



**FEDERATION OF  
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**  
President: Mr. George Hawthorne

February 2001  
Number 539

## NEWS

Hon. Secretary  
Mrs. S. Napper  
56 Lamorna Crescent  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
RG31 5WF  
(0118 945 5094)

The Federation, its Council and its Officers cannot be held responsible  
for the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.  
(E-mail: berksbees@lineone.net)

Hon. Editor  
R.F.Crocker  
25 Shiplake Bottom  
Peppard Common  
Oxon RG9 5HH  
(0118 972 2315)  
roncrocker@btinternet.com

### Future Events

Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> March	Newbury's Leaver Memorial Lecture	Details : General Secretary
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> April	Spring Convention Stoneleigh	Tickets in advance From Mrs B. Showler

## BEEKEEPING COLLECTABLES

George Hawthorne on T.V. – Channel 4 - Collectors Lot. Scheduled for 3pm on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

### FROM THE EDITOR

Colonies have been using up their stores at an alarming rate and I have had calls asking where I get my white fondant and how much it costs. It seems that some of you have paid well over the odds, I get mine from a Tilehurst bakery and have it delivered to one of their branches, it comes in 12½ kilo blocks, price varies but my last purchase cost £9.65 per block (77p per kilo). Enquire from your local cake maker and make sure of the price before you buy.

Beulah's Newsletter is appended at the end of this News. Please read and note that because she did not find evidence in all colonies inspected that they are free of disease. The term used is "apparently free". Most of the cases found were on "Apiary tours". This suggests that more tours should be organized; anyone interested in taking part in a tour should contact their Secretary who can then liaise with the Chairman or the Editor, state if weekday or weekend is preferred. We have left it too late to book Beulah for a Saturday but an alternative can probably be arranged.

Do bees get honey from maize? As far as I know, they don't, but last year they did work maize for pollen, probably because of a shortage of pollen due to weather conditions. I, for one, was sceptical until I saw it for myself. Makes one think!

RFC

### THE APIARY IN FEBRUARY

Were you in the Boy Scouts or Girl Guides in your youth? Their motto as I remember, was BE PREPARED. This is relevant in our hobby of beekeeping. Although it may be cold, wet or foggy outside things are hopefully happening in your hives. The Queen has been laying for quite some time now and the bees are 'woofing' their winter stores, to generate warmth, in order to keep the temperature up for the brood.

It is unwise to open them at this time, unless it is a warm mild day with hardly any wind. Hefting (raising the rear of the hive to assess its weight) is recommended. If you are in any doubt use the wetted bag of sugar on the crown board, fondant, or candy, all of which have been explained in previous issues.

Some other jobs you can be getting on with besides cleaning your equipment, you could be assembling some frames. Don't fit them with foundation yet as it is too cold and the wax will be brittle and liable to break. If you are able to work with wood you could make more supers and brood boxes. Your bees will need at least three supers per hive. If you need more equipment but feel unable to make them, a trip to Thornes of Windsor or a phone call to John Belcher at Pangbourne is recommended.

Take a good look at the entrances of your hives; a lot can be deduced by what you see at any time of the year. If you failed to fit your mouse guards in the autumn or fitted them too late, you may have a resident mouse. If, at this time, you see large pieces of wax behind the guard or being thrown out, then you may have an unwelcome guest. However fine wax dust at the entrance is a good sign, the bees are busily uncapping their stores so all is well.

You should not ignore your charges during the winter. They, or the mouse guard, may have become dislodged due to the high winds we seem to experience these days. Likewise debris may be obstructing the entrance if they are sited near the ground. I strongly recommend that you should use hive stands to eliminate these problems. It won't be long now before winter is a distant memory, you are desperately trying to stop them swarming (generally once they have decided to do this you can't stop them), you are stacking supers on and looking forward to a bumper crop. Enjoy your beekeeping, you are privileged to have a wonderful hobby, which can be rewarding both summer and winter.

Ambrosia

## **BERKSHIRE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE - INTERMEDIATE COURSE.**

- Having trouble with excessive, unexplained, swarming?
- What do you do with a colony that has suddenly turned very bad tempered?
- You have never tried to breed your own queens.
- Recognising disease.
- How to choose the strain of bee that suits your method of beekeeping.

These topics are just a few that will be covered on the intermediate beekeeping course at Burchetts Green College of Agriculture. Commences Monday evening, 7.30 - 9.30 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2001 for a total of 6 evenings. Ring the college and request a brochure 01628 824444 or contact the Tutor, George Butler, on 01189 83 2735.

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**Pathogenic fungi: new ways to fight Varroa**  
**Katie Shaw**  
**ROTHAMSTED IACR**

**Friday 16th March 2001 at 7.30pm**  
**Upper Bucklebury Memorial Hall, near Thatcham, Berkshire**

Newbury Beekeepers Association warmly invites you to the 19th Annual Leaver Memorial Lecture.

This year our speaker will bring some fascinating news about ongoing research at Rothamsted on the search for suitable pathogenic fungi which can be used to manage the number of Varroa in colonies. The research is now in its third year and Katie Shaw will report on the latest findings, which we have heard are very promising.

**The lecture is free and all beekeepers in the region are most welcome.**

Directions from your Secretary or from the Editor

## BEES in the CURRICULUM

Bees in the curriculum now has its own site on the Internet  
Have a look at [www.bees4kids.org.uk](http://www.bees4kids.org.uk)

Your Editor would like the e-mail addresses of your local schools either direct or through your Secretary.

All the best,  
Sylvia and Raymond

## £7.50 Notes on the BBKA October Open forum.

In case you were wondering, £7.50 is what you pay each year to keep the BBKA going. I will use it as a general title for occasional articles on what you get for your money. This time I will select items of interest from the Open Forum, which I attended on your behalf. These are informal discussion meetings intended to provide a balance in the autumn to the formal Annual Delegates meeting, held in the spring. Space only permits notes. Items will probably be more fully covered in the next BBKA newsletter.

1. You will remember in a recent £7.50 I reported that the National Bee Unit are developing a better treatment for EFB, well the BBKA have commissioned Rothamsted to develop at test for the presence of the EFB bug which we can all use. With both of these on board, we will be able to tackle the problem ourselves, much more efficiently than the Ministry.
2. The bad news is that the Government are in the process of commissioning a value-for-money study of its support of beekeeping. In other words, we are again at risk of losing the Bee Inspectors and the National Bee Unit. With the BSE affair still rumbling MAFF is under a cloud any aspect of their work is going to be under the Treasury microscope and we all know what that means. BBKA advice is, don't write to your MP yet, but start composing something pithy for use early in the New Year. Also, plan to maximise the use of your Regional bee Inspectors next year
3. The excellent "Bees in the Curriculum" produced by BBKA to help junior schools introduce bees and beekeeping to children, has not been taken up anything like as well as it deserves. This is because WE are not taking it along and introducing it to our local schools. How can we whine on about there not being enough people coming into the craft when we can't be bothered to take up the initiatives that are provided for us? Ask your Association to get some copies and get stuck in.
4. Your membership of BBKA entitles you to up to £2,000,000 in insurance if your bees get you into trouble. However, like all insurance policies there must be a few cop-outs. As ever, it helps to have read the fine print. Perhaps someone in Berks. who understands these things might like to write a short piece on the subject, in English, for the newsletter. If, however, many of us now like to sell our honey at a Farmer's market or take our BEES to a Show. Most of the organisers of such events now require £5,000,000 worth of cover from participators. BBKA have found out that this will increase what we have to pay by an estimated 8p. There will, of course, be a great deal of fuss about if and how this enormous sum is to be paid. However, when it is over the BBKA will still be keeping up to date on your behalf.
5. Last year the Government published details of all the trial sites for GM crops in England. NOT TRUE. At least three (backup) sites were used but not notified. The only good thing about this is that the crops were maize and sugar beet, which are not honey producers. It is also a crumb of comfort to us in Berkshire that the unpublished sites were in Shropshire and Devon. With the Establishment against us, it looks as if we are going to need a National uprising a la Yugoslavia to stop GM in its tracks. There is now certainly no way we can declare our honey to be GM free. If we move our hives six miles from the published trial site, we may be moving the six miles nearer the unpublished one.

Apart from item 5 above it was an encouraging but exhausting day at Stoneleigh (more from £7.50 next month). One comes home from these things with the brain (such as it is) churning. On this occasion I had the great good fortune to know that Jonathan Holl, a member of Slough Association and an accomplished player on the church organ, was giving a recital at St. Giles, Reading. Wonderful, stirring, diverting, calming, uplifting----- I could go on for hours. Certainly just the thing to soothe the savage breast after a day at Stoneleigh. Social Secretaries please note something different may be available from within our ranks!

Bernhard Schumann, Annual Delegate.

## **IMPROVING WHAT WE HAVE**

The recent reports in *Bee Craft* of the very successful BIBBA conference in Sheffield bring to mind earlier, well-organized serious attempts in Northeast Scotland to 'improve what we have'. In 1976, my company sent me to work in the Middle East and, by agreement, my five-colony apiary was cared for in my absence by an Association member. Whilst I was abroad, the Islamic revolution took place in Iran, and the new regime no longer approved of expatriate workers. I returned to Kent to find my apiary reduced to one colony, occupied by very foul-tempered bees.

Fortunately, a posting to Aberdeen was offered and accepted, and the removal of family, furniture, and apiary successfully completed. The only serious problem remaining was what to do with the bees, the temper of which grew even worse in the cool conditions of their new locality.

At this time, my beekeeping fortunes took a turn for the better, and have stayed that way ever since. This transformation was due to seeking and taking the advice of the local Beekeeping Advisor, Bernhard Möbus, NDB, who was assisted by the recently graduated Matthew Allan, who now also holds the NDB. They were based at the North of Scotland College of Agriculture (now part of Scottish Agricultural Colleges Ltd).

The previous adviser had preached that, 'only aggressive bees gather the most honey'. From his wide knowledge of beekeeping on the continent of Europe and from his BIBBA connections, Bernhard knew that docile bees could do just as well in honey gathering, with the enormous bonus of being a pleasure to handle at all times.

### **Queen cells distributed**

Bernhard was determined to reverse the genetic defects in the local honey bee population that they had inherited. He sought and found a superb local queen to breed from; the college made available grafted larvae in easily-transportable cell cups; local beekeepers (some from 100 miles or more) collected their larvae from the apiary at Graibstone, outside Aberdeen, for introduction into their own prepared nuclei.

### **Improvement in two generations**

The result for me, and for dozens of other beekeepers, was outstandingly successful and achieved in only a few generations. Our experience probably confirms Steve Taber's assertion at BIBBA 2000 that vast improvement can be made in honeybee stock in only two generations. With natural mating, regression occurs from time to time, of course, but this has been kept at bay in my own apiary at Henley by careful, simple records and by elimination of bad temper. When colony behaviour descends to DDD standard instead of my target AAA, the queen must go, but I also dispose of all her drones.

This drastic action has been necessary on only three occasions in 15 years. With the general steady rise in beekeeping standards, perhaps we are slowly winning the struggle in the UK to, 'improve what we have'.

Don Thomson

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

The December meeting on 'Mead and how to make it' was well received. Roger Hosking talked on his 50 years experience making and drinking mead, the art of which had been handed on from his father - from an original recipe. Bob Loades, our librarian, followed on with a demonstration of modern equipment suitable to effect an excellent 'brew'. He recommended 'The Brew Shop' at 10 Alexandra Rd, South Farnborough, Hants, telephone: 01252 540386, particularly as a supplier of dried yeast.

Members enjoyed the chance to try various meads, including a vintage of over 10 years. A very enjoyable evening was rounded off with festive fayre and coffee.

### **Reminders**

10<sup>th</sup> January meeting entitled 'Encaustic Art with Wax'

Annual subscription and insurance to new Treasurer, Mr William Napper, 56 Lamorna Crescent, Tilehurst, READING, RG31 5WF

Check and test surplus equipment for wax moth!

Sylvia Smallbone

Hon. Secretary: John Edwards 0118 934 0238

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

Our December meeting was the long awaited talk by Tony Vetta. Both Tony and his wife are great enthusiasts on the subject of bats and regularly have injured and orphaned ones at their home. We learnt that recently some long held beliefs about the number of species have been turned upside down by DNA research, which has shown that some formerly thought to be related are now known to be quite different. We all found it very informative and were fascinated by the rather sleepy little one they had brought along to show us.

Our next meeting promises to be equally informative, this time on the subject that we are all interested in and will be on Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> February at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor at 8 o'clock as usual. Our guest speaker is our local Bee Disease Inspector, Beulah Cullen and her subject is: "Help - my bees have died!" Don't miss it! Any members from neighbouring Associations are welcome to join us as well.

The March meeting is replaced by the Annual Dinner; date and venue still to be announced at the time of writing, but the order forms will be distributed with this newsletter. Make a note in your diary of where, when, and then return the form as soon as possible please.

Newsletter items to: Joy Dodson. Burnham (01628) 664091

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION**

Our December meeting was our non-beekeeping evening. Nigel Snell gave a very interesting talk illustrated by beautiful slides on the re-introduction of Red Kites to Oxfordshire. They are now well established and their future seems secure. A good attendance, which included visitors from Reading and Slough Associations then spent an enjoyable social get-together with suitable Christmas fare well organised by our ladies under the direction of Viola.

Our February meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> will be series of mini-lectures by a selection of our own members on a subject of their choice. A lot can be learned by hearing of problems, how they were dealt with, which have been encountered by beginners and long time beekeepers alike.

Hon. Secretary:- George Butler 0118 983 2735

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Our presence at the Reading Farmers market on Saturday 2nd December was a great success. The festive ambience, was helped along by music from the roving players and Father Christmas, who wished all stall holders a merry Christmas as he handed out Christmas cards. The camaraderie among our fellow stallholders was great and the atmosphere was enjoyed by all.

Our table was well provisioned with goods for sale, including honey in a variety of sizes, complete with Christmasy covers, candies and some wonderful encaustic wax paintings produced by our talented Ted Conway. Many thanks to Reg. and Elaine, who, although unable to provide any produce, travelled a considerable way from their home to "man" the stall for the morning with Peter Kimber, and my long suffering wife (because she has to put up with me), Janet. Thanks also to Hazel for her contribution of various honeys, wax and candles; which added so much to enhance our layout.

At our last meeting of the year we were entertained by our speaker, Alan Copeland with his slides of the curiosities in and around Reading. His display was accompanied by sounds relevant to the picture being shown and he included a lot of detailed information, which greatly enhanced his very professional display. He does a comprehensive list of titles, so hopefully we may look forward to seeing him again sometime.

May I remind you that your subscriptions were due on the 1<sup>st</sup> January and now appear to be overdue. I am afraid that we are unable to send you the Newsletter after February 2001. If this is relevant to you, this paragraph will be highlighted.

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

**Newsletter "Deadline":** - Contributions to arrive with the Editor by the First Post 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:-

Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV.  
Telephone:- (0118) 947 9450/5451

GET THE BEST DEALS LOCALLY by ringing John Belcher on 0118 984 2321 for the full range of Thornes equipment. Most items are in stock and the rest just a phone call away. Apistan, together with other approved treatments at very competitive prices including the recently released Thymol based products, Apiguard, and Thymovar. Rendered beeswax in exchange for foundation.

**SURPLUS HONEY FOR SALE IN 30lb CONTAINERS** £1.10 per pound. Apply 0118 947 9450/0370 273092.



This is the news letter that I meant to write in October!  
Let's get the worst bit over first.

## **Foul Brood**

The news on the foul brood incidence front is not good. Cases of European foul brood in England were the highest since records began in 1942. The Southern Region had the highest number of infected colonies for 6 years; congratulations to those who spotted the problem themselves but **most of the cases were found by the inspectors!** At the end of this letter is a table showing the distribution of reported disease in the Region and the fate of the infected colonies. The good news is that only 3 cases of American foul brood were reported in the Region. Also, about 3500 colonies inspected in the Region were apparently disease free.

## **The incidence of EFB won't decline unless beekeepers learn to recognise and report it in its early stages.**

If you have not already done so, please try to include some element of disease recognition training in your summer programme. Apiary tours and disease recognition workshops, (Disease Training Days) will be on offer, as in previous years. Please remember that weekends are at a premium in the early part of the season, so book your dates as soon as possible.

## **Shook swarms**

If you are unfortunate enough to find EFB in your apiary, "shook swarm" manipulations would be a sensible option to choose. The shook swarm trial for EFB is progressing well, with mostly very encouraging results. There have been a few problems with absconding colonies and loss of queens but at present the success rate for the year 2000 is around 94%, with no recurrence of disease so far. The trial will continue next year.

## **Brood Comb Change**

During winter, bees rely on spells of fine weather to allow them to take cleansing flights. In prolonged periods of inclement weather, bees may be forced to defaecate in the hive and may deposit pathogens on the combs. Other bees have to "clean up" and acquire infections themselves. Nosema and Amoeba diseases are passed on in this way. It is also possible that undiagnosed foul brood bacteria may be present on the brood combs from the previous season. In my experience, there are several good reasons for changing all brood combs each year:-

Any disease pathogens which have been lurking on the brood combs over winter, are removed.

Clean comb seems to have a beneficial effect on the colonies, which build up very quickly and produce good honey crops.

New comb has fewer drone cells, therefore less opportunity for Varroa to multiply; it also has fewer holes, leaving more cells available for worker brood.

Clean comb is much easier to examine thoroughly; eggs can be seen much more easily, as the light filters through the base of the cells.

Producing new wax occupies the wax builders and may divert their attention from swarming.

Why not try to change all combs on at least one colony this Spring? I think you will be pleased with the result. The last page of this letter tells you how to do it.

## ***Melissococcus pluton* has changed its name.**

The bacterium which causes EFB is now *Melissococcus plutonius*, in deference to classical scholars. It hasn't become less infectious!

## **Varroa**

Varroa mites seem to have been generally well controlled this season. I have heard of a few colonies which perished during treatment, which suggests that those colonies were treated too late in the season. It is very important to treat sufficiently early to ensure an adequate population of healthy "winter bees".

## Pyrethroid Resistance

Beekeepers rely heavily on Apistan and Bayvarol to control the mite. Resistance of mites to the active ingredients of these treatments (pyrethroids) is already evident in some areas of mainland Europe. The National Bee Unit is currently preparing a sampling technique which will be in use next season, to determine whether there are any pockets of resistant mites in England or Wales. These tests will only be done with the full consent of the beekeeper.

### Varroa name change

The mite that we have been combatting for the last 9 years is not the species *Varroa jacobsoni* but a different species, *Varroa destructor*. At least the name is appropriate and easy to remember! Its virulence hasn't changed.

### Teaching events

Last season, Southern Region Bee Inspectors held 29 apiary tours or apiary demonstrations and 6 disease recognition training days. In addition, during the year there have been 18 talks to BKA's.

### We are here to help – use us!

### Major Public Events

During the season the National Bee Unit was represented at the Royal Bath & West Show and the New Forest & Hampshire Show. We were kept very busy at both of these events, with plenty of interest in our exhibits, particularly from the young generation. We also assisted at the Marwell Bee Week, which was another extremely successful venture. Well done to those who arranged it.

### Basic Microscopy Courses

I am planning to hold two very basic microscopy courses at my home in Hillingdon; the two dates that I have in mind are Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. The topics covered will be diagnosis of the adult bee diseases, Nosema, Tracheal mites and Amoeba; making slides of pollen grains and, if time allows, some bee anatomy. The dates are not irrevocably fixed; if anyone is interested please give me a ring. I hope to have 6 participants for each day and I expect to start at 10.00am and finish around 4.00pm. All equipment will be provided but you may bring your own bees to test.

### Honey Prices

I shall shortly be asked to provide for MAFF statistics, average prices for wholesale, direct sale and bulk sale, for "flower", "heather" and cut comb honey; I also need average yields for main crop and heather honey. I would be most grateful if you could supply me with any of this information for your district.

### Spray Liaison Co-ordinators

I have already had one request for this information for next year from a branch of the National Farmers Union. Please will secretaries send me the names of spray liaison co-ordinators as soon as they are appointed. If I hear nothing, I shall either send last year's names or give the Association secretary's name.

### News letters and foul brood maps by e-mail

This letter and the monthly foul brood maps issued during the inspection season, are available to any interested person by e-mail. Enter "subscribe" in the subject line, followed by the Southern Region county in which you are interested and send to me at the address below. If you have e-mail but receive this letter by Royal Mail, please send me your e-mail address for future communications.

Thank you all for the help and encouragement you have given to me and to the seasonal bee inspectors during the past year; I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Beulah

Regional Bee Inspector. Beulah M Cullen  
26 Sweetcroft Lane Hillingdon  
Middx UB10 9LD  
Tel/Fax 01895 810469  
e-mail [b.cullen@csl.gov.uk](mailto:b.cullen@csl.gov.uk)



# Brood Comb Change



You will need:-

- 1 Clean brood box filled with clean frames and new foundation
- 2 Spare queen excluder
- 3 2 Dummy boards
- 4 1 gallon of thick sugar syrup (warm if possible) and a feeder

## **\*Method**

- 1 Early in March, clean the floor board.
- 2 Mid March; remove any empty lateral frames from the old brood box; close up remaining frames and put in a dummy board. Put the new brood box directly on top of the old one, (no queen excluder) with new frames vertically aligned over the old ones and add a dummy board. Keep the surplus new frames safe until required.
- 3 Feed colony with the gallon of warm syrup, put on top of the new brood box; trickle a little of the syrup down the frames to alert the bees to its presence. Bees will not secrete wax with only stored honey; they need an “income”. Clean (scorch) the roof and cover board before replacing.
- 4 Bees will move into the new box and begin to draw the foundation. When there are enough cells, the queen will move up to lay. As soon as the queen is in the top box, put the spare excluder between the two boxes to prevent her from returning to the lower box. (Be absolutely sure the queen is in the top box!)
- 5 Add new frames to the top box as required.
- 6 Three to four weeks after insertion of the queen excluder, all brood in the bottom box will have emerged; the box can be removed, the wax melted and the box and frames thoroughly cleaned.
- 7 It would be sensible to replace the floor with a clean one at this stage.
- 8 It may be necessary to put a queen excluder over the upper box and add a super before removal of the lower box, if there is an early nectar flow.
- 9 At all times keep watch on the stores and feed if necessary.

\*This system works very well in the Thames Valley, using National hives. The larger the hive body, the more lateral frames should be removed, to persuade the bees to move upwards for more space. If there is an early rape crop in the vicinity, you may find the new brood box full of rape honey! If you can lift it, extract the honey and you have your new brood combs!

## Foulbrood in Southern Region 2000

County	AFB	EFB	EA	EDA	EDB	EDH	EDR	EDS	EFB destroyed	EFB treated
BERKS	0	33	0	0	5	0	1	2	8	25
BUCKS	0	32	0	0	1	3	2	1	7	25
DORSET	1	34	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	30
HANTS	1	98	1	0	11	8	1	8	28	70
IoW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NHA	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
OXON	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
WILTS	1	31	0	3	6	2	2	1	14	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>168</b>

04/12/2000

AFB = American foul brood  
 EFB = European foul brood  
 EA = AFB & EFB in same colony  
 EDA = EFB destroyed because of  
 AFB in same apiary

EDB = EFB destroyed at request of beekeeper  
 EDH = EFB destroyed, heavily infected colony  
 EDR = EFB destroyed; recurrence after treatment  
 EDS = EFB destroyed; small colony