



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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October 2007  
Number 614

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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

18th-20th October 2007	The National Honey Show	<a href="http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/">http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/</a>
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## THE APIARY in OCTOBER

This is tidying up time and now that we have finished taking off any honey, we can turn our attention to Varroa. I have a feeling that some of us are getting so used to the idea that Varroa is something to be taken lightly. That would be a mistake - and you've only got to remember that the mite has by now just about destroyed all our feral bees to realise the constant threat it poses to our own colonies. Don't imagine that because your apiary is miles away from everyone else's, you can't possibly have any mites - we've all got them now. Put a Varroa tray at the bottom of the hive. The dead mites that fall will give you an indication of the extent of the infestation.

One common mistake is to ignore the sell-by dates on Apistan and Apiguard. Most of us only use a few strips out of a package of ten and the rest are put away on a shelf and come out the next year or the year after. The manufacturers really mean that their product will not be effective after the expiry date. If you think it won't matter and you go ahead and use an old strip, you will put your colony at risk.

Oxalic acid has been found to be effective which is good especially as some beekeepers are finding the traditional treatments are not quite as effective as they used to be. It is done a bit later in the year round about Christmas. A solution is made and it is drizzled over the tops of the frames.

One of the virtues of having more than one hive or of making a nucleus is that at this time of the year you can amalgamate and create strong colonies to go through the winter, which will mean a good start when spring comes. A weak colony has fewer bees, which makes them susceptible to cold, which will make them less likely to be able to keep their queen warm. They will also be open to invasions by wasps, which seem to be active much later this year.

And don't forget the mouse-guards.

To many of us the idea of open floors seems rash, as we want our bees to be warm and cosy in the cold. Well, bees are able to tolerate very cold weather - there are beekeepers in Canada. What is bad for them is damp of which we get a lot in this country. Having good air circulation through the hive from bottom to top is found to be healthier and desirable. Incidentally if you rest your Varroa board on your mesh base, don't put it back there when you have made your count and leave it there all winter - it won't let the air flow through!

There is still quite a bit of forage here and there, but not enough to keep the bees well stocked up, so they need feeding. You can go on feeding until they stop taking it down. Later on you can check by hefting if they need a little top-up and then you can put in another few litres.

Triad

## **From the Editor:**

**Beekeeping classes** have again been organised for this winter, for beginners commencing January 7<sup>th</sup> 2008 and for intermediate beginners on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Get your prospectus from Yvonne Arnold at the College of Agriculture, Burchetts Green or go to <http://www.bca.ac.uk/Parttime/generalinterest.htm>

For most beekeepers this season has been disastrous and many colonies will have to be fed. This is the first year since I changed to near native bees that I may have to feed, in the past few years even nuclei raised before July have stored enough to over-winter, unfortunately not this year. I will probably use fondant as I did years ago.

**Collapsing Colonies:** Research into the effects of electromagnetism on bees is ongoing. Keep up to date at: <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'

## **From America's Popular Mechanics**

This past spring, a nationwide effort by top DNA scientists determined that CCD is probably caused by a number of factors, including multiple bee-killing viruses. But identifying specific viruses with DNA sequencing is a slow, painstaking process.

Charles Wick formerly the leader of the chemical and biological detection team at the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland volunteered a microwave-size invention to help finding and identifying viruses. The device was originally used to screen drinking water for pathogens, Wick's 50-pound Integrated [Virus](#) Detection System (IVDS) fires an electric charge at a sample, then counts and sizes the resulting particles making up the sample to identify viruses. By measuring to the nanometer, the IVDS can home in on a disease in 10 minutes.

In a trial run, Wick was sent samples from affected beehives which he liquefied in a blender, filtered through a cheesecloth, and ran through the IVDS. Wick says, "we brought in a new technology and immediately detected the pathogens that were being looked for."

Within minutes, the IVDS had found multiple suspicious viruses, kick-starting the chase for the cause of the collapsed colonies. Wick's invention is now part of the ongoing CCD effort, and a commercial version of the device has just been released.

## ***The Editors - Newsletter of the Berkshire Federation of Beekeepers***

### **Bees in the Electro-Magnetic Jungle of Today**

Colony Collapse Disorder is already a very serious problem for bees in the USA and apparently also for bees in Europe. The Federation newsletter no. 612 reports that our German colleagues at the University of Koblenz-Landau are currently researching electro-magnetic effect on bees.

It appears that developed countries may have brought CCD problems on their bees by human disregard for adverse effects of radio waves on wildlife, particularly the insect world of bees, butterflies and moths that rely on their antennae.

Apiaries positioned near to high voltage power lines are well known to have very 'unhappy' bees. But are they not also 'unhappy' in a world now rapidly filling up with mobile 'phone networks, internet transmission (wi-fi), radio controlled watches, hi-Tec hearing aids, TV remote controls, etc?

After 65 years, all happy, keeping bees I am no longer a keeper, but shall always remain a carer. For all keepers and carers our motto must be 'Happy, Healthy Honeybees', especially in a rapidly changing technological era.

Could it be that the answer to CCD lies in much better knowledge of insects' antennae, as yet very little researched? One of the few scientists who has acquaintance with electromagnetic effects is our own Prof. Robert Pickard His excellent article is to be found in the wonderful Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Beekeeping edited by Ted Hooper (UK) and Roger Morse (USA); on page 244 may be found "Magnetic and Electrical Field, Effects on the Honeybee".

Perhaps at the National Honey Show on 18th October Prof. Pickard could tell us what he thinks may be the cause of CCD.

**Donald Thomson**

**Donald Thomson** has given the Editor a newspaper cutting "Inspiration, perspiration and bites by mosquitoes" and asks, "What do honey bees have?"

### **Inspiration, perspiration and bites by mosquitoes (extracts)**

SCIENTISTS may have worked out why mosquitoes make a beeline for some people but appear to leave others untouched. To the mosquito some people's sweat could simply smell better than others and it is those people who are more likely to be bitten.

Specific cells in one of the three organs that make up the mosquito's nose are tuned to identify the chemicals that make up human body odour.

Researchers believe the discovery will lead to the development of a new generation of repellents that would block mosquitoes' noses - preventing them finding human prey - within five to 10 years.

Mosquitoes use three organs to smell and taste - a feathery -17 antenna which can identify a wide range of chemicals, a proboscis used for short-range detection and the maxillary palp for longer range smelling.

Scientists at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, whose research was published yesterday in the journal "Current Biology" have produced a detailed map of the maxillary palp, they found that it contains a series of highly specialised receptor cells used to detect the different components of human body odour.

The researchers carried out their work on *Anopheles gambiae*, the mosquito species most responsible for spreading malaria.

The disease infects some 650 million people per year worldwide and kills between one and three million people a year, mostly young children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is well known that bees will attack sufferers of diabetes and other ailments and also sweaty clothing made of fibres with acetate content

A search on the Internet revealed that the Israeli University of Jerusalem was working on the Nile virus – also carried by mosquitoes, and in the process had found “Israeli” paralysis virus, possibly associated with CCD in honeybees as far back as biblical times, it was said that they are co-operating with an American university. In the limited time available no other reference to this virus was found. A smoking gun? Maybe. Watch this space!

Some years ago I imported Buckfast queens from Israel, possibly there may be an explanation of some of the things that I did not understand.

RFC

### **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**

### **SCBKA Summer Barbeque**

Our summer barbeque this year was again held at the Cookley Green Cricket ground but, after last year's friendly squeeze into the tiny pavilion, Lynne had also organised some extra cover for the tables. Over 80% of the association's membership had purchased tickets and, despite another wet day, a large number turned up, including some members' families and several of our new members.

The food was organised by Lynne, with help from Linda, Louise and Viv (not forgetting the barbeque cook – Guy), and was both excellent and plentiful. We had no presentations or major speeches – this was a purely social occasion – but the chat inevitably started off with bee-talk and the dreadful season many have had. People soon moved on to more cheerful topics though, and I overheard conversations on everything from fungi to cricket and wine to bicycles. The inevitable rain did not dampen spirits, and everyone seemed to have a very enjoyable afternoon.

The first of our winter season meetings is our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday October 17<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm followed by "Mind Your Back", a talk by our Secretary Dr. Phil Westwood.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

E-mail: >southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com<

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August members and new friends met at Hazel and Michael Blackburn's property at Chazey Road Caversham. Hazel being unexpectedly still detained in the RBH with her troublesome knee; we missed her planned input on beeswax candles but not too much as Michael stood-in on this part and gave some deft candle rolling demonstrations from beeswax sheets. On then to the colony in the grounds.

There have been several reports from reading members of swarms taking up residence in empty hives. For many seasons bait hives have been more in hope than expectation but this year there are some success stories. Also in this case Michael's empty hive set-up in the garden had been blessed with such a visitation and the bees have done very well!

Michael opened the hive and was able to remove virtually a super full of honey, which for this season for a swarm is very good. Exposing drone larvae did reveal some varroa. Overall the colony is in good shape, numerous, with one or two bees only showing wing deformities. Michael added Apiguard™ to start –off his anti-varroa measures.

We carried the super to Michael's extraction room, which would be an example to most of us for hygiene and good order. Extracted supers stored interspaced with paper sheets and plastic wrapped. Michael has some stainless steel catering roasting trays that he uses when extracting. These have a perforated false bottom which is actually a 'gravity-trap' there is a convenient aperture on each size, just right to hold the lug of a frame and Michael speedily uncapped using a sturdy uncapping fork he has obtained, this has a decent gauge of metal in its structure, a thinner-one will bend. This is very neat method and very economic on honey, in fact Michael detests wasting honey and using a spatula lifts all spilled honey which he reserves even small amounts. The uncapping method leaves virtually pure light cappings in the 'tray' and after a short period, inside the 'gravity trap' clean honey to reserve for filtering or feeding to colonies. This is all very different from the heat and stickiness many of us generate when extracting! After a spin in the motorized extractor there was a honey in a jar for new friends to take away that they had witnessed being removed from a beehive half an hour before!

With very many thanks to Michael Blackburn for the 'techniques beekeeping meeting of the season!'

October meeting. On this the start of our winter program Reading and District Beekeepers have the pleasure in being with Wokingham Beekeepers for a joint meeting on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October at Saint Paul's Church Hall Wokingham. Please be there by 7-30pm. anyone requiring more information or directions please contact Michael on 0118 947 5451 or Jon. on 0118 965 0734.

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.

By now the work at the apiary should be all but over for this year, an extended programme of visits will have shared the tasks of treating, feeding and generally getting them ready for the winter and hopefully will have helped our newer members with this stage of the season too. The honey crop was not so much this year, but then this seems to have been the general trend, as the meeting for the Review of the Year in September will no doubt have shown – with one or two possible exceptions.

Nevertheless, hopefully you will have had enough to be able keep a jar or two apart for the Honey Show, and maybe even a frame for extraction, some comb honey or wax that is good enough to enter. This month, on Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> October, we meet at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ, at **7pm** for the staging and judging will start at **7.30pm**.

Our judge this year is Hazel Blackburn from Reading Beekeepers' Association, who is always very helpful with comments and suggestions for ways to improve our entries. The informality of our Show usually makes it an enjoyable evening and we hope that those of our members who have not won a prize previously will enter the Novice Class at least. Booking in can be done on the night, though multiple entries would be useful to be aware of ahead of time to prepare labels.

Show Schedules have already been sent out to everyone with the newsletters, for any further information or query, please contact me on the number below.

The AGM and Supper will take place on the 13<sup>th</sup> November at 8pm. Your committee welcomes newcomers to their ranks, nominations for both Committee and Officer positions should be sent to Michael at least a week before the AGM. Your current committee will be standing for re-election, so please do come along to support them. After the formalities, we have a social evening, so contributions for the Supper table would be most welcome too.

As usual, our library is available at meetings, along with various information leaflets and we look forward to seeing everyone there.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

No contribution

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

**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 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: -

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