



South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

The December meeting will be held on Wednesday 17th December at 7.30pm at Woodcote Community Centre. The meeting will open with a slide-illustrated talk by Dr Michael Keith-Lewis of Reading University on pollination and the role of bees and other insects. The second part of the meeting will be traditional Christmas Fare and refreshments.

Newsletter No.12
December 2003

Forthcoming events:

Spring Convention, Stoneleigh
24th April 2004

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In the Apiary: December: -

This is the time of year to relax, but not completely. Time to read some of the excellent books in our library, and for those with a computer, there is an Apimondia disk on Apitherapy, also in our Library. There is also a CD available from Apiservices "All About Bees", let our Librarian know if you are interested, if there is sufficient interest we will obtain a copy

I have had reports of brood chambers so full of stores that there is no room for brood. The stock answer is to insert a drawn comb at the edge of the cluster, I have seen instructions to 'insert at the edge of the brood nest', but there will be no brood nest if there are no available cells.

I think that in these circumstances and this time of year, there will be less disturbance to the bees if a super of drawn combs is inserted below the brood chamber, however this job should already have been done, colonies that cannot raise brood are likely to die out. Am I going to practice what I preach? I am unable to because I melt down all empty combs thus helping to reduce disease. I wonder how many beekeepers know which hives their empty combs came from.

Do not neglect to visit the apiary occasionally but keep disturbance to the bees to a minimum. First check the entrance then heft the hive, yes, it is possible that bees in mild conditions have consumed more stores than expected, check the feed hole, if it is warm and sweet and there is plenty of stores, then normally, all is well.

Begin to get things cleaned and ready for next season, I leave foundation fitting until later, foundation will keep fresh provided that it is properly stored but it can deteriorate and "quickly get Stale" if conditions are not right. Consider melting down any comb that has contained brood. Old combs can propagate disease.

Now that pyrethroid resistant Varroa is appearing in a number of places, plan your method of treatment; Apiguard is now licensed for use in the United Kingdom. I have used open mesh floors with success and intend to replace all floors next year. One German beekeeper in the Black Forest runs his hives with no floor at all and uses nothing else but tobacco smoke at fortnightly intervals. I wonder how many queens he has lost as a result.

R.F.Crocker.

Association Meetings:

Traditionally this was part of the Secretary's report but Brian has requested to be relieved of this task to lighten the workload of the Secretary and I have agreed to produce the report on the last, and forthcoming meetings.

On 15th October we held our 22nd A.G.M. The important matters decided were: -

1. A reduction in our annual subscription rates is now possible with a further reduction anticipated in 2005.
2. In view of the increasing bank balance, new equipment is to be purchased for use by members.
3. An annual dinner to be held in March 2004.
4. We would hold our own honey show to be staged at our Christmas Meeting. The first such show to be held in December 2004 and organized by Reg. Hook and John Sewell.
5. An information leaflet to be produced for sending out to prospective members giving details of the activities of our Association and any other useful information such as a history of our Association.
6. A special events year for our 25th Anniversary in 2006. All members please participate and send in your wishes and suggestions to be printed in our Newsletter. These will of course, will be considered by the Committee and subsequently put to future A.G.M.s.

Our next meeting is our Christmas meeting on Wednesday 17th December. An evening of traditional fare (if you have never sampled Viola's punch I can recommend it!!) followed by a slide illustrated talk by Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas of Reading University on the subject of pollination and the role of the bee and other insects

George Butler (Chairman)

Hornets: -

I recently went to one of my apiaries (regrettably without a camera) and found hornets trying to get into a hive. Occasionally a hornet dived on a bee in flight; it was immediately set on by other bees and balled. I saw this a couple of times. Reg. Hook has also witnessed this phenomenon in one of his apiaries. Has anyone else had this experience or anything else unusual? Please write in if you have had a similar or any other unusual experience, I am sure that this would be of interest and possibly instructive. From Norman Carreck's comment it would appear that the behaviour witnessed is unusual in our bees. Perhaps, with our changing climate, this is something else to guard against.

Incidentally a local bee farmer picked up a hive in which a colony had "died out" and transported it home only to find that he had transported a nest of hornets.

R. Crocker

Norman Carreck from Rothamsted Research comments: -

I've never seen hornets try to get into a hive or attack bees myself, but of course tropical species of hornet often do. Steve Martin described their behaviour in his "social life of hornets in Japan" published by the Central Association of Bee-Keepers a few years ago. The Asian honeybee *Apis cerana* is well adapted to hornet attacks, and as soon as one appears, the bees rush onto the front of the hive and shake their abdomens producing a shimmering effect like a "Mexican wave", which presumably confuses the hornet. If it gets too close, it is pounced upon by the bees in a coordinated attack and then balled by about 250 bees. The centre of the ball is heated up to about 47°C, which kills the hornet, but not the bees.

Unfortunately the western honeybee *Apis mellifera* does not have this behaviour, and will try to attack the hornet in an uncoordinated way. The hornet invariably escapes, and then goes into an attack mode, marking the vegetation around the hives with a secretion. This attracts its nest mates who then systematically destroy the bee colony by biting bees in half. In one recorded example a colony of 35,000 bees was destroyed completely by only 32 hornets in four hours! Thus hornets are regarded as a major pest by beekeepers in such areas...

South Chilterns Foul Brood to Oct 10th 2003

From the grid it can be seen that there are now three EFB infected apiaries in the Henley square. The editor has not heard of any reports from any South Chilterns member. If any S.C. member is involved it is hoped that it can be discussed openly. Beulah Cullen has reported that one of the instances in Windsor Great Park is hers, and commented that she was not allowed to carry out the treatment of her own bees since she is no longer employed by the Bees Unit.

SU49 West Abingdon	SU59 Dorchester A 2:2	SU69 Benson	SU79 Stokenchurch	SU89 High Wycombe	SU99 Amersham
SU48 East Wantage	SU58 Blewbury	SU68 East Wallingford E 1:2	SU78 Henley on Thames E 3:5	SU88 Marlow	SU98 North Slough
SU47 Chieveley	SU57 Yattendon	SU67 Pangbourne	SU77 Reading	SU87 White Waltham	SU97 Windsor E 2:6

It is intended that "apiary tours" will be arranged for 2004 and as suggested by our R.B.O., they will be open to all beekeepers in our area. If you know of beekeepers that are not members of SCBKA please let the Secretary or Editor know, this could be a good P.R. exercise.

R.F.C.

Integrated Varroa Control

Mike Brown and I recently attended the 8th meeting of the European working group on integrated Varroa control held in Kirchhain, Germany, **22-23 May 2003**, as UK representatives.

This working group originates out of the EU project FAIR CT973686 'Co-ordination in Europe of integrated control of Varroa mites in honey bee colonies.' The original co-ordinator of this EU project was Ingemar Fries from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala. The funding for this was terminated in 1999 and no further funding has been secured, but regular meetings have continued since then co-ordinated by Toni Imdorf of the Swiss Bee Research Centre, Liebefeld with the group members self-financing the meetings and associated research.

The main objectives of this working group are 'to co-ordinate research efforts in Europe on integrated Varroa control and to disseminate information to the beekeeping community on how populations of the bee parasite, Varroa destructor, can be kept below the damage threshold by alternative strategies.'

This year the meeting was organised by Ralph Büchler of the Kirchhain Bee Institute. Thirty-five participants attended the meeting with representatives from Austria, Germany, Croatia, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, Switzerland, Portugal and the UK. There were also two representatives from Canada.

The meeting started with a general discussion and a status report from all represented countries detailing levels of winter losses which had been experienced in 2002-03, the perceived reasons for these and what tasks lie ahead for the group. The average winter losses were somewhere between 10 - 30 %, some areas such as Slovenia experiencing lower than expected losses but in localised areas of Germany, Poland, Austria and Canada losses were anything between 30 - 100 %. There were a wide range of reasons suggested for these losses, for example, late honeydew flows that lead to crystallisation and therefore starvation, increased levels of *Nosema apis* or poor autumn weather. However, the most commonly suggested reasons were mis-timed Varroa treatments and resistance to control measures, particularly pyrethroids. The consensus of opinion was that the way forward revolves around communication, extension work with beekeepers, the development of monitoring strategies and simple treatment protocols and the implementation of relevant Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies. Much of which we are already doing in the UK.

Over the next two days of the meeting there were approximately thirty presentations and further discussions. The first day was mainly concerned with oxalic acid and thymol treatments covering a variety of formulations including Osinal, Oxavar, Thymovar, and Apiguard. There were also discussions on the safety, registration and residues of oxalic acid, including an update on the progress made with the application for a Maximum Residue Limit (MRL).

Day two covered other treatment methods, such as Food Grade Mineral Oil (FGMO), experiments with small cell sizes, biological control and management tactics. There was a section covering work carried out on the selection of Varroa tolerant bees and secondary infections. Mike gave a report on the preliminary work carried out at the NBU on virus detection techniques using the TaqMan PCR technique. This was very well received and may lead to further collaborative work. We also had time to discuss the latest potential threat to European beekeeping, the small hive beetle.

The opportunity arose to visit one of the Kirchhain Beekeeping Institute's experimental apiary sites. The Carnica bees in the apiary site were some of the most docile bees I have ever come across, no veils, no smoke, no gloves, and no stings! They are the result of thirty years of selective bee breeding, the bees having been chosen for their docility and productivity. They are now part of a Varroa tolerance selection experiment where the bees are left untreated and the best performing colonies are selected to breed from.

As you can see I have only been able to touch the surface, the two days were very well organised with an interesting and varied programme of presentations and discussions. There was also plenty of time for one-to-one discussions and exchange of opinions, and there is the potential for much collaborative work, which will be beneficial for beekeeping across Europe. The minutes of the meeting are due to be published soon, which will give a more detailed picture of the events and also selected reports of the work will be made available. You can access these and the minutes of previous meetings and reports of earlier work through <http://www.apis.admin.ch/english/host/hostalter/hostalter.htm>. There is also a link to this through the NBU website <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/underVarroa>.
Selwyn Wilkins, NBU

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Invitation:-

ASSENDEN GLASS

has the solutions to all your Christmas presents
plus a glass of wine and a mince pie.

Open from November 28th to December 7th,
11am to 5pm

I look forward to seeing you there. **Anne**



Newsletter by e-mail: -

With the recent postal difficulties in some areas in mind, perhaps this is a good time to remind those with Internet facilities that, as well as newsletters from other associations, members can receive the Newsletter by e-mail. If you would like to avail yourself of this facility, please contact Marcella Skinner, or send a mail to southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com

Newsletter deadline: 10th of the month for inclusion in the next Newsletter

Advertisements: - Small advertisements free to members. Traders £1 per issue (up to 5 lines) additional lines 20p per line. Cheques to be made payable to South Chilterns B.K.A. and forwarded to the Editor.

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Around and about the region *October 2003*

May I start with a “thank-you” to all who have made my first season as Regional Bee Inspector so enjoyable. The season was already in full swing before I was appointed and I was also conscious that, in Beulah Cullen, I had a hard act to follow. But I have been made to feel welcome by Associations and beekeepers wherever I have gone.

I have particularly enjoyed reading the many association magazines and newsletters I have been sent. Please keep them coming as they do all get read and give me a good insight into association activities. There are so many that I can't contribute to them individually but I hope that you will find this, the first in a regular series of news updates, a useful addition to the bee press.

Ian Homer

Another season over, swarms taken, honey harvested, varroa mite numbers assessed, colonies treated where necessary and fed for the winter

That, at least is the theory, but this year, more than ever before, I've noticed how we cannot just apply a blanket set of rules everywhere. Southern Region is a big area, stretching as it does from Lyme Regis very nearly to Peterborough and within that area there are significant variations in climate and also in nectar flow and honey crop. Some beekeepers have reported record crops even though the spring flow was mostly consumed by the bees in June.

Others, particularly in the western part of the region, saw the nectar flow come to a virtual standstill in mid-August and have had to feed since then to avoid starvation.

Taken as a whole, the season has been characterised by a substantial amount of early swarming with subsequent mating of new queens not always being successful. Several of the bee inspectors in the region have visited beekeepers with colonies having laying workers or drone laying queens – in several cases it had been mistaken for European Foul Brood.

Honey crops overall appear to have been good but, without the heavy clover yield of the previous year, have not quite reached the same record levels. Honey prices are always sensitive to location and, to some extent to the level of tourist activity, but are holding up well. I would be grateful to receive details of both yields and prices in your area – a form is attached or you can e-mail details to me at i.homer@cs.gov.uk I will publish the results of this survey in the next issue of “Around and about the region”

STOP PRESS

Pyrethroid resistant varroa mites were discovered in the Region for the first time at the beginning of October. Two cases have been confirmed on the Dorset/Somerset border in the Sherbourne area. There appear to be no logical connections with any other cases and the resistance is thought to have resulted from prolonged exposure to varroacides.

During much of the year there appeared to be little evidence of varroa throughout the region; this view was backed up by frequent comment from beekeepers that they hadn't seen many damaged bees or varroa mites this year. However, during September it has been a common sight to see brood damaged by varroa and associated viruses. It is clear that these colonies will lose much of this brood and will be severely depleted going into winter.

This is an important reminder to monitor the mite populations of colonies several times each sea-

Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa

Throughout the season, further cases of resistant mites have been identified in Devon and Cornwall. In addition, there have been new cases identified in other areas. Resistance seems now to be well entrenched in the Haverford West area of Wales and in mid Shropshire and County Durham. Some of these newly affected areas have no identifiable links to the West Country and indications are that they are separate developments of resistance.

Because of the way in which pyrethroids work, resistance could occur anywhere where they are being used. Beekeepers are encouraged not only to assess the mite populations in their colonies but also to test whether the mites in those colonies have developed resistance. Many associations already have test kits to use to monitor for this - kits, with full instructions, are available for those who don't yet have them – please contact me if your association would like one. Please also remember to let either the National Bee Unit or me know the results of your tests. To date we have had very few results sent to us – does this mean that beekeepers are not testing?

son in order to determine what action is necessary and when. Colonies will overwinter most successfully when they have a sufficient number of undamaged bees at the start of winter. A continuous programme of mite reduction is likely to be most effective.

Increasingly, it is important not only to monitor mite numbers but also to use the Integrated Pest Management techniques described in the NBU brochure "Managing Varroa". Re-read it now so that you are ready to start with IPM techniques next year.

A number of one day conferences on Integrated Pest Management have already been held in the South West Region where the impact of resistant mites is greatest. These explore a whole range of approaches to mite reduction and allow beekeepers to determine the methods most suited to their own approach to beekeeping. I am hoping to arrange several of these events in Southern Region during the coming year. If your Association would be interested in hosting one, please contact me.

The approval in June of Apiguard as a licensed varroicide offers beekeepers the opportunity to treat against varroa without increasing the risk of pyrethroid resistance in their colonies. Resistance is now sufficiently widespread for all beekeepers, not just those in areas of confirmed resistance, to be giving serious consideration to their varroa control strategy.

There are many who believe that the colony losses due to pyrethroid resistance could equal those that were experienced when varroa was first encountered in the UK.

Lateral Flow Devices

During the year we have been evaluating these devices in the field. They look rather like a home pregnancy test kit but are designed to provide field diagnosis of foul brood. The AFB devices have been in use throughout the season with diagnosis provided by the device being verified by laboratory analysis before any action is taken. The EFB device only arrived with us in the field in September so its use has been limited but we have had a couple of confirmations with some late cases of disease.

In the longer term, both devices will be available for beekeepers to purchase to enable those who suspect disease to confirm their suspicions prior to notifying the bee health inspection team. The exact timing of their commercial availability is still not certain but the AFB device could be available during the 2004 season

Foul Brood Statistics

2003 saw a slight reduction in confirmed cases of EFB - 145 colonies in 65 apiaries throughout the region. AFB was found in 3 colonies in 3 apiaries. Distribution maps showing the locations of these cases are attached. By comparison, in 2002 there were 160 colonies with EFB and 10 colonies with AFB.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this season has been the number of cases of EFB in East Hampshire (and across the border into Surrey and West Sussex) an area which has previously been largely free of disease. David Purchase has been actively pursuing it and, with the continued co-operation of beekeepers in the area, we are hopeful that fewer cases will be found next year.

Disease recognition courses have been run for various associations in previous years – I am very happy to arrange courses for any association that wants one. As always, the earliest to book get the best choice of dates. Beekeepers who have previously attended one of these courses may feel that a refresher course would be useful – again I am happy to arrange these to meet demand.

Honey Sampling

Some of you may have been asked to permit a honey sample to be taken from one of your colonies. The NBU has been carrying out a programme on behalf of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in accordance with European Commission Council Directive 96/23/EC. This requires member states to monitor chemical residues in live animals and animal products, including honey. Whilst most of the samples taken last year were of extracted honey, this year, wherever possible, samples were taken from within the brood chamber.

The results of this sampling are not instantly available but those relating to last years sampling are currently available on the VMD website (www.vmd.gov.uk)

Spray Liaison

During the season I took a call from an air charter company advising me that they would be carrying out extensive spraying (with a bee friendly product) within the next few days.

After a chapter of incidents which kept delaying the helicopter, the spraying eventually happened about two weeks later. As far as I can tell there were no adverse affects on any bee colonies though, according to the local newspaper, sun worshippers on a nudist beach were liberally treated with the product!

It raised the question both in my mind and in the minds of county officials as to how effective or necessary the Spray Liaison Scheme is in today's environment.

For liaison schemes to work effectively, associations need a detailed knowledge of where all of their members hives are and notification of all spraying activity. I am certain that neither are possible.

Given that many of the sprays used today are "bee-friendly" (as opposed to non-toxic),

which reduces the need to take action, it is possible that spray schemes are more a source of confusion than help.

There are, fortunately, very few incidents of bee poisoning these days. However, the majority that do happen appear to be as a result not of agricultural or horticultural sprays but of products such as Bendiocarb, which is commonly used by pest control operatives. If this is used to destroy a feral bee colony, it is essential that all comb is removed or that the nest is adequately sealed to prevent subsequent robbing from that site. Similar precautions are also needed when wasps nests are destroyed.

Spray liaison schemes have been in place for a number of years now – largely unchanged since their inception. Spraying practices have changed significantly in recent years - is there still a need for a spray liaison scheme? It would be useful to hear the views of Associations on this.

This is the generic term which the National Bee Unit has adopted to describe some of the less desirable bee pests which we don't yet have in this country but which could get here at some time in the future. They are of interest for two reasons. Firstly, it is thought that our climate could sustain some of them, if they were inadvertently introduced here, and secondly, two in particular have recently been made notifiable throughout the whole of the EC.

The one that most beekeepers will have heard most about is the Small Hive Beetle, which is native to Southern Africa but which was found in the US in 1998 and in Australia in October 2002. The bee inspection team have, this year, been carrying out searches for this pest in areas thought to be most at risk (close to ports, airports or US air bases) but, fortunately, to date, nothing has been found. Beekeepers are encouraged to be vigilant and report anything unusual to the NBU or their local bee inspector. Brochures describing this pest are available for those associations who don't already have them.

Tropilaelaps clarea is a mite with a similar life cycle to varroa but is rather smaller. Like varroa, it also originates from Asia and moves freely on combs and relies on brood for feeding, causing damage in colonies with high mite levels. Due to its small size (approx 1mm x 0.5mm), it will be very difficult to see but it is known that Tropilaelaps will succumb to pyrethroids in the same way as varroa. We will of course have to wait and see whether Tropilaelaps will make an opportunistic appearance if we have to stop using pyrethroids because of resistance.

And Finally

Whilst the main role of the bee health inspection service is to inspect for, and deal with, notifiable disease, another very important role is that of working with beekeepers to improve bee husbandry. In this regard, I and the Seasonal Bee Inspectors are always happy to provide talks, workshops or demonstrations on topics related to disease and bee husbandry. Please contact me at the address below for more information.

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NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION Survey of Honey Prices and Yields 2003

Please indicate the current price **per pound** which each category is achieving in your area.

If there is a significant variation in the price of any item, please indicate a price range.

	Wholesale	Direct Sales	Bulk
Run, Set or Creamed Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cut Comb Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Comb Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Lbs		
Average yield per colony (excluding heather)	<input type="text"/>	{ Please indicate the yield <u>in pounds</u>	
Average heather yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ which has been experienced in	
Highest recorded yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ your area.	

Name, Association, Location _____