



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

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NEWS

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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

Federation Event ?	Will it go ahead?	
November 15,16,17	National Honey Show	

FROM THE EDITOR

It is now almost the end of April and we still do not have beekeeping weather. I still stand by my prediction that 2001 will be a repeat of 1947. The weathermen seem to be coming to the same conclusion that this summer will be hot, however, they blame global warming. My forecast of the foot and mouth situation is wildly short; maybe an "inquest " will shed light on the reasons and apportion blame, no doubt, any incompetence and the part that the government played will be whitewashed. Most beekeepers in our area have been lucky, only a handful of us have been affected by restrictions, many beekeepers in the north and the west have been unable to get to their bees

The first week in April I removed my wire netting in order to do some feeding, this proved disastrous, woodpeckers attacked every hive in the apiary, and three were reduced to firewood. This is unusual this late in spring, but then we have had an unusual winter and spring. Some of the remaining colonies are now woefully short of bees with a lot of chilled brood, thankfully the queens are OK but I cannot expect a crop of honey here in May.

There have been many reports of acarine and failed queens from all over the country, imported queens seem to have fared worse than home bred queens, my own failures were home bred. Maybe beekeepers are reluctant to admit to their own failures. As far as acarine is concerned, formic and oxalic acid has a good effect as has thymol, personally, I do not like using acid. There are several good thymol based products on the market. I now use Apiguard which can be spread along the top bars to get better evaporation when the ambient temperature is low but remember, the lower the temperature, the less effective the product against Varroa therefore careful judgement must be exercised. We do not want to breed resistant Varroa.

RFC

THE APIARY IN JUNE

It was a very wet early spring, even now, as I write these notes at the beginning of April; we are still getting more rain. I am not a prophet, but I reckon we might have many swarms in the latter part of April into May and on to June. The reason could be this. In February, we had some warm spells and the bees were busy on the early pollen to feed the young, as well as knocking back their winter stores in order to produce food for their Queen. She in turn was increasing her egg laying and so the spiral continued. Then came the wet weather again, interspersed with a day or so of fine weather and the bees continued to build up. During the wet spells when they couldn't get out the bees were getting over crowded. Even then, they could have been planning to swarm when the weather improved.

If they are building queen cells, follow the advice previously given, either separate the queen from the uncapped brood and knock out all the cells bar two or follow the numerous schemes in the many books that have been written on this subject. Look up artificial swarms, the Demaree, the Hall method, or if you have time on your hands and really want to 'go to town' have a go at the Snelgrove method! One last word on this vast subject, don't confuse swarm cells with supersedure cells. As a rule, swarm cells are numerous, are of various ages, and are generally found at the edges of the comb. If one is capped the queen will have left home. Supersedure cells are fewer in number are of the same age and are found in the centre of the comb. The queen will probably still be in residence, indeed it is not unknown for her to be still there when her daughter is born. They have even been seen on the face of the same comb, both laying at the same time. Don't worry about removing her, the bees will do that when they are ready.

Any time you are worried whether or not you are queen-less, just place a comb of eggs or very young larvae from another hive into the doubtful hive. After three or four days, have a look at it. If they have begun to draw out queen cells they are queen-less, and it will be OK to introduce a queen in a hair curler, or introduction cage. I use a large hair curler for this operation. It is prepared by stopping one end with a paste consisting of icing sugar and honey. The queen is inserted and this end is sealed. This is then fitted between the comb faces. The bees can touch and feed the queen through the hair curler but they can't sting her. Meanwhile they are eating away the paste bung. After about three days, they are able to release the queen and by this time they have acquired her scent, so they will now accept her.

As mentioned last month if your bees have been working oil seed rape, this should be extracted as soon as possible due to its tendency to granulate quickly. Remember you can extract even uncapped honey if, when given a good shake it doesn't come out. Incidentally, you maybe able to recognise if they are on OSR, as they will arrive back at the hive with their faces, maybe covered in yellow pollen and a large yellow pellet attached to hairs (the corbicula) on their back legs.

Keep going with replacing the supers when necessary.

Ambrosia

News from the 2001 BBKA Annual Delegate meeting Article 2.

£7.50 –Second report from the BBKA ADM.

In the second half of the Annual Delegate meeting we find out whether the Counties can agree enough to get the BBKA to do what we want. Last year only three propositions made it to the floor, two proved impractical to the Executive and the third resulted in developments in recommended training procedures for new beekeepers

This year there were 22 propositions –far too many to be adequately debated in a single afternoon. Most were badly drafted and therefore resulted in a mass of argument about trivia and points of order during which the main points were lost. An example of this was our own proposition 3, on Disease Liaison Contacts, where I added at the end a suggestion on how the system might be funded. Because this would hamper the main proposition, I withdrew it, but to no avail. Everyone wanted to tell me that it wouldn't work. Certainly, nobody wanted to find a way to make it work, or move beekeeping forward.

In this sort of nit-picking mood (all too common with the current BBKA), the ADM. achieves nothing and so I withdrew our other two propositions. A defeated proposition cannot be brought up again for three years, but a withdrawn one can be redrafted and re-introduced when the climate is better.

I have since started to set up an Email liaison with other Delegates so that we can, in future, check each other's propositions, present them in a more acceptable form and, perhaps, gain a bit of support in advance.

By the way, next years ADM. will be in January, so we'll need to get our propositions agreed at the August Council meeting. If you want anything brought up, please get it in to Sandra Napper or me as soon as practicable.

Bernhard Schumann. Federation Chairman.

BEE INVOLVED

Contributions or photographs for the Newsletter can be sent by e-mail but the name of the sender must be included but need not be published. berksbees@lineone.net

Editor

Letter to the Editor

I read with dismay in last months newsletter, the lack of new and younger (is 32 young?) members getting involved with bee-keeping, so I thought I would tell you a little about my interest. I'm very new to bee keeping; this is only my second year. My interested came about through my father-in-law, Derek Brown, who kept bees for over 25 years. Derek has hung up his smoker (well actually passed it on to me); Derek was a bee-keeping-back sufferer. I attended a few swarm collections with him and this added to my interest. I'll never forget the fist time I saw him hit the tree hard with a swarm hanging from it and the bees falling, as one, to the white sheet below where the skep was ready, I was ready also TO RUN!

I attended George Butler's excellent course at the Berkshire College of Agriculture and was hooked. I have only managed to attend a few meetings due to work and family commitments but I'm keen to take this new hobby further. I did start with two small colonies last year, but had a few problems. One of them decided to "fly off " not sure quite how I offended them but they left en-mass for a nicer home somewhere and the other colony I have to admit didn't make it through the winter. Yes I did keep them warm, yes I did feed them, but I don't think there was enough of them to keep going through the winter.

With two young boys, two and one years old, it may not be easy to keep a couple of hives in the garden any more. I'm sure you all know how inquisitive little people are! So, I have a request for someone out there. I've decided that this year I'd like to help an experienced beekeeper who I can learn from. I know I have a great deal to learn and the deal is I can help with the "humping about". I'm lucky enough to have a job where I work a lot from home so as long as we can plan a little ahead the apiary visits (weather dependant I know) I can be quite flexible.

So who would like a helper this year, someone who has only a few hives would be best and not too far from Streatley area where I live.

Alan Clark

DISEASE

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Dr. Beulah Cullen. Hillingdon, Middlesex.
South Eastern Region:- Mr. James Morton

Fax/Telephone number 01895 810469
Fax/Telephone number 020 8571 6450

Appointed Bee Inspectors:-

Mr. Julian Johnston. Oxfordshire & North West Berks:
Mr. David Purchase. Hampshire & South West Berkshire:

Telephone number 01993 850432
Telephone number 01256 781288

SWARM COLLECTION

We still want names for a National list of beekeepers willing to collect swarms. If you are willing to have your name and telephone number included on a list, please contact your own Secretary or the News Editor. As you would be contacted by telephone, it does not matter if you do not have an e-mail address, also, you would be expected to state your own charges. So far there are only three names put forward for our Federation area. Some beekeepers do not wish their names to go on a published list but would be willing to help in an emergency, we want to know about these also. DO NOT LET SWARMS GO.

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Due to the Foot and Mouth crisis, the Wokingham and Reading Show has been cancelled this year.

We the committee, had already decided that we wouldn't be there as they were asking us to contribute. They also required us to pay to park in their public car park some distance from the flying bee display but we feel it is necessary to be close to our bees at all times as before, and deserve free parking. We felt that our contribution to the show was an asset, as our bee handling demonstration never failed to draw a large audience, but this did not seem to be appreciated by the new organisers. Another contributing factor was that members were reluctant to support our show, leaving it to the same few each year to give of their time to set it up and 'man' it during the event. So ends an unbroken period of about 15 years attendance at Reading shows!

However, there maybe a light at the end of the tunnel. In the autumn, we intend holding a mini honey show at our usual venue, with judging carried out in public, so you will get a chance to see what the judge is looking for. Details will be given later.

It has just been revealed that a very large area of GM maize is being planted on Reading University-owned land near Cutbush Lane Shinfield. Although this crop is wind pollinated, honeybees will collect its pollen. Surprise, Surprise, James Chapman of the Daily Mail 13th April reports, 'Trials of *non-GM spring osr* at nine sites in England and Scotland, contain traces of a GM crop' We beekeepers have been saying this could happen for months! RAH.

At the time of composing these notes, the program for future events is not available.

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

In view of past problems, it is intended to avoid any debate on the subject of GM crops but information will be allowed. Many beekeepers wish to know what is being grown in their area

Editor

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

Our thanks go to Marcella Skinner for hosting our first out door meeting of the season. The blackthorn winter was into its second week, and with a temperature of barely 50 degrees Fahrenheit our demonstrator Dr Ian Wootton fully examined three colonies and skilfully showed how to handle bees in less than ideal conditions. All three colonies had wintered well and were building up very well - no sign of swarming but one colony was producing queen cups.

It was obvious that despite our cold, wet, late spring, the Queens had not been idle but were steaming ahead. Once the weather returns to normal I can anticipate all hell breaking loose and at the time of writing these notes, (21st April) I will predict a very swarmy season.

Our June meeting is programmed to be held at Eddy Lock's bees on 9th June. Eddy's bees are on a farm so it will depend on the foot and mouth situation as to whether the meeting will go ahead. Please telephone Eddy (01491 612792) or me, a couple of days or so before 9th June to receive a definite answer. We will try to arrange an alternative venue if we have to.

Hon. Secretary: - George Butler 0118 983 2735

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

The first two apiary meetings yet again were attended only by the few dedicated members who have regularly given up their time in the past to look after our bees. It would be so nice to see some new faces coming along to share their views and experience.

The bees themselves seem to have come through the winter quite well, although concern was felt regarding one hive, which was quite weak. This was reduced to a nucleus and it is hoped that it will now build up again. Another hive had strangely appeared to mutilate a queen after she had been found and marked at the earlier visit, so as no eggs were present she was replaced by an Australian queen. This had been brought along to re-queen a third hive, which fortunately turned out to be thriving now.

We await the future visits with interest to see what results are found next! Watch this space – as they say – or even better come along and see it all first hand...the next apiary meetings are to be on Sundays the 3rd and 17th of June.

You can call the Secretary, Michael Sheasby on 01753 642656 to find out more details.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

There is no contribution from Wokingham this month.

Hon. Joint Secretaries: Sylvia Smallbone & John Edwards 0118 934 0238

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 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

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.

TALK ON BEE BREEDING BY DR JEFF PETTIS AT THE BIBBA AGM

Dr Jeff Pettis is a research entomologist at the bee research laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland, U.S.A.

He is currently conducting research on the control of parasitic mites, small hive of the beetles and American foul brood in honeybees.

In his opening remarks Dr. Pettis said he wanted to talk about drones, for drones are a most important part in bee breeding. Research has shown that Varroa infestation and also the treatment using Apistan and Formic Acid have an adverse effect on drones.

Drones do not become sexually mature until they are 14 days old and have had five days of good weather in which to fly.

As Varroa prefer drone brood it follows that many drones can suffer damage by mites. Research has shown that 60 percent of infested brood is drone brood. In the research into the effects of Varroa and Apistan on drones, three groups of colonies were used to carry out the tests.

The first group were colonies that were infested with Varroa.
The second group were colonies that were treated with Apistan.
The third group (the control) had neither mites nor were treated with Apistan.

Day one. Survival of drones

Group	
First	40% survived
Second	80% survived
Third	97% survived

Days 5 to 10. Survival of drones

Group	
First	33% survived
Second	43% survived
Third	53% survived

Days 12 to 18. Survival of drones

Group	
First	20% survived
Second	33% survived
Third	40% survived

Drones are fragile and easily succumb to adverse conditions.

Varroa and Apistan both affect drones. Colonies chosen to provide drones in any breeding programme should be treated the previous season in order to get mite levels down, so that the following season the drones reared have low mite counts.

In the research, drones were marked with coloured numbered disks as they emerged from cells. Drones that emerged from infested cells were marked with one colour, and drones that emerged from uninfested cells were marked with a different colour.

On day 15 the marked drones were collected and the drones everted and semen samples taken in measured volumes.

	Drones from Clean cells	Drones from Infested cells
Viability of semen	99%	94%

So there is no difference in surviving drones regarding the viability of semen of drones from either clean cells or infected cells.

However drones losses are greater due to Varroa infestation and treatment using Apistan, but the survivors are sexually viable.

Testing the viability of semen

Semen was collected and stored in the pipettes. The pipettes were sealed at each end by heat (glass melting and sealing the aperture). Tests have shown that storage at room temperature of 15 degrees C. to 24 degrees C. 80% of the sperm was viable, and over time there is not a dramatic drop off in viability. Semen can be stored for six to nine weeks with no drop off in viability. Tests on the viability of semen taken from one year-old queens and compared with semen taken from newly mated queens, show no difference in sperm viability between the two groups.

It may be that the way forward in the search for Varroa resistant colonies is to collect semen from drones from badly infested colonies, and to use that semen from the survivors to inseminate queens.

In answer to questions, Dr Pettis said that in determining the viability of semen, staining was used that caused the dead semen to appear in one colour, and the live semen to be a different colour, this is a stain that is used in the poultry industry, and promised to communicate with the questioner regarding details.

In answer to a question on the number of colonies required at an isolated mating site to provide sufficient drones to mate 100 queens Dr Pettis said that five colonies were necessary.

Dr Pettis mentioned drone congregations, and said that one researcher in America who had observed many drone congregations and could almost indicate where a possible drone congregation could be, by looking at the topography of the area.

Asked about the effect of the use of Thymol on drone survival and viability, Dr. Pettis said that as far as he was aware no research had been done, but he thought it was likely that it would have an adverse effect.

Why not join BIBBA; Apply to the Membership Secretary: Brian Dennis, 50 Station Road, Coggenhoe, Northants NN7 1LU

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National Bee Unit

Central Science Laboratory

Hygienic behaviour assay

Introduction

Hygienic behaviour, a genetically determined behavioural trait, involves the identification and uncapping of cells containing diseased and parasitised larvae and their physical removal or ingestion. Research has shown that this specific behavioural response facilitates colony resistance to American foulbrood and chalkbrood. The aim of this investigation is to determine the geographic occurrence of hygienic behaviour throughout England and Wales, and to correlate this with the incidence of European foulbrood.

Materials

The following materials are provided:

- A permanent marker pen
- One acetate sheet
- One tally chart

- Plain paper envelope
- Prepaid envelope for postage of results to the NBU
- Experimental protocol

Day 1. Preparation of combs

Remove a comb from the hive. Suitable combs should have enough brood to complete the assay, but not enough to affect the overall survival of the colony. An area containing approximately 100 capped cells is required for the assay. Only healthy colonies should be used.

Cut a suitable area of sealed brood from the comb. This should contain approximately 100 cells. Place the piece of comb on the acetate, and trace around it with the permanent marker pen. Once traced, place the acetate on top of the comb piece, ensuring that the comb is lined up with the trace, and indicate any empty cells by filling in the area of the cell on the acetate. Once complete, remove the acetate from the piece of comb, noting on it the colony number, apiary name and your name. Fill in the appropriate tally chart with the number of sealed cells.

Freezing the comb

Place the piece of comb in the plain paper envelope provided and place in a domestic freezer for 24 hours. This time must not be exceeded, as this will invalidate the test.

Day 2. Replacement of comb containing freeze-killed brood

Remove the piece of comb from the freezer and allow it to defrost. Once completely defrosted, place the piece of comb back into the original colony for 48 hours, into the original frame from which it was cut.

Day 4. Analysis of removal of freeze-killed brood

Remove the piece of comb from the colony. Replace the appropriate acetate on top of the piece of comb, ensuring that the comb piece is lined up with the trace. Mark on the acetate any cells in the appropriate areas where the cells have been uncapped or emptied of contents, with a code of x for cells uncapped and cleaned, e for cells uncapped but with contents still inside, and unmarked if apparently unchanged. Use the permanent marker pen as before and fill in the appropriate tally chart.

Data analysis

This will take place at the NBU. Please return completed acetates and tally charts as soon as possible, so all the data can be collated and analysed.

If you do take part in this study, please inform your local Bee Inspector before you begin the experiment. Many have already carried out this experiment and may be able to advise you if you have any problems.

For further information or in case of queries contact:

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