



South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

The June Apiary meeting is on Saturday 19th June starting at 2.30pm. The venue is Kate's Cottage Wyfold and is the President's Day. See Secretary's note.

Newsletter No.18

JUNE 2004

Forthcoming events:

The Royal Show, Stoneleigh
4th – 7th July

FBBKA Honey Show
30th September

Apimondia Dublin 2005

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In the Apiary, JUNE

Varroa control - Provide food for the tits! From the shallow frame that you inserted in the brood-box (You forgot that didn't you? Do it now.), cut off the drone brood, put it into a bag and freeze it for a couple of hours in order to kill any Varroa. It can then be hung out for the birds, taking care to remove any stores that could be robbed.

Why freeze it? Bees are likely to come to inspect the comb and apart from disease, any loose Varroa that might be around will migrate to the bees. This also applies to any comb dropped on the ground.

The prolonged autumn of 2003, coupled with the warm but inclement spring, has resulted in many mis-mated or unmated supersedure queens. I have had two out of eleven. Watch for queens turning drone layer, even into July. Colonies do not always try to replace them until there is no unsealed worker brood. Even if they do, the chances are that any worker brood available is too advanced to make good queens. If you are in this situation and have doubts as to how to proceed, ask someone for advice.

Still check for swarming: we are approaching what would normally be mid season, but April showers proved to be heavy rain continuing into May. This usually results in lots of small swarms – the bees' way of ensuring the perpetuating of the species. In poor conditions the swarm stands a 50/50 chance of survival and the reduction in numbers in the original colony will conserve the stores, if this happens to you don't forget to check if your queen has been mated.

I suspect that this year June will be a gap month. In these days of summer rape, a complete gap is less likely. I

have known years when feeding has been necessary in late May and June. Use candy or fondant - this way sugar is less likely to get into the supers! However, whatever the conditions may be, the beekeeper should observe what is going on, the state of the weather and forecasts, and especially the shade temperature and the flowering of the principal sources of nectar.

Congestion in a hive, whether with stores or overcrowding with bees, will most likely result in swarms, as will breaks in the honey flow.

See therefore, that sufficient supers are available and are ready before they are likely to be wanted. The fresh super should be put on as soon as bees are in the last one provided.

Always keep an eye out for disease or anything else untoward. Do not be hesitant in calling for advice. This can often be given over the telephone. Also, there is a wealth of information out there on the world-wide-web.

Swarms should be hived on new foundation and swarms of unknown origin should not be fed for 48 hours so that they can consume any stores that they are carrying and so reduce the risk of any disease that might be carried. After this time a feed could be advantageous.

As there will be no brood with these swarms, this is the best opportunity to reduce the Varroa population. Treatment is most effective with open mesh floors (I have not yet got round to fitting all floors with open mesh. Bad example!) But remember that cessation of treatment is advised when honey is being stored in the supers.

Ron Crocker.

FROM THE SECRETARY

MAY MEETING

The June meeting is President's Day when Ian Wootton will demonstrate at Marcella Skinner's garden apiary in Wyfold. The meeting will start at 2.30pm on Saturday 19th June. OS ref 682809.

Committee members are reminded that a committee meeting will held immediately after the apiary meeting at Woodcote Community Centre at 5.00pm.

Brian Carter

APRIL MEETING

The first of our outdoor meetings took place at the apiary of Berkshire College of Agriculture. Traditionally our first meeting of the season has been our President's day, usually at Marcella Skinner's and traditionally we have come to expect rain or hail. One year I remember George Hawthorne demonstrated in a snowstorm! What happened this year? Sunny and warm, with the temperature in the upper 60s.

As I mentioned in my May "In The Apiary" notes, drone laying queens are in evidence this year and sure enough, the first colony inspected, headed by a 2003queen was a drone layer. This was dealt with and whilst disappointing from my point of view made for an interesting start to the demonstration. Second colony inspected, also with a 2003 queen, was a puzzle. Hive full of bees but no eggs or brood, yet in an earlier examination had normal brood. This hive was closed up and a note made to examine again in the near future. This was done and guess what? Another drone laying queen. Conclusion: old queen superseded early in the season and the new queen failed to mate, possibly due to inclement weather at the time when she would have been taking her mating flights. Two drone laying queens out of the six colonies at the college!

George Butler (Chairman)

FROM THE EDITOR

Honey Labelling

Details of the honey labelling regulations are being published in the BBKA Newsletter which as we are not members we do not get. They will also be available for publication in all bee journals and can be viewed on the BBKA website at

http://www.bbka.org.uk/articles/honey_labels.php

The document runs to nine pages and does not lend itself to précising without altering meanings or leaving things out. No doubt we can arrange copies for members who require one, but at a cost.

The label must show the name, the “best before” date and the weight in the same field of view. Type referring to weight has size requirements but the rest just has to be clearly legible and indelible, as well as uncluttered. Just the name and country of origin is enough if for direct sale. There are still prescribed weights. The names in the Honey Regulations have to be used in order to comply with the Labelling Regulations. The packer’s or seller’s name and address must be on the label.

Ron Crocker

EDUCATIONAL APIARY TOUR (Free, of course)

The proposed “Apiary Tour” with our Bees Officer is scheduled for 10th July as this is the only day available that does not clash with other events. Ian Homer has suggested a starting time of 10.30 a.m., with a suitable break about mid-day, possibly at a pub. Participants can join or leave the tour at any point. Any beekeeper or prospective beekeeper who is interested in taking part or wishing to have his or her bees inspected on the tour - not necessarily an Association member - please contact the Editor, the Secretary or Ian Homer.

As far as possible bees will be inspected in logistical order. The Tour will allow “students” to join or leave at any point. There will be a break at a convenient pub during the day but anyone may bring his or her own refreshment.

For convenience we have the offer of a mini bus. This will reduce the number of vehicles in use but it will mean that users will be tied for the duration of the tour.

(Editor)

BEE VENOM - Bee sting therapy

Further to the report of a recent Richard and Judy show on Channel 4, where a “therapist” used a bee to demonstrate bee sting therapy on a patient.

Sensitivity to bee stings and desensitisation.

Most people are stung by a bee at some time. In the great majority of cases, the local pain and swelling only lasts for a few hours and there is no further damage. If, however, a person is repeatedly stung from time to time – a situation which is common with beekeepers - then a change occurs in the subject’s immune system.

The body tissues support a population of floating cells (lymphocytes) which are of many different types, each type has a particular grouping of atoms on its surface which gives it a distinctive pattern called a receptor. When foreign toxic substances are injected into the body, the toxin floats around bumping against these cells until it finds one carrying a receptor which fits with the toxin. The toxin is latched on to the cell and two things result. Firstly, this cell is stimulated to divide so that it becomes more numerous and thus better able to cope with any future injection of the toxin and, secondly, the cell produces a soluble protein which dissolves in the tissue fluid and carries the same receptor. This protein immobilizes and neutralizes any toxin molecules which it encounters.

So the common sequence with beekeepers is that they gradually become resistant to the effects of bee stings and an experienced beekeeper may well be able to tolerate multiple stings without ill effects. However, this desirable outcome does not always occur. There is another part of the immune system which is centred around fixed body cells carrying receptors and located in the lungs, blood vessels and skin. When these cells are activated the substances that they produce cause the symptoms of shock and include breathlessness, fainting, skin rashes etc. The severity varies. It may be anything from trivial to life threatening. The latter is fortunately rare!

A small proportion of people seem to have an immune system which is very sensitive and easily triggered, and, for reasons which are not completely understood, their numbers seem to be increasing. These allergic individuals need to be careful to avoid being stung and some who have had severe reactions find it necessary to carry a device which enables them to self-administer adrenalin in an emergency.

In a very few instances, experienced and previously immune beekeepers suffer unexpected reactions to stings. This is rare, but well documented, so that even beekeepers are well advised to avoid stings whenever possible.

Until recently, courses of injections of controlled doses of bee venom to desensitise people were widely available. However, the remote chance of a severe reaction to a dose has led to a rule that these courses are only given in clinics where full facilities for resuscitation are available and skilled staff are on hand.

There is also the question of bee venom used as a therapeutic agent to treat arthritis and other conditions. This is promoted from time to time, both by the occasional doctor and by complementary practitioners, often using bees to administer the venom rather than controlled dose by syringe. Since the dose from a bee is very variable, this is very much more likely to result in bad reactions and cannot be recommended. And as far as being a reliable treatment for arthritis is concerned, I am a living proof that it does not work.

Ian Wootton

Linda's Recipes

Easy Honey Ice Cream

225g clear aromatic honey 4 egg yolks 450ml whipped cream

Heat the honey in a saucepan with four tablespoons of water to just below boiling point. Whisk the egg yolks in a bowl until thick and creamy, then whisk in the hot honey. Return the mixture to the pan and cook gently, whisking until the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat and continue whisking until the mixture cools. Fold the cream into the honey mixture. Pour into a freezer container and freeze until firm.

Linda Clarke

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

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

Patricia Mills wishes to dispose of her father's **hives and equipment**
Telephone: - 0118 97223748

Wanted: For a group of beekeepers. Small, motorized stainless steel honey extractor to take all sizes of frames. Details to the Editor

For sale: - Three Langstroth hives, two with bees, two supers for each. Apply Editor 0118 9722315

For sale: - Two National hives with two supers each, one with docile bees. Details from Editor.

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Don't Go Miles to get your bee supplies or pay expensive carriage. **Go to John Belcher** who has most of your needs in stock and every thing else at the end of the telephone. Please call any time on 0118 984 232