



**FEDERATION OF  
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**  
President: Miss Margery Cooper

September 2008  
Number 624

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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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Hon. Editor  
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## Future Events

Oct 30 <sup>th</sup> - Nov 1 <sup>st</sup>	National Honey Show	See Page 2
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## NAO survey of Beekeepers

It is clearly very important that we try to get as many members as possible to complete the survey – my interpretation is that this information will directly impact future DEFRA funding into bee research as well as the resourcing of NBU

- Questions on colony losses
- Questions on varroasis and foul brood diseases
- Most of the survey is essentially an audit of service provided by NBU inspectors

I think you will agree that Ian Homer and his team give us fantastic support, and by filling this feedback form we can only help the National Bee Unit and DEFRA to get adequate bee research funding in the future.

Importantly members can fill this survey in online [Safeguarding the health of honeybees](#)

### About the survey

The National Audit Office is undertaking a Value for Money study into how the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is working to safeguard the health of honeybees in the United Kingdom.

So that we can take into account the views and experiences of beekeepers in England and Wales (where the Defra-sponsored National Bee Unit operates) we are asking beekeepers to complete a short survey.

The survey [Safeguarding the health of honeybees](#) should take around 15 minutes to complete and all the questions are compulsory.

Our final report is due to be published around the end of the year.

Please complete the survey as an individual beekeeper rather than in collaboration, for example with other members of your local beekeeping organisation. We shall be seeking input from beekeeping organisations through different routes.

The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete.

All information received will be used solely for the purpose of informing the NAO study and will not be passed on to third parties.

**All surveys should be completed by 5 September**

If you encounter any problems with completing this survey or have further comments please contact the team at [beestudy@nao.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:beestudy@nao.gsi.gov.uk) to request the survey in an alternative format. Alternatively call John Hardman (020 7798 7877) or Rachel Coffey (020 7798 5388).

## THE APIARY in SEPTEMBER

Well, summer seems briefer year by year and speaking as a beekeeper at time of writing I will want my hard-won colonies, after the decimation of winter 2007/8, to have their best possible chance of overcoming their biological enemies to start to build up to satisfactory levels in 2009.

The use of oxalic acid has been found to show some promising results, incidentally it's possible to find in the internet recommendations of higher still concentration in solution e.g. from Scotland 38 grammes in 1 litre of water plus 200 grammes of sugar, I make that 0.38% in a 20% sugar solution. From what we've seen this year the higher strengths have given cleaner drone larvae bodies re. Visual varroa count. Maybe now can go-up a bit this year. However there is still a recommendation that this should be applied close to the winter equinox. So what are we going to do to protect from varroa in September?

Many of us will be using the 'strips', which use organic chemicals referred to as 'miticides' that attack the central nervous system of the varroa mite. Published by New Zealand 'MAF' on their Bio security New Zealand website link are some comparisons Apistan fluvalinate\* 95% effective but resistance by the varroa to fluvalinate can reduce this to 30-50 %. Bayvarol flumethrin \* 95-99% effective but there is something called 'cross resistance' it means that mites already developing resistance to fluvalinate become quickly resistant to flumethrin. So you can't alternate Apistan with Bayvarol, maybe this is why Thornes don't stock Bayvarol. It will be available from Bayer Veterinary at Bury St Edmunds however. \* *Active ingredient.*

Thymol based methods. Apiguard is known to most of us. Containing thymol a natural essential oil (used effectively to treat lice in children and pets in that strong smelling shampoo) Basically it penetrates the mites thru their spiracles and burns them up inside. According to the NZ MAF the developing mites in sealed cells are largely unaffected, the time of use is rather critical, after the main brood laying period but while the outdoor daytime temperatures are between 15-20C and do not fall below 12C. Close following of the instructions is important, i.e. you need a second application of an Apiguard tray 2 weeks after the first one. Given the control recommendations the effectiveness has been found indicated by NZ MAF to be between 54-98%. There are other methods of applying thymol and other strongly aromatic organic compounds e.g. one preparation called 'Apilife VAR' contains thymol, eucalyptol, camphor and menthol on a vermiculite tablet. The bees have been known to abscond with these treatments; frankly no one bee or spaniel likes smarting eyes etc. even though it's good for them!

Lower thymol levels are used in a product called Exomite Apis TM. The finely divided thymol is applied in a fine powder mix referred to as 'Entostat' having a high electrostatic charge that will be attracted by the flying bee's opposite charge when alighting on the entrance insert provided in the pack. Dry low humidity conditions are more-or less essential for optimum effectiveness. This method of treatment uses the bee's social habit within the hive of mutual grooming, and grooming and thymol will attend to attached mites. Exomite Apis is not referred-to by NZ MAF, but in all probability adult varroa in the hive and on-bees will be treated to a varying effect dependant on population and weather.

Coming onto a treatment that is reliant on bee's habits within the hive, we can refer to icing sugar! Yes, bees will be stimulated by the sugar and the dusting of their sisters to groom.

Reports are available that this gets a lot of varroa off their hosts' bodies. Sift the lumps out first! And then carefully dust bees on frames enough to give them distinct light whitening. Mesh floors are ideal here, if reports are true, next day you can find numbers of varroa, lying on their backs with legs still wiggling. Wash or scrape them off and make sure they go down a drain or into a bucket of brine. This would seem like a good method to try once a year as part of your integrated pest management. It's 'chemical' free, the bees could do with a bit of a break from strong medicines e.g. there is a report in 'Bee-mail' emanating from research in The Virginia Technical College of Agriculture in the USA that miticides are causing sperm cell reduction and infertility in drones. If this can happen who knows what else may be happening from the human administrations inside the tiny bodily organs of our favourite insects?

Triad

## **NATIONAL HONEY SHOW IN WEYBRIDGE, SURREY**

This year's National Honey Show is to be held at St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2QS on 30th October to 1st November.

This is good news for Berkshire beekeepers as this new location should be much more accessible for most members.

If you want to inspect honey and other bee products and exhibits of the highest quality or want to shop in the excellent trade section or attend first class lectures and workshops, or all of these delights, this is a Show well worth attending.

Further details and the timetable can be found at [www.honeyshow.co.uk](http://www.honeyshow.co.uk)

New members of associations are entitled to free entry, providing their associations have already notified the Show Secretary of their names and addresses.

## **Purchasing Bees**

We have received reports within South Chilterns and from a neighbouring association regarding problems from beekeepers who purchased their nucleus of bees from Easy Bee in Gloucestershire – in some cases via Fragile Planet.

The problem seems to be that Easy Bee supplies what purports to be a nucleus, but the queen arrives in a separate cage, sometimes with attendants, and sometimes not; and no instructions to break off the little tab to release the queen when the candy (if there is any) has been nibbled through. – Presumably the queens are kept in a bank and the 'nucs' are made up immediately prior to dispatch.

We would advise members to buy stocks of bees which comply with the recognised definition of a nucleus: that is containing a young queen which is already laying together with her brood, as well a good numbers of both nurse bees and flying bees to forage. To ensure the small colony can withstand periods of adverse weather it is also important that the nuc contains adequate stores of both pollen and honey.

There seems to be few suppliers of quality nucs, and often the best route is to enquire within your association to see if a colleague can supply a nuc - and if responding to an ad, ask within your association to see if any members have experience with the supplier.

Some beekeepers advise prospective beekeepers to, if possible, request to handle the bees they are going to buy, this is good advice.

## **The Disease Recognition and Varroa Management Day Sunday 15th July, Benson Parish Hall**

The Disease Recognition and Varroa Management Day at Benson Parish Hall on Sunday 15th July was a great success, with an attendance of around 60 beekeepers from both the local area and further afield. Our own Regional Bee Inspector, Ian Homer, was accompanied by the National Bee Inspector, Richard Ball, and Seasonal Bee Inspectors Margaret Holland, Robert Carpenter Turner, Rupert Coutts and David Packham - a huge knowledge resource to draw on.

Talks on aspects of disease recognition and management were backed up by break-out sessions giving participants the chance to ask questions about issues such as varroa management and microscopy for disease recognition, look at equipment and handle specimens of diseased combs. A great emphasis was placed on apiary and hive hygiene. A test demonstrated how much we had learned about disease recognition during the day, and a useful question and answer session dealt with a lot of the questions not covered in the textbooks.

This was an extremely valuable day, and I would strongly recommend attendance on any future event of this sort. I took copious notes - far too many to include here - which I may make available at a future date if there is the interest.

Phil Westwood Secretary SCBKA

## **BBKA NEWS – HIGHLIGHTS**

The August edition of BBKA News includes the following range of articles which should be of interest to members:

Practical beekeeping:

- Inside your hive – seasonal tips (page 2)
- Diary of a new beekeeper (page 10)
- Bee Sting Allergy in British Beekeepers (page 11)
- Nosema Ceranae Spread (page 12)
- What is Nosema Ceranae? (page 13)
- Preparing for the End of the Active Season (page 15)
- Balling of Queens, a Behaviour of Honey Bees (page 16)
- Are Shook Swarms Working? (page 17)

**Ideas/Info for Associations:**

- The Business Corner (page 21)
- Diary of Events (page 24)

Updates on BBKA actions at national level:

- The Royal Show (page 1)
- Chairman's Letter – summarises recent actions (page 2)
- Endorsement Policy – important statement about BBKA's relationship with the agro-chemical industry (page 3)
- Recent bee losses in Germany (page 3)
- Bee health Research and the Adjournment Debate in Parliament (pages 3 & 4)
- Question Time (page 5)

- BBKA Web Site (page 16)
- BBKA Written Examinations - results (page 20)
- The Business Corner (page 21)
- Winter Loss Survey – preliminary results (page 22)
- Newsround (page 24)

Other interesting articles:

- Deformed Wing Virus – a Mystery (page 4)
- How do honey bees navigate? – Part 3 (page 6 & 7)
- The Mandibular Glands (page 8)
- Introductory Genetics for Beekeepers – Part 1 (page 9)
- When is a Helper not a Helper (page 18)
- The Types of British Bumblebee (page 19)
- Bumble Bee Nest Survey – please participate (page 19)
- New Book – ‘A World Without Bees’ (page 21)
- Your Letters (pages 22 & 23)
- Honey Bee or Honeybee? (page 24)

Michael Sheasby – Slough BKS, Berks Federation and BBKA Executive Committee

### **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

### **Ian Homer**

Ian Homer, our Regional Bee Inspector, was taken to hospital in mid-July with heart problems. He is now back at home and his new voice-mail message says he's hoping to emerge back into the beekeeping world in late August. We wish him well and hope that he is soon back in harness.

**The DEFRA website is: - <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'**

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **SCBKA Apiary Visit, July 19th 2008**

#### **Viv and Steve Moll's home apiary at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell**

In July we met at the home of Viv and Steve Moll to examine the hives they keep in their back garden. Although they have most of their stock in British National hives elsewhere, they currently have two WBCs at home and, at the time of visiting, also a five-frame nucleus box and their observation hive. All their hives contain the deep 14x12" frames, which gives the WBC's a capacity equivalent to 13.8 British Standard brood frames and the BNs the equivalent to 15.1 BS brood frames.

Viv and Steve inherited some of Viola Crowe's hives and bees when she retired from beekeeping in 2006. However, because of the proximity of nervous neighbours, they place a high emphasis on a bee which is gentle and will not swarm readily. For this reason, all their hives are re-queened with Buckfast queens from breeder Ged Marshall when appropriate. The hive we examined was due for this treatment, having been artificially swarmed earlier in the season, and now being headed by a new queen who had mated freely in the vicinity. The hive proved to be healthy, well populated and well behaved on examination.

Following the inspection, Reg Hook gave a demonstration of a varroa resistance test. It is known that resistance is high in our region and, sure enough, the test showed that the varroa in the hive were very resistant to pyrethroid miticides of the sort used in the Apistan strips. Viv and Steve treat with Apiguard (which is based on thymol rather than pyrethroids) in the autumn and oxalic acid in the winter where it is required, so their varroa levels are generally low.

After a spirited debate on the merits of the Buckfast versus the native bee – the association has vociferous proponents of both approaches - we retired to an ample and excellent tea prepared by Viv with help from Viola.

Thanks to Viv and Steve for hosting the day, and Reg, as always, for his demonstration.

The next meeting will be our final apiary visit of the year. We are meeting at Janie Hedgcock's apiary at Boundary Farm, Whitchurch Hill, Reading, RG8 7PB (map reference 633 793). Reg will also be talking about preparing your bees for winter.

Our Annual General Meeting is on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Nominations and volunteers for the committee should be sent to the Secretary in advance.

Secretary:- Phil Westwood

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

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Sunday August 20<sup>th</sup> Reading beekeepers, joined by representatives of the Ugandan MUT rural beekeeping project. Were at the kind invitation of Ronald Blower assembled at Ronald's extensive grounds in Shurlock Row to open his beehives and check their progress. Having over wintered swarm collected summer of last year Ronald now has 3 colonies, they have proved to be a bit 'swarmy' despite his ministrations plus a nucleus with bees and a laying queen.

Colony no1 had seen no queen activity for 4-5 weeks and queen in view shiny cleaned-out cells. The nuc was examined and the queen found. The frames and bees were transferred to a suitable brood box and united with 'No.1' with a sheet of newspaper between and jiggged to allow some bee access to the top box as we did successfully in April at Hare Hatch, the objective of course is to introduce a viable queen and build-up the population.

Colony no2 also presents itself as queenless, smaller population than 'no1' but again cleaned-out cells no queen or queen activity. Here we were able to make a provision for the colony to produce a 'scrub queen'. There have been some negative things written about these queens produced by the bees from an egg laid in a worker cell, but to enable the colony to go forward it is a tried and true method of many years standing and in the case of the honeybee of many million years standing! For this we were fortunate to obtain a section of comb from Colony no 3 with sealed brood and a patch of eggs which we attached to a frame and inserted in 'no 2' to await developments.

Colony no3. This is going very well, brood a plenty and active foragers (this is from a May swarm) and what a queen we saw! Very long, full rounded abdominal segments coloured in mottled green and brown like the flowering spike of Rumex (look it up). What a beauty!

Ronald has since reported that the united brood boxes are now as one colony without visible fighting and he will change top brood box for bottom if necessary. Inserted eggs have produced queen cells; four, he will monitor them and colony no 3 continues to flourish!

It's hard to be certain why there have been these queen losses, the bees appear to be healthy and in what little drone brood we opened we saw no varroa. There are a lot of black headed gulls living around Reading these days, this small agile gull can be seen in flocks hawking around at about 50 feet up actively catching flying queen ants during ant swarms, in this writer's opinion they are a threat to queens and drones on mating flights.

With very many thanks to Ronald and all who attended.

September meeting. Beekeepers with family are cordially invited by Tim Sheldon starting at 11.30 sharp on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September to meet at Tim's home New Cottage Collins End, Goring Heath. Tim will take us out to his hives on the estate where they are in some splendid rural locations; afterwards we are invited for a barbeque. This is the final meeting of our summer programme and one of the best. Bring along something for the feast. Full directions from Tim, Jon or Michael

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, Tel. 0118 966 5358

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

The apiary visits have been well attended and enjoyable, gatherings have taken place at the Club Apiary, Bob Loades' and Peter Seagrave's apiaries. The promise of tea and cakes ensured a good attendance at Peter's lovely garden but we had to work hard to earn them. We had to rearrange several of his colonies to make the most of the space available. A lot of brace comb was removed from the frames and even Peter was surprised how much wax was generated. Once this is melted down and cleaned, it will be enough for some candles.

Our chairman, Peter Seagrave, has provided the following and it would be rewarding to have a large number of entries:

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

### **First Winter Meeting**

This year we want to put some fun into the first winter meeting of the year which will take place on Wednesday October 8<sup>th</sup>. We have decided to have a little competition between the Wokingham members for the best tasting pot of honey on the day. Each jar will be assessed by everyone present at the meeting and the pot scoring the highest number of votes will win the trophy described below. There will be a surprise guest – a honey judge who will advise us on what to look for when we are judging the honey. So, put the date in your diary and let's have a big turnout and get the winter meetings off to a good start.

#### **The Albert Spragg Centenary Cup**

Albert Spragg is President of the Wokingham & District BKA and a great advocate of learning through shared experience. Bert, as he likes to be called, was 100 years old on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. For many years, Bert presided over the Sunday morning meetings at the Association apiary and passed on his valuable experience both to new and established beekeepers.

Bert would always make the apiary visits entertaining and educational and in this spirit the Centenary Cup has been donated. The rules are simple – bring along a pot, or pots, of your honey to the meeting and let your fellow members judge which pot of honey deserves to be the best. The honey can be any colour, consistency or flavour and it should be presented in a standard glass 454 grams jar with no markings. Go though your pots of honey, pick a good one and bring it along. You could be the proud keeper of the trophy for twelve months.

Peter Seagrave Chairman

## **SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY**

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

The apiary has continued to do well and the harvest looks promising despite the weather. The new queens are laying well, apart from the Dartington which it is hoped will have the new queen established by the next meeting in mid-August.

The Apiguard treatment is due to be added then, after the honey has been removed earlier, though there is some concern that the brood boxes are light on stores. Hopefully they will have brought in enough by then.

The apiary meetings will continue in September on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, starting at 2.30pm, when preparations for the winter will be made and any feeding done after the Apiguard treatment has finished. If you have not been there before, directions can be obtained from the numbers below or any other member of the committee shown on your programme.

The delayed Sunningdale Carnival is to be held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September. This is an excellent opportunity for us to promote beekeeping and understanding of bees and a final opportunity to add signatures to the BBKA Petition to Government for increased investment in bee health research. If you can assist at the Society's stand for part of that day, please call or email Michael Sheasby (see below).

September also sees the start of the winter programme of meetings at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. Because of new parking restrictions around the hall, if the car park is full it is advisable to park in Bolton Avenue, just a short walk away, where they do not apply. This is the next but one exit from the nearby roundabout and just before the exit for the hospital.

The first meeting will be the annual Review of the Year and will give us all an opportunity to learn what sort of season our fellow beekeepers have experienced and to hear a report as to the current state of affairs at the Society Apiary. This will be on Tuesday, the 9th of September, and will start at the usual time of 8pm. We look forward to seeing everyone there.

In October we have our Honey Show on Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup>. This has become a firm favourite in our annual programme and is when we can all exhibit our honey and hive products. Newcomers to beekeeping may enter any class but also have their own Novice class for honey, which no one can enter if they have won a prize before. We usually have a very lively and informative evening where the Honey Judge will inspect the exhibits and award the prizes, giving helpful tips along the way to the various (anonymous) exhibitors. The schedule will be sent out in good time for you to decide which classes to enter and all you need to do is bring along your exhibits on the night to book them in. Unless, of course, you are entering multiple classes, when it would be helpful to have prior notification in order to have your entry labels ready for you.

Please note that the Honey Show starts at an earlier time than usual. **Booking in and staging will commence from 7pm and the judging will start at 7.30pm.** This is to allow the judge plenty of time to award the prizes and for the array of cups to be presented after an interval for refreshments. If you have any queries about the show, please contact me by phone as below or on [jddodson.three@virgin.net](mailto:jddodson.three@virgin.net).



All details of our meetings can be found on the website [www.whericanwego.com](http://www.whericanwego.com). Just enter SL4 and check the 'free of charge to all' box before searching.

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 **FIRST POST** (Around 10.00am) on the fifteenth of the Month for the Following Month, **Contributions received after this will be held over for a later month.**

It was suggested at the Federation Committee Meeting that the deadline should be the twentieth of the month, however, for at least for a couple of months, this will not fall in line with the Editor's commitments.

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 15th 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, The Studio,  
1 Grove Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8PN. Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451

**Free:** Mead making equipment including several demi-johns, air locks, hydrometer, corks, labels etc, etc. Best offer secures. Derek Porter 0118 979 0326

**For Sale** 4 WBC supers, in good condition. £3 each or £10 the lot. Buyer collects.  
Derek Porter 0118 979 0326

**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.

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