**Bad tempered bees.**

**Michael Birt**

Another aspect of modern beekeeping is dealing with colonies that are bad-tempered.

Working with bad-tempered colonies is not enjoyable and we all want our beekeeping to be enjoyable. Dealing with bad-tempered colonies is another aspect of socially responsible beekeeping. Again, if you are unsure how to deal with a bad-tempered colony (and you have read your books and perhaps become even more confused about what to do) then attend the relevant training provided by your branch and ask for help.

I rank colonies by level of aggressiveness:

Level 1: so well-tempered that it is possible to inspect such a colony without smoke. In general, the bees are calm.

Level 2: when the hive is opened the bees rise to look and defend and some fly up and many might run. Some smoking is needed, mainly to remove bees from ends of frames when lifting them to inspect and subsequently to replace the queen excluder etc. Bees fly around one’s head but are unlikely to come to the face net.

Level 3: smoking is needed. Bees fly to the face net and will sting if one’s chin touches the net. Some bees are likely to follow a short distance.

Level 4: bees are clearly aggressive with many settling on the face net and release alarm pheromone, frequent smoking is a necessity. Some bees will follow a good distance.

Level 5: colonies are definitely unpleasant most times and one is always apprehensive of opening such a colony.

It follows that Levels 4 and 5 should be dealt with at the earliest opportunity by re-queening

One should be aiming to have colonies that are Levels 1 and 2.