



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

November 2006
Number 604

Hon. Secretary:
Vacant

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

Saturday 21 st April 2007	BBKA Spring Lecture & Exhibition	Stoneleigh Park
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BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

Your Berkshire Beekeepers Federation is still in need of a volunteer to act as General Secretary.

IN THE APIARY: NOVEMBER

Traditionally bees should now be fully prepared for winter, adequate stores (most important), mouse guards on, and where necessary, protection against woodpeckers in place. But, due to changing climate, some beekeepers are still removing supers of honey, mainly ivy.

Is it too late to feed for the winter? Not if for any reason, the bees are short of food! Dead bees do not produce honey! At this time bees are likely to be in a winter cluster so a rapid feeder is out, syrup in a contact feeder is likely to crystallize so that the bees cannot get it, the answer is to apply candy or fondant, do check occasionally to be sure that it does not run out.

Cases of colonies suddenly becoming stronger (?) sometimes accompanied by dead bees around the hive and also heavily infested with varroa occasionally come to light. This is due to varroa-infested colonies on the verge of collapse absconding and joining a healthy colony; often a good queen is replaced with an inferior one. Applying Bayvarol or Apistan at this time is a waste, for this to work the colony must be active and not in its cluster. Many people do not like the use of oxalic acid in any form, the alternative is to use Apiguard, this product is most effective when used according to the manufacturers instructions, however, there is anecdotal evidence that it can be used on a strong colony over the winter. Apiguard requires a temperature of at least 12°C to sublime and is most efficient when the average daytime temperature is +15°C, it requires a circulatory space above the cluster so that the bees can access the tray, but not as much as a super, the ideal is a 1½" to 2" eke, insert a tray and add a second after two weeks, leave the trays in the hive until all the gel disappears. Even if the varroa are not killed immediately they do not seem to reproduce I have found colonies treated this way having no detectable evidence of varroa in the spring.

Queen raising this year has been disastrous, queens failed to mate, queens being superseded, sometimes more than once and queens failing after a short period of laying. It is noticeable that there are fewer grasshoppers, flies and other insects this year, is there a related problem?

Roger Patterson appeals to all beekeepers that have, or have had, any problems with queens to contact him.

Roger Patterson. E-mail: r.patterson@pattersonpressings.co.uk Tel: 01403 790 637

Triad

There's a beetle in my hive!

Beetles in the hive are not good news at the moment. However, this specimen turned out to be very unusual. The colony had been struggling all summer, the problem being a severe infestation of varroa. Its treatment with Apiguard had proved fruitless. The result was a pile of rather smelly bees, left exposed on the floor of the WBC hive upon removal of the brood box. The heap was gently moving up and down and investigation revealed a very large black beetle, banded with orange, foraging amongst the rotting debris. This turned out to be one of the several species of the banded sexton beetle to be found in Britain, probably *Nicrophorus Investigator*.



Normally the beetle searches for dead creatures, such as birds or small mammals. Having found one, it proceeds to bury the corpse beneath the soil, before removing feathers or fur and covering the cadaver with a mucus-like substance, which masks the smell of decay. This ensures that the beetle's larvae, when they emerge from their eggs, have the food source very much to themselves. The beetle and its mate are also unusual inasmuch that they care for the young grubs, feeding them with regurgitated flesh from the rotting corpse.

The beetle, when removed from the hive, proved to be covered with mites, although not those of varroa. These gamasid mites were simply hitching a ride and are not believed to be injurious to the host. Their prey is blowfly larvae and clinging to the beetle is the certain route to an infested corpse.

The writer wonders if this is the first instance of a banded sexton beetle being found in a beehive.

Cyril Mc Combe

REPORT ON HONEY SHOW FOR BERKSHIRE FEDERATION MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS AT WOKINGHAM AND READING SHOW, SPENCER'S WOOD. 3RD SEPTEMBER 2006.

You may remember that experimentally we are combining the Federation honey show with member association's show. This first being Reading and District Beekeepers Association's venue in conjunction with Wokingham and Reading Horticultural Association in the Produce, Art, Craft and Photography Marquee.

We are happy to report that we had an increase in entries in our section. 61 compared to 50 in 2005 and that we had good support from members of the Wokingham Association in Robin Roberts and Nigel Perkins who made multiple entries and our particular thanks to Nigel who provided beeswax mouldings and frame honey for our display. We did receive an apology from



Slough and Windsor where a pressing family matter prevented the assembly of some entries.

Our Judge was the excellent Margaret Johnson from Southampton accompanied by husband Alan, past BBKA president also an expert on honey and hive products.

RESULTS. Points are using the usual system at this show with 3 for a first, 2 for a second and 1 for a third (points' winners receive cash prizes). Commendations are awarded by judges however, points are not currently given.

Light Honey. 1st J. Davey Reading. 2nd N. Perkins Wokingham. 3rd S.Blinstrub Reading.
Medium/dark 1st J. Crosthwaite Reading. 2nd N. Perkins. 3rd R. Roberts Wokingham.
Granulated/soft set. 1st N. Perkins Wokingham. 2nd H. Blackburn Reading.
Honey for sale. 1st H. Blackburn. 2nd J. Davey Reading. 3rd N. Perkins Wokingham.
Beeswax blocks. 1st N Perkins Wokingham. 2nd H.Blackburn Reading.
Beeswax candles. 1st N.Perkins Wokingham. 2nd J.Davey. 3rd P. Bruce Reading.
Chunk honey. 1st R. Roberts Wokingham. 2nd J.Davey Reading.
Cut comb. 1st J.Davey Reading. 2nd R. Roberts. 3rd N. Perkins Wokingham.
Honey, almond & cherry cake. 1st Mrs A. Lake*. 2nd J.Crosthwaite. 3rd H. Blackburn Reading.
Honey shortbread biscuits. 1st J.Davey. 2nd H. Blackburn Reading. 3rd R. Roberts Wokingham.
Honey Marmalade. 1st H. Blackburn. 2nd J. Davey Reading. 3rd R.Roberts Wokingham.
Bee Fodder. 1st J.Davey. 2nd R.Roberts Wokingham. 3rd Mrs D. Lises*

*Non-beekeeper entries.

Points awarded.

J. Davey Reading. 18. N. Perkins Wokingham. 14. R.Roberts Wokingham 13. H.Blackburn Reading.10. J.Crosthwaite Reading.5. P. Bruce Reading. 1. S.Blinstrub Reading.1.

With many thanks to all who entered, stewarded and contributed. This includes beekeepers who prepared honey for sale and contributed from this to Reading Association to make their usual contribution to the charities supported by the Reading and Wokingham Show.

How to become a Good Beekeeper.

Many of us were able to take advantage of George Butler's excellent courses in beekeeping, which he ran at Burchett's Green Agricultural College. He gave a good clear introduction to the craft; he was patient and was able to answer everyone's questions with a clear simple answer. We are going to miss him. For new beekeepers his death is going to make life a bit difficult because there are no prospects yet of a replacement for him at the College.

There are, of course many books on beekeeping and they can be useful - if you understand exactly what you are struggling to find out. Then we also have members of our local Association we can consult and most beekeepers are only too happy to help each other. But quite soon you feel you can't keep on asking and you try to struggle on without pestering them too much.

The BBKA is aware of these difficulties and has come up with the answer: the Basic Course.

The course takes you right through from where to put your hives to what to do about Varroa. You work at your own pace, in your own time. When you are ready you can apply to do the Test at a time and place to suit you. It takes about an hour to complete and at the end you get a certificate!!!.

It is worth doing because it focuses your attention step by step on the many different aspects of beekeeping until you are confident and knowledgeable about the subject – and you won't have pestered your fellow-beekeepers too much.

If you want to know more, please contact me, Rosemary Bayliss – 01344 421 747

BBKA Basic -

A Monthly Quiz – do you know the answer?

The Candidate will be aware of

1. the care needed when handling a colony of honeybees.
2. the reactions of honeybees to smoke.
3. the personal equipment needed to open a colony of honeybees.
4. the reasons for opening a colony.
5. the need for stores.

- Rosemary Bayliss – your exam sec.

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The last of our summer meetings, by courtesy of Viola and Basil Crowe, was very successful, there was a good attendance including new and prospective new members. As anno domini advances, Viola and Basil will be giving up beekeeping so regrettably this was the last of the meetings that they have hosted.

Our next meeting will be on 13th December (**please note it is the second week of the month and not the third**). This will be our Christmas Gathering and we will have a talk from a representative of the charity "Send a Cow". There will also be the usual seasonal food and raffle. Please support our raffle by informing Reg Hook that you would like to contribute, or you can bring something on the evening. Writing this has made me realize that Christmas preparations will be in full swing, which is the last thing I am thinking about at the end of September. It is with regret that I will have stood down at the AGM as Secretary; I am off to pastures new in Dorset.

We have had two responses to join the Committee and their positions will have been established. I wish them well and obviously know that our Association will flourish with the constant help and support from the members.

Wishing you Seasons Greetings

Annette Cleaver

Secretary: southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District Beekeeper's Association were pleased to invite other Berkshire Federation members to participate in their annual honey show at the Reading and Wokingham Show at Spencers Wood on Sunday September 3rd. We are pleased to report some support from within the federation and a thoroughly enjoyable day despite early squalls keeping the public attendance down though no rain after 7.00 AM and a fine and sunny afternoon. There is a separate report issued for the honey show.

The next meeting is at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall at 7.30 sharp on Thursday 9th November. This is our A.G.M. We ask all members to attend, and we invite all comers to a talk afterwards by Reading member Cyril McCombe entitled "there's a beetle in my hive"! An entomological detective story with a classic outcome!

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

No Contribution

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Firstly, a reminder to anyone who has not yet returned their subscription form and cheque to Stan for the coming year, please do so immediately, as your insurance cover is not valid as of 30th September.

Our first winter meeting in September was our usual Review of the Year, when we hear how each other has fared over the past season. There were mixed reports, some had done rather better than others but we were all agreed that this year had been an exceptional one, with quite a few problems for many of us. We are hoping that the autumn will settle things down and looking forward to another year, wondering what the new season has in store for us.

This month's meeting, on Tuesday 14th November, will be our AGM. We look forward to seeing you all at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ for an 8pm start.

Your new committee will be elected then and at present there are four vacancies on the committee. Nominations for any of the Officers and the remaining Committee members should be addressed in writing to the Secretary and signed by the proposer and seconder. The person nominated should also indicate his or her willingness to serve if appointed. Such nominations must be received by the Secretary no later than 31st October 2006 at: The Red House, Old Beaconsfield Road, Farnham Common, Bucks, SL2 3LR. We are always pleased to welcome new committee members and hope that you will all give consideration to helping to keep the Society's wheels turning.

After the formalities, we shall have our usual social gathering, so would ask you all to please bring along a contribution to the supper table. Our library will also be available, along with any surplus library books left for sale.

In December, we shall be hearing from our Apiary Supervisor, Jim Cooper, who will be talking to us about 'Preparing for the New Season', with some timely advice and tips on getting off to a flying start with well prepared, and repaired, equipment. This will be on Tuesday the 12th December, at 8pm.

Advance notice of our Annual Dinner in January, which has been provisionally booked at the Aurora Garden Hotel in Windsor on Friday the 26th at 7 for 7.30pm. Please pencil this in your diary; further details of menu and prices will follow. This replaces the usual second Tuesday meeting this month.

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

Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRSTPOST** (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.
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