



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

May 2006
Number 598

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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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The Apiary in May

This year the season has started late and if we have a cold or wet April we may well have failing queens or even laying workers. Provided that there is brood in all stages and worker eggs are present, the colony will usually look after itself. Should a queen be present but has failed, she can be replaced or, if the colony is not viable it can be united with another one.

When a colony cannot produce a replacement queen after a period of time, some of the worker's ovaries will develop and they will be able to lay eggs. As these eggs have not been fertilised, they will evolve into drones, and the worker cells will be capped in a dome shape. Once a colony has reached this state, it will be impossible to introduce a new Queen, as they will consider that they already have one and will probably kill her.

To recover at least something, move the hive about ten feet or so behind its existing position and place a floorboard and an empty brood chamber on the old site. Take each frame out and shake all the bees onto the ground. Place this comb, now free of bees into the box on the original site. Do this with all the frames, fit crown-board, roof, and leave. The laying workers or faulty queen will remain on the ground whilst the foragers will find their way back to their old site, after a day or so they will accept a Queen. Alternatively these bees can be united with a queen-right colony by placing it on top with a sheet of newspaper separating the two brood boxes.

Continue to fit empty supers ahead of requirement also continue to check for swarming. It is often possible to extract honey by the end of this month especially if your bees have been on oilseed rape. If there are open cells, give the combs a good shake, if no liquid comes out it will be OK to proceed.

Triad

A better and safer way of using oxalic acid

The Swiss company Andermatt Biocontrol; have developed an oxalic acid-sucrose trickling product for varroa control (OXUVAR) see (http://files.biovet.ch/documents/oxuvar_en.pdf). It is now licensed for use in Germany and it is expected to be licensed in Switzerland by the end of the year.

Oxalic acid is simple in application and has a low risk of residues and its use is widespread in Europe. OXUVAR has been developed to simplify the trickling or drip method of applying oxalic acid and meets the requirements for veterinary products see http://www.apis.admin.ch/en/krankheiten/docs/saeuren/acide_oxaliqueBeeWorld.pdf for those that do not have internet the original translation by Ro Rayner of this document is available from the editor.

The mixture of oxalic acid, water and sucrose is chemically unstable, so that contact between oxalic acid and sucrose before its application must be avoided. Storing them in separate containers can easily prevent undesirable degradation of oxalic acid solution and sucrose. Oxuvar is supplied in two separate containers,



- 750 ml container (HDPE, with wide opening) with dehydrate oxalic acid in the appropriate volume of water
- SiOx/PE coated paper bag with rapidly soluble sucrose powder

Source: Schweizerische Bienen-Zeitung

Thread of e-mail exchanges with Ron Crocker

I fear that using Apiguard for a couple of years now has created more problems than it solved. The boxes and frames used are all now tainted with the pungent smell and I suspect it got into my late honey crop, maybe from extracting half broods that they had filled up. Anyway, it tasted a bit suspect when cleaning out the ripener last autumn and I have got six buckets of it but not really checked it out yet. Jim had the same thing happen, he tells me his father mentioned that his honey tasted of it.

Knowing that you have used Thymol, I wondered if you ever encountered a similar problem and whether you have any suggestions for cleaning up equipment to get rid of it. Maybe Ian Homer's favourite soda solution or perhaps caustic soda? Also, what to do with the honey if it is all tainted. Can it be fed back or will that set up a vicious circle?

I would appreciate any help you can give on this.

Reply

Apiguard is not usually absorbed permanently into woodwork; the smell will disperse if your equipment is aired for a while. If Apiguard or any product that creates a vapour is applied during a honey flow it could possibly be absorbed into unsealed honey. In recent years there has been a late flow, mainly from ivy, if this late honey is to be extracted then the application of Apiguard should be deferred. Although not approved or advocated by the producers, for the last few years I have applied my Apiguard in late October or during November using a 2.5" eke. The temperature above a strong colony is 9 to 13°C thus enabling slow sublimation. I have yet to find any visible sign of varroa at the first spring inspection, of course re-infection is inevitable.

Why do you extract half broods? If they are put under the brood chamber in early spring the bees will clear them. Your honey can be fed back to the colonies that it came off, but I suggest that you use new foundation in the supers. Bear in mind that there is always a risk of spreading disease when feeding back honey. I hope that Dr Watkins will comment on this.

Thanks for your reply, Ron.

I too have only ever used it after taking off the summer honey, i.e. September onwards. Will try airing the equipment a bit more, but it does get rather mixed up as I never seem to have enough! The half brood frames were redundant and being used as supers for this reason and possibly some had stores in them. Didn't expect the resulting problem, of course.

JD

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

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors are:

Berkshire

Charles Fryatt

01793702860

Oxfordshire & South Bucks

Margaret Holland

01327 857328

Hampshire

David Purchase

01256 781288

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Our May 20th meeting is the New President's Day in Marcella Skinner's apiary, Kate's Cottage, Wyfold, Reading. Don't forget our plant sale in June, so all those extra plants and seedlings that will not fit in the garden can be put to good use elsewhere!

April saw the Bee Farmer's Spring Convention in Hereford. I was invited for the weekend and found it fascinating to see Beekeeping on such a large scale. Robert and I arrived at the Green Dragon in the middle of Hereford on Friday afternoon; we had a reception of around 90 people attending, some of which I had met before at various meetings. Saturday we all boarded two coaches and headed for Aberystwyth to David Wainwrights Honey Plant. We were shown around the packaging department and spoke to various employers bottling honey from around the world. We then had a competition of guessing the taste of some 8 different types of honey, none of which I had a clue! Saturday evening was spent listening to the joys and disasters of the years honey season over dinner and Sunday we were off again visiting the Treasurers home and seeing the various by-products, from Candles to Polish that were on offer. Sunday evening we had time to unwind with a Barn Dance, unwind being an understatement as my head was full of the experience. Monday afternoon I checked my own "little hive" and all seems to be well. The bees were nicely clustered and flying well with pollen loaded on their return. Well its a start!!!!

March meeting:

The subject of our March meeting was "Application and research into bee health issues" by Dr Max Watkins of Vita (Europe) Ltd. The talk covered 'Novel treatments for honeybees' and research into cures for deformed wing virus, tracheal mite, and other problems. Vita has taken back B401 against wax moth.

A new product (Vitasol) against varroa and other mites including house mites is in the pipeline. Go to <http://www.vita-europe.com/>

The main thrust of the talk was varroa, its treatment, and the importance of knowing where pyrethroid resistance is. Don Thomson and Ron Crocker hold test kits and instructions for their use; however, where Apiguard is used there is little point in testing for pyrethroid resistance. It was interesting to note that Apiguard is an organic product. EFB and AFB diagnostic kits are available from bee appliance dealers.

On Saturday June 24th we have an apiary tour, this will give an opportunity to learn more about assessing a colony. Anyone wishing to have their bees assessed and inspected on the tour please contact Linda Clarke on 01491 613329 or southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Friday 17th March Reading and District Beekeepers joined Newbury and District at Upper Bucklebury on the occasion of their 'Leaver Lecture' to hear our Regional Bee Inspector Ian Homer's talk entitled "Joyful Discoveries in Bees and Beekeeping" also subtitled as "Eureka moments" by Ian himself. This is an essential talk for beekeepers at all levels to hear. Joy Dodson of Slough and District has covered some of the best points in her report in the April newsletter but also the judicious use of a little Vaseline under-lugs and between boxes was suggested is going to help preserve the life of my boxes and frames which my bees love to propolise! Ian also gave us a little test questionnaire to fill-out at the start as well as a useful schematic to record the situation and performance of hives in an apiary.

As usual Newbury beekeepers made us heartily welcome; with thanks to them and to all Reading attendees.

May meeting: on Sunday 14th May starting at 2.00 pm we are the guests of Wokingham and District beekeepers at their out apiary at Diana Brimblecombe Animal Rescue Centre. Nelsons Lane, Hurst. RG10 0RR. Tel.0118 9706762. The St. Nicholas Hurst Village Society publish an excellent map on their web-site but essentially Nelsons lane is off Pound Lane, which is a left-turn off 'Wokingham Road' (A321) So If you've driven through Hurst Village at Wokingham Road Junction with Hurst Pond on your right you turn-right towards Wokingham. Have a light lunch and join our Wokingham friends in the fresh-air at 2.00pm! See you there!

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our March meeting was quite well attended and we heard our fellow member, Harry Peace, talking about his experiences with his two Dartington hives. He had embarked on this method of keeping bees in order to alleviate a back problem. As usual, the bees did not pay any attention to the instructions, so it has been a trial and error learning curve. After some adaptation of the method to his own situation, Harry found his success required him to divide several of his old National supers to supplement those supplied, in order to accommodate the surplus honey. Our thanks go to Harry for his efforts in preparing a most interesting and informative demonstration and bringing along some of his equipment for us to see, also to Jim for providing an empty hive.

We hope to have picked up some useful tips to try out on the apiary hive, which has had mixed results. Come along and see how this is faring, as the new season at the apiary is now well under way. The next meetings there will be on Sundays, the 7th and 21st of May, at the new start time of **2.30pm**, at the society's apiary in Fulmer. If you need directions, please call our apiary supervisor, Jim Cooper, on 01628 783228. We do hope that as many members as possible, both new and not so new, will take the opportunity to help keep this valuable asset to our Society going during this season. It is intended as an invaluable teaching aid to those newer to beekeeping and as such relies on the helping hands of more experienced beekeepers to guide them. The exchange of information that usually flows from these meetings benefits everyone there and it is always good to see the changing fortunes of each hive throughout the season, do make the effort this year. The following month's meetings will be on Sundays, the 4th and 18th of June.

Copies will also be available there of the new booklets produced by CSL and DEFRA called "Managing Varroa" and "Tropilaelaps: parasitic mites of honeybees". These are a 'must have' for all beekeepers, containing the latest information available.

Any member who wishes to borrow our labelling machine for stamping "Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" onto a separate label for honey jars; please call me on the first number below.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

Obituary

RALPH P. ANDREW 1924-1998

DOROTHY A. ANDREW (BUNTY) 1915-2006

On a glorious spring day, Thursday 23rd March 2006, many relatives and friends of Ralph and Bunty met at St. Mary's Church, Hedgerley, for a Service of Thanksgiving for their lives and interment of Bunty's ashes alongside those of Ralph's in the churchyard. It was a joyous service with friends leading us in thoughts of the lives of Ralph and Bunty, including the reading of The Beekeepers' Prayer by Don Church, our Chairman.

Ralph started his beekeeping after they had moved to Farnham Common in the 1950's. Whether he intended to take up the craft when he did is uncertain, but on an occasion when the two of them went to Wales to visit friends, they came back with a couple of hives in the boot of the car. Everything Ralph and Bunty did was accomplished with enthusiasm and depth. Unfortunately, Bunty soon learned that the mix of chemistry of a sting to her body was not at all conducive, which meant that Ralph was the 'hands on' one of the family.

They both joined Slough Beekeepers' as the first step in learning more about the craft and it was not long before they became involved in running the group. Over the years, they developed a very deep knowledge of beekeeping, doing much for beekeepers and the craft in Slough and more widely in both Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Ralph held various posts, with Bunty always supporting him and even after his death; she attended our monthly meetings until quite recently. Soon after her 90th Birthday, she moved to Broughton Astley, Leicestershire, near to her daughter Caroline and her family, so that she could help her mother living nearby.

Their passing has left a void in the ranks of both Slough Beekeepers' and further afield and we do offer our sincere condolences to Caroline and her family. Ralph and Bunty's friendship and stewardship will be greatly missed

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

In the continued absence of a secretary, there is no contribution from Wokingham.

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

Beekeeping equipment and supplies

from your Thornes agent in Berkshire
Large stock of most requirements available ex. stock. All other in range available only a phone call away. Deliveries in season at regular intervals. Please phone **John Belcher** on 01189 842321 for a quotation. Beeswax exchanged.