekeepers are very special types of people, AND SO ARE THEIR WIVES.

But you are entitled to an answer to your original question. First, think of the long term, much later when you are dead and gone your successors are going to have to sell your equipment. Sooner, if you go allergic, you will have to get rid of it yourself. The best deals are to be had with the most popular hive type. In other words the National. In the meantime you will be lugging hives around the country. The modified National is still the easiest to get to grips with. You will also be extracting from time to time. Short lugged frames are much less easy to grip when full with honey or brood. Smith, commercial and Dadants are all for professionals, with professional handling gear. That leaves us with WBC, which you will have ruled out already, Langstroth, which has too small a brood chamber and the modified National. So now we have the National with double, one and a half or 14 x 12 brood chambers.

If you go for double brood chambers they will be a beast to lug around and will only fill up with solid ivy honey in years like 2003 (becoming regular, wouldn't you say?). With one and a halves you can easily check for queen cells since most (but by no means all) are produced between the two chambers. But that's the only good thing about them. This leaves us with 14 x 12s to which I changed about ten years ago, when I had about 12 hives. With a bit of practice you can do a FULL check on a 14 x 12 in five minutes. You can also run 14 x 12 frames in one and a halves for a while.

Finally, when you get to my age, the change to Dartington, for your back's sake, is straightforward.

Since all other equipment is compatible I'd suggest you run half of your hives in one and a half and the rest on 14 x 12 until you make up your own mind.

Well, that's my last blast. May I say goodbye and wish you all a very happy Christmas and a cracking beekeeping year in 2004.

Garulus

## **Berkshire Federation Show Report 2003**

We were pleased to have some keen novices entering the show this year, which helped to retain the number of entries into the show. Generally entries were down due to several keen exhibitors from past years no longer entering the show. Old age and lack of time were the prime reasons, for the honey was plentiful this year. The standard of exhibits could have been better with more attention given to - making sure jars were well filled - free from froth - bee's legs - hairs, etc. Creamed honey needs to be bottled in advance so that it resets by "show day". We were pleased to have support from our South Chilterns friends both in the show and at the lectures. Thank you all for entering.

Just a little note of interest. I travel far and wide judging honey shows and this last weekend I was at Pinner in Middlesex. In the dark class, I came across some honey with a little heather content. Later enquiries revealed that it had come from hives in London Regents Park. The exhibitor concerned has five hives in the park where there are beds of heathers!

Hazel Blackburn (Show Secretary)

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: - Mr. Ian Homer.

Fax/Telephone number: 01308 482 161

South Eastern Region: - Mr. Alan Byham

Fax/Telephone number: 020 8571 6450

## FOULBROOD October 10<sup>th</sup> 2003

Number of infected apiaries in 10km squares  
[Number in brackets ( ) = Number of infected colonies]

SU29 Buscot	SU39 Stanford in the Vale	SU49 West Abingdon	SU59 Dorchester <b>A 2:2</b> <b>E 1:1</b>	SU69 Benson	SU79 Stokenchurch	SU89 High Wycombe	SU99 Amersham	TQ09 Rickmansworth
SU28 Bishopstone	SU38 Letcombe Regis	SU48 East Wantage	SU58 Blewbury	SU68 East Wallingford <b>E 1:2</b>	SU78 Henley on Thames <b>E 3:5</b>	SU88 Marlow	SU98 North Slough	TQ08 Uxbridge
SU27 Aldbourne	SU37 Lambourn	SU47 Chieveley	SU57 Yattendon	SU67 Pangbourne	SU77 Reading	SU87 White Waltham	SU97 Windsor <b>E 2:6</b>	TQ07 Staines
SU26 Great Bedwyn	SU36 Inkpen	SU46 Newbury	SU56 Thatcham	SU66 Burghfield Common	SU76 Shinfield	SU86 Crowthorne <b>E 1:1</b>	SU96 Ascot	TQ06 Weybridge
SU25 Ludgershall	SU35 Hurstbourne Tarrant	SU45 Litchfield	SU55 Kingsclere	SU65 Basingstoke	SU75 Hook	SU85 Farnborough	SU95 West Guildford <b>E 2:2</b>	TQ05

8.10. 02

### READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On the 9th of October Reading Association had the first of what we hope will be an occasional regular 'forum' to discuss points and problems raised by members. The topics were well discussed to the extent that we dealt with three headings only. Any interested party who wishes to start a discussion of a beekeeping topic will be welcome at future forums, wise heads will be as welcome as querulous (or strident!) enquires: Please watch this space for the next forum date.

**Diary date** – The Reading BKA annual dinner is booked for Friday 23rd January 2004  
Venue as last year at The Maltsters Arms, Rotherfield Greys, Nr. Henley  
Menu included with this newsletter Price £16.00 p/person

For our **11th December** meeting at the Caversham Heights Methodist - The speaker will be John Hamer, from Blackhorse Apiaries Woking, John was booked for December last year, but had to cancel at short notice. We are therefore hoping that he will be able to give us his talk on "Other Ways of Keeping Bees". You may remember John as the highly innovative beekeeper and honey producer who demonstrated his techniques with comb honey and gave us that superb talk on honey extraction using a spin dryer and presenting honey for sale - so don't miss this talk (together with the mince pies)

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, 114 Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading RG6 7LU Tel. 0118 966 5358

**Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.**

Regrettably, I am not able to report personally on the recent Federation and Society Honey shows, as due to unforeseen circumstances whilst on holiday, we were unable to return in time. However, I am sure that those who did attend had an entertaining day/evening and will return with enthusiasm next year.

The committee would like to extend their sincere thanks to Bernhard for organising our Honey Show again this year, though I understand that in spite of his valiant efforts, there was a significantly-reduced number of entries. Your comments and/or suggestions have been requested for ideas to revitalise the event and it is expected that this will have been discussed at the AGM in November. If you were not able to be there, your ideas will still be useful, so please pass them on to our Secretary, Michael Sheasby – his number is now included below.

Harry Peace is presenting the annual video evening this month; those of us who have seen his videos in the past will be looking forward to it, as it should be another really entertaining evening. Do please join us on Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December at 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor. Afterwards, we will be able to enjoy a glass of wine and mince pie.

The library is now available at all meetings and there are still a number of surplus library books that will be on sale.

As the Annual Dinner was such a success when it moved to January this year, we have booked the Aurora Garden Hotel for the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2004. Your booking form and menu were sent out with the October newsletter, so by now it should have been returned to Don Church, the organiser. If you have not sent them in yet, don't delay, please return them as soon as possible.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson                      Burnham (01628) 664091  
Secretary:      Michael Sheasby      Farnham Common (01753) 642656

**WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

**Report on October meeting**

Norman Hughes gave us a very interesting and informative talk on queen rearing in a single hive. A useful handout that detailed the necessary equipment and the timetable for the whole process accompanied the talk. It seems the Basingstoke group have had considerable success using this method and have achieved up to 85% success rate. Further details are available at their web site: <http://www.basingstoke-beekeepers.org.uk>. Norman also provided advance notice of work that Vita Europe has been undertaking in the development of home diagnostic kits for AFB and EFB.

**December meeting**

Our Christmas meeting will be held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December and will feature a talk by Sandra Napper entitled 'Cooking with Honey'. Seasonal refreshments will be provided after this mouth-watering presentation.

**Rosemary's Book of the Month: - Oilseed Rape and Bees by Allan Calder.**

This little book was written in 1986 when oil-seed rape was beginning to take off as a major agricultural crop in this country. Beekeepers, who for generations expected the forage pattern to follow the old path from willow through to clover, leading to extraction later in the year, began to find themselves confronted with a huge bonanza of forage early in the season which the bees lapped up.

This led to early strengthening of their colonies and a generous supply of honey in the late spring. Wonderful! Nevertheless, they were a bit dismayed when they found that rape honey crystallises faster than the speed of light, which meant they had to extract in May as well as August. Calder goes into interesting detail about how the rape plant has been developed through research - and we can suppose that improvements and modifications of the chemistry of the plant are still being investigated. He shows the advantages it brings to our farmers and to our economy in general.

He also points to the downside of the huge fields that seem to be needed for profitable rape growing - "In many areas apiarists are obliged, willy-nilly, to take into account a yearly input of rape nectar into the hives simply because the rape is all about them. Modern, large-scale agriculture has often so changed the face of the countryside that no other major nectar source is left. . . . Many large-scale apiarists have re-organised their yearly sequence of operations to take advantage of the two major resources, rape and heather."

The book gives advice on how to handle rape honey and says something we all know by now: extract it at once! He advises creaming it. He also points out that granules of the honey that are left on equipment can cause later honeys to granulate.

It is a well-balanced and informative little book; of interest to us all these days when we see the continuing decline in our native flora and when the role of farming and its methods are increasingly being questioned.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

**Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions**, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRST POST** (Around 10.00am) on the First of the Month for the Following Month

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month deadline; adverts should be sent well before this time.

**ADVERTISEMENT ENTRIES:** - 2 Lines for £1.00. Commercial, £1.00 per line, together with your cheque made payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager:-  
Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV. Telephone:- (0118) 947 9450/5451

	<b>BERKSHIRE MOBILE WELDING</b> <i>Carry Services</i>	<b>Mobile: 07951 138512</b>	
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## **NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION**

**Around and about the region**    *October 2003*



May I start with a "thank-you" to all who have made my first season as Regional Bee Inspector so enjoyable. The season was already in full swing before I was appointed and I was also conscious that, in Beulah Cullen, I had a hard act to follow. But I have been made to feel welcome by Associations and beekeepers wherever I have gone.

I have particularly enjoyed reading the many association magazines and newsletters I have been sent. Please keep them coming as they do all get read and give me a good insight into association activities. There are so many that I can't contribute to them individually but I hope that you will find this, the first in a regular series of news updates, a useful addition to the bee press.

*Ian Homer*

Another season over, swarms taken, honey harvested, varroa mite numbers assessed, colonies treated where necessary and fed for the winter

That, at least is the theory, but this year, more than ever before, I've noticed how we cannot just apply a blanket set of rules everywhere. Southern Region is a big area, stretching as it does from Lyme Regis very nearly to Peterborough and within that area there are significant variations in climate and also in nectar flow and honey crop. Some beekeepers have reported record crops even though the spring flow was mostly consumed by the bees in June.

Others, particularly in the western part of the region, saw the nectar flow come to a virtual standstill in mid-August and have had to feed since then to avoid starvation.

taken as a whole, the season has been characterised by a substantial amount of early swarming with subsequent mating of new queens not always being successful. Several of the bee inspectors in the region have visited beekeepers with colonies having laying workers or drone laying queens – in several cases it had been mistaken for European Foul Brood.

Honey crops overall appear to have been good but, without the heavy clover yield of the previous year, have not quite reached the same record levels. Honey prices are always sensitive to location and, to some extent to the level of tourist activity, but are holding up well. I would be grateful to receive details of both yields and prices in your area – a form is attached or you can e-mail details to me at [i.homer@cs1.gov.uk](mailto:i.homer@cs1.gov.uk) I will publish the results of this survey in the next issue of "Around and about the region"

## STOP PRESS

Pyrethroid resistant varroa mites were discovered in the Region for the first time at the beginning of October. Two cases have been confirmed on the Dorset/Somerset border in the Sherbourne area. There appear to be no logical connections with any other cases and the resistance is thought to have resulted from prolonged exposure to varroacides.

### Varroa

During much of the year there appeared to be little evidence of varroa throughout the region; this view was backed up by frequent comment from beekeepers that they hadn't seen many damaged bees or varroa mites this year. However, during September it has been a common sight to see brood damaged by varroa and associated viruses. It is clear that these colonies will lose much of this brood and will be severely depleted going into winter.

This is an important reminder to monitor the mite populations of colonies several times each season in

order to determine what action is necessary and when. Colonies will overwinter most successfully when they have a sufficient number of undamaged bees at the start of winter. A continuous programme of mite reduction is likely to be most effective.

Increasingly, it is important not only to monitor mite numbers but also to use the Integrated Pest Management techniques described in the NBU brochure "Managing Varroa". Re-read it now so that you are ready to start with IPM techniques next year.

### **Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa**

Throughout the season, further cases of resistant mites have been identified in Devon and Cornwall. In addition, there have been new cases identified in other areas. Resistance seems now to be well entrenched in the Haverford West area of Wales and in mid Shropshire and County Durham. Some of these newly affected areas have no identifiable links to the West Country and indications are that they are separate developments of resistance.

Because of the way in which pyrethroids work, resistance could occur anywhere where they are being used. Beekeepers are encouraged not only to assess the mite populations in their colonies but also to test whether the mites in those colonies have developed resistance. Many associations already have test kits to use to monitor for this - kits, with full instructions, are available for those who don't yet have them – please contact me if your association would like one. Please also remember to let either the National Bee Unit or me know the results of your tests. To date we

have had very few results sent to us – does this mean that beekeepers are not testing?

A number of one day conferences on Integrated Pest Management have already been held in the South West Region where the impact of resistant mites is greatest. These explore a whole range of approaches to mite reduction and allow beekeepers to determine the methods most suited to their own approach to beekeeping. I am hoping to arrange several of these events in Southern Region during the coming year. If your Association would be interested in hosting one, please contact me.

The approval in June of Apiguard as a licensed varroacide offers beekeepers the opportunity to treat against varroa without increasing the risk of pyrethroid resistance in their colonies. Resistance is now sufficiently widespread for all beekeepers, not just those in areas of confirmed resistance, to be giving serious consideration to their varroa control strategy.

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## Lateral Flow Devices

During the year we have been evaluating these devices in the field. They look rather like a home pregnancy test kit but are designed to provide field diagnosis of foul brood. The AFB devices have been in use throughout the season with diagnosis provided by the device being verified by laboratory analysis before any action is taken. The EFB device only arrived with us in the field in September so its use has been limited but we have had a couple of confirmations with some late cases of disease.

In the longer term, both devices will be available for beekeepers to purchase to enable those who suspect disease to confirm their suspicions prior to notifying the bee health inspection team. The exact timing of their commercial availability is still not certain but the AFB device could be available during the 2004 season.

### Foul Brood Statistics

2003 saw a slight reduction in confirmed cases of EFB - 145 colonies in 65 apiaries throughout the region. AFB was found in 3 colonies in 3 apiaries. Distribution maps showing the locations of these cases are attached. By comparison, in 2002 there were 160 colonies with EFB and 10 colonies with AFB.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this season has been the number of cases of EFB in East Hampshire (and across the border into Surrey and West Sussex) an area which has previously been largely free of disease. David Purchase has been actively pursuing it and, with the continued co-operation of beekeepers in the area, we are hopeful that fewer cases will be found next year.

Disease recognition courses have been run for various associations in previous years – I am very happy to arrange courses for any association that wants one. As always, the earliest to book get the best choice of dates. Beekeepers who have previously attended one of these courses may feel that a refresher course would be useful – again I am happy to arrange these to meet demand.

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## Honey Sampling

Some of you may have been asked to permit a honey sample to be taken from one of your colonies. The NBU has been carrying out a programme on behalf of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in accordance with European Commission Council Directive 96/23/EC. This requires member states to monitor chemical residues in live animals and animal products, including honey. Whilst most of the samples taken last year were of extracted honey, this year, wherever possible, samples were taken from within the brood chamber.

The results of this sampling are not instantly available but those relating to last years sampling are currently available on the VMD website ([www.vmd.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.gov.uk))

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## Spray Liaison

During the season I took a call from an air charter company advising me that they would be carrying out extensive spraying (with a bee friendly product) within the next few days.

After a chapter of incidents which kept delaying the helicopter, the spraying eventually happened about two weeks later. As far as I can tell there were no adverse affects on any bee colonies though, according to the local newspaper, sun worshippers on a nudist beach were liberally treated with the product!

It raised the question both in my mind and in the minds of county officials as to how effective or necessary the Spray Liaison Scheme is in today's environment.

For liaison schemes to work effectively, associations need a detailed knowledge of where all of their members hives are and notification of all spraying activity. I am certain that neither are possible.

Given that many of the sprays used today are “bee-friendly” (as opposed to non-toxic), which reduces the need to take action, it is possible that spray schemes are more a source of confusion than help.

There are, fortunately, very few incidents of bee poisoning these days. However, the majority that do happen appear to be as a result not of agricultural or horticultural sprays but of products such as Bendiocarb, which is commonly used by pest control operatives. If this is used to destroy a feral bee colony, it is essential that all comb is removed or that the nest is adequately sealed to prevent subsequent robbing from that site. Similar precautions are also needed when wasps nests are destroyed.

Spray liaison schemes have been in place for a number of years now – largely unchanged since their inception. Spraying practices have changed significantly in recent years - is there still a need for a spray liaison scheme? It would be useful to hear the views of Associations on this.

## Exotic Pests

This is the generic term which the National Bee Unit has adopted to describe some of the less desirable bee pests which we don't yet have in this country but which could get here at some time in the future. They are of interest for two reasons. Firstly, it is thought that our climate could sustain some of them, if they were inadvertently introduced here, and secondly, two in particular have recently been made notifiable throughout the whole of the EC.

The one that most beekeepers will have heard most about is the Small Hive Beetle, which is native to Southern Africa but which was found in the US in 1998 and in Australia in October 2002. The bee inspection team have, this year, been carrying out searches for this pest in areas thought to be most at risk (close to ports, airports or US air bases) but, fortunately, to date, nothing has been found. Beekeepers are encouraged to be vigilant and report anything unusual to the NBU or their local bee inspector. Brochures describing this pest are available for those associations who don't already have them.

Tropilaelaps clarea is a mite with a similar life cycle to varroa but is rather smaller. Like varroa, it also originates from Asia and moves freely on combs and relies on brood for feeding, causing damage in colonies with high mite levels. Due to its small size (approx 1mm x 0.5mm), it will be very difficult to see but it is known that Tropilaelaps will succumb to pyrethroids in the same way as varroa. We will of course have to wait and see whether Tropilaelaps will make an opportunistic appearance if we have to stop using pyrethroids because of resistance.

And Finally .....

Whilst the main role of the bee health inspection service is to inspect for, and deal with, notifiable disease, another very important role is that of working with beekeepers to improve bee husbandry. In this regard, I and the Seasonal Bee Inspectors are always happy to provide talks, workshops or demonstrations on topics related to disease and bee husbandry. Please contact me at the address below for more information.

**Ian R. Homer, Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,  
5, Malters Cottages, Litton Cheney, DORCHESTER, Dorset, DT2 9AE  
Tel/Fax: 01308 482 161 e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk**

## NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION Survey of Honey Prices and Yields 2003

Please indicate the current price **per pound** which each category is achieving in your area.

If there is a significant variation in the price of any item, please indicate a price range.

	Wholesale	Direct Sales	Bulk
Run, Set or Creamed Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cut Comb Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Comb Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Lbs		
Average yield per colony (excluding heather)	<input type="text"/>	{ Please indicate the yield <b>in pounds</b>	
Average heather yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ which has been experienced in	
Highest recorded yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ your area.	
Name, Association, Location	_____		