



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

December 2004
Number 582

Hon. Secretary:
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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

16 th April 2005	Spring Convention Stoneleigh	http://www.bbka.org.uk/convention.php
21 st – 26 th August 2005	Apimondia Dublin	

From the Federation General Secretary: -

Below you will find a press release from the BBKA concerning proposed government cuts in support for the Honeybee Health Programme, which is managed through the National Bee Unit (NBU) of DEFRA.

These cuts are due to start from 2007/2008 and follow the Haskins report into the Civil Service.

DEFRA have also indicated that they would be deregulating Varroosis from next year and have plans to deregulate European Foul Brood in about three years time.

The BBKA has stated that " while it is prudent for us to plan with the NBU how we should work together to minimise the impact of this reduction and the proposed deregulations, we need your help to try to reverse the Government's mind on these cuts."

I have been requested to ask you, the members, to write to your local MP explaining the situation, and the risks, and to seek their support in attempting to reverse the Government's decision on bee health.

"The cuts neither make economic sense nor protect the bio-security of our bees that is important for the future."

Suggested key points that you could include are also attached and can be used in compiling your personal letter to your MP.

The BBKA has asked that you also send them a copy of your letter so that they can keep track of the campaign.

Thank you in anticipation.

William Napper



The British Beekeepers' Association

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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

BEE HEALTH UNDER THREAT

Her Majesty's Government is planning to reduce support of the Honeybee Health Programme from £1.25 million to just £1 million. This saving of just £250K or 20% of the budget, risks the decimation of the UK honeybee population and the £100 million plus contribution that these insects make to agriculture through their pollination activities.

The Honeybee Health Programme, managed through the National Bee Unit of DEFRA, has been operating successfully for many years, helping the 30,000 beekeepers in England, 95% of whom operate on a small scale, to control diseases that can destroy honeybee colonies. The diseases include American Foul Brood, European Foul Brood and Varroosis. Since the arrival of Varroa (a parasitic mite that kills honeybee colonies) in this country in 1992, wild colonies of honeybees have died out and it is only beekeepers that maintain stocks of honeybees.

The Government's own survey conducted by ADAS, published in 2001 showed that honeybees contribute at least £120 million to the agricultural economy of the country. This does not include the benefit to horticulture or to the environment as a whole. The survey underlined that the Honeybee Health Programme was very important in protecting our bee stocks from the introduction of disease from outside this country.

In fact the next threat to honeybees, the Small Hive Beetle, has already been found in Portugal and other members states of the EU. This pest has devastated bee colonies in USA after being introduced from South Africa. It is only a matter of time before it arrives on our shores. When it does, beekeepers will need all the help they can get to defend their bees. The planned Government cuts mean that there will not be adequate professional support in the battle against the beetle.

The British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) fears that if these cuts are made, many small scale beekeepers will give-up keeping bees because they will not have access to local professional support should their bees become sick.

Ivor Davis - Chairman of the BBKA said:

"We fear that withdrawal of this support from the Government will force many beekeepers to give up the craft with a consequential large reduction of honeybees in this country. We believe that this is economic folly in that trying to save just £250,000 could result in a loss of many £ millions to the agriculture of this country, especially to early flowering crops such as fruit trees that rely on honeybees for pollination."

Tim Lovett - Vice Chairman of BBKA speaking on Radio 4's Today programme said:

"In a nutshell, if we loose this service, we put at risk the whole bee population in the United Kingdom"

Small Hive Beetle

For those receiving newsletters by Internet, DEFRA leaflets can be downloaded by clicking [here](http://www.csl.gov.uk/science/organ/environ/bee/factsheets/) or from <http://www.csl.gov.uk/science/organ/environ/bee/factsheets/>

In the Apiary - December

The 2004 season for most in our area started with a heavy spring honey flow including a crop from the hawthorn. Both Manley and Herrod-Hempsall asserted that if the may blossom yields honey there is likely to be precious little else. So it has proved this year.

There should be very little work to do with the bees this month, other than the usual checks to see that all is well in the apiary - no roofs blown off, mouse-guards missing, wood-pecker guards in place, hives knocked over or fallen branches.

Colonies that had been denuded of their honey in spring were found to be almost starving in June and required feeding.

Following the unusual summer and autumn weather this year it is well worth checking that colonies have sufficient food. You can check by hefting the hives, or, if the hive is light, by removing the crown board gently and having a look, you will be able to see down between the combs to judge the situation. At this time of year it is unlikely that there will be much brood to chill. **If food is really needed**, then give them fondant directly over the cluster. Remember that bees use very little stores in cold weather, so if they have stores near the cluster then they will probably be all right until very early spring when you will be able feed syrup with a contact feeder – it is unwise to feed syrup now, if you do, it will be likely to ferment leaving a legacy of dysentery.

Now is a good time to repair and prepare your spare equipment. By all means assemble or clean frames ready for the spring but do not fit foundation just yet. Make sure that any wood preservative used does not contain anything that will harm the bees.

Ron Crocker

BBKA Basic Monthly Quiz...

The next Section is about Equipment:

The Candidate will be

- 1 able to name the principal parts of a modern beehive;
- 2 aware of the concept of bee space and its significance in the modern beehive;
- 3 able to assemble a frame and fit it with wax foundation;
- 4 aware of the reasons for the use of wax foundation;
- 5 aware of the spacing of the combs in the brood chamber and super for both foundation and drawn comb and methods used to achieve this spacing.

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our apiary in Fulmer has now been bedded down for the winter, with the woodpecker cages on and the shed cleaned out. Jim tells me that some running repairs will be needed to it next year, so we shall be looking for willing helpers for this task in the near future. Please contact him by telephone or speak to him at one of the meetings if you are able to help.

The October meeting was our Annual Honey Show, judged this year by Vivienne Brown. Thirteen entrants submitted some sixty entries this year and everyone was successful, some more than others, of course, but we all had an entertaining evening and those of us that missed out on a prize through some fault or other were able to understand why. Hopefully as a result, future entries will be more successful. There were some difficult decisions to be made and some light-hearted banter kept us amused. Our grateful thanks go to our Judge for all her efforts and advice, and to Bernhard Schumann for once again organizing it all. Bernhard has indicated that he would like to step down now and hand over to someone else for next year's show. So we would like to hear from any member who would be prepared to take over this task.

This month's meeting, on Tuesday, the 14th December, will be attended by Ged Marshall, who will be talking to us about his Buckfast Queen rearing program. This strain was originally bred by that renowned beekeeper, the late Brother Adam of Buckfast Abbey. We would welcome anyone who would like to come along to hear this evening's meeting, which promises to be of great interest to us all. As usual, it is being held at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor and will commence at 8pm.

Our Annual Dinner will again be held in January, on Friday the 21st at 7pm for 7.30. The booking form, with menu choices and cost, is enclosed. Please return as soon as possible to the address shown. It is always a very enjoyable evening, with excellent food, so we look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it.

Don't forget that our library is available for members' use at all meetings and a few surplus books will be for sale as well. We also have a new labelling machine for members' use, which stamps

"Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" onto a separate label for your honey jars, which allows the flexibility of numbering needed for this. As this is now required by law if selling to the general public, please contact me on the number below should you wish to borrow it.

Finally, the committee would like to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and Successful Beekeeping during 2005.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Rosemary's Book of the month

If you haven't read Ted Hooper's *Bees and Honey*, you ought to.

The first thing that caught my eye was the quality of the illustrations. The diagrams of the bee's anatomy actually look interesting. They're finely drawn, clearly marked and captioned and are printed alongside the appropriate text. The photos are really clear as well.

And then the text tells you exactly what you want to know in plain English.

The chapters on setting up and what you need are well worth reading especially if you are just starting out; diseases are well taken care of (except Varroa which had not yet come to this country in 1983) and there are a few pages on plants bees like and extracting honey,

Our Association library is, as you may have noticed, pretty comprehensive. I think this book is one of the best.

January meeting

Roger Kemp, the Bucks Recorder for butterflies will give a talk on Butterflies of Berkshire on Wednesday 12th January at our usual venue of St Paul's Parish Rooms starting at 8:00pm.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On 14th October Reading BKA members met for a very well presented talk by the Basingstoke beekeeper Norman Hughes entitled "Things that Come to Mind".

Norman began by metaphorically turning out the pockets of his bee suit as he approached his hives for inspection and demonstrated techniques for handling queens and the queens reaction, that can facilitate effective clipping, which Norman advocates, like most good beekeepers he aims to have good healthy populations in his hive and avoids risks of losses thru swarming.

Despite the delicacy required in the techniques, Norman uses gloves: disposable ones, having his wife June to work the hives with him is a decided advantage, as Norman says the request "just remove that sting for me dear" may be heard from time to time! Norman also applies his engineer's brain to the logistics of autumn feeding and by check weighing has a method of visual assessment of the amount of stores on frames inside the brood chamber as an alternative to 'hefting' which allows him to more accurately syrup feed, this is an undoubted benefit to the colonies as well as to the pockets of the beekeeper.

Norman also revealed to us what is unsuspected by many beekeepers the life of the drone in his true calling: the drone assembly areas, Norman was introduced to this when he followed a party with a fishing rod with a feather lure: anointed with a couple of drops of queen pheromone during one of his regular visits to the courses at Gormanston in Ireland. There are many drone assembly areas usually over open ground, how the drones assemble and how the queens know where to head during mating flights are some of the many mysteries of beekeeping. It would be exiting indeed to discover such an area and witness the aerobatics and formation flight, which the drone in his element is capable. Norman and June are highly esoteric beekeepers and the talk was much appreciated by members who attended.

Thursday December 9th is our meeting near to Christmas, please join us for some mince pies and to listen to a talk by Julian Johnston who is a former bee inspector and has travelled the world extensively, the subject will be "Bees of the Middle East".

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

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 1st 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



Key Points for a letter to your MP asking for support in reversing the Government's proposed cuts to NBU Funding

1. The proposed cut is part of the Haskins Report
2. They are proposing a £250,000 cut from £1.25 million pa (a 20% cut)
3. The cuts will only affect ENGLAND; Scotland and Wales are dealt with by their Assemblies
4. This will come into effect in 2007/8
5. Varroa is to be deregulated in 2005 and there are plans to deregulate EFB in 2007/8
6. It is probable that the cuts will mean a considerable reduction of about 50% in the number of seasonal bee inspectors
7. NBU and DEFRA believe that EFB should be manageable using the shook swarm technique without antibiotics even though, as yet, there is insufficient published evidence available

However!

8. We rely on the RBI/SBI network to help beekeepers recognise disease and search out local spread once EFB is found
9. They have a statutory right to inspect whereas a voluntary body like a local beekeeping group could not do this
10. Most beekeepers find it difficult to recognise EFB until it is too late therefore the success of the shook swarm technique does not affect the spread of EFB
11. We fear that, without the support of the RBI/SBIs, many beekeepers will give up beekeeping once they have lost their bees.
12. If the cuts take place NBU will not have enough resources to combat the inevitable arrival of the Small Hive Beetle (this has just been found in a number of member states in the EU including Portugal) and this latest pest will have a devastating effect on beekeeping in the UK
13. Since Varroa arrived in this country there are very few feral colonies and it is only beekeepers that maintain the current stocks of honeybees
14. ADAS (2001) stated that honeybees contribute £120 million to the agricultural economy of England (especially for top fruit)
15. Rothamsted estimated this figure to be about £150 million
16. Very few beekeepers benefit from their beekeeping in this country as it is mainly a local craft and not commercially viable.
17. The private benefit to beekeepers of keeping bees is estimated at only £11.3 million
18. We consume about 25,000 tonnes of honey in this country but only produce about 6,000 tonnes of honey.

The story is that the cut of £250,000 will have significant impact on beekeeping. We believe that some bee diseases will spread and make beekeeping very difficult. Many beekeepers will give up. This will impact on the environment and economy of the country and we believe the impact will be much greater than the savings the government hope to make.

Thank you