



Beetalk January 2014

Newsletter of Darwen and District Beekeeping Group.

Welcome to the newsletter of Darwen and District Beekeeping Group.

As most of you will know we are a small group of Beekeepers from East Lancashire, covering the areas of Darwen, Blackburn, Rossendale, Burnley, Accrington and the Ribble Valley.

We formed this group in November 2013 as a result of some issues we had with other groups in the area who we felt were going away from what hobbyist beekeeping was all about.

We are a very informal group, but we are also a diligent group, who want and will help members become responsible and confident beekeepers.

We run courses for beginners, which unlike others, do not charge you and most important of all, our courses take a full season to complete, as we feel to learn and to be able to manage bees in the correct way which is both safe for the beekeeper and he bees takes longer than a few weeks which some clubs advocate.

Anyone can join us by going to the website at www.blackburnbeekeepers.com and filling in an application form, but we must point out that the membership is limited to 50 members.

Group SERVICES

**Bayvoral - Apiguard - Oxalic Acid -
Thymol Etc.**

**These Chemicals for treating bees can be obtained from:
Bob Fulton Phone 01254 - 772780
Bob will have them available at beekeeper's meetings.**

MEMBERSHIP

REGISTERED MEMBER.

Subscriptions for the 2014 season will be £15.00

SUBS SHOULD BE PAID TO Bob Fulton. HON. TREASURER Phone 01254-772780

**Address ::::: Bob Fulton,
The Mound, Pole Lane,
Darwen,
Lancashire.
BB3 3LD**

Association Swarm Catchers.
For the 2014 season.

A small charge is made to collect swarms to cover expenses which is up to the discretion of the individual collector.

BLACKBURN, DARWEN, ACCRINGTON and
ROSSENDALE
AREAS

Bob Fulton.
Telephone 01254722514

BURNLEY, NELSON, RIBBLE-VALLEY AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Michael Birt
Telephone 0161-408-4607

Please feel free to ring any of the above in your area and they will do their best to sort out the problem.

Swarm collectors will not come out to Bumble Bees and Wasps problems

Please bear in mind that the swarm collectors will only deal with honey bee swarms and will not deal with bumble-bee or wasp problems.

FUTURE BRANCH MEETINGS.

16/3/2014

Part 5 Basic Manipulation.... Lesson 1 ::: 1st Inspection of the year

30/3/2014

Part 5 Basic Manipulation.... Lesson 2 ::: Varroa Control.

13/4/2014

Part 5 Basic Manipulation.... Lesson 3 ::: Looking for problems within the hive.

*Details of all the meetings can be found on the web site on the events page at
www.blackburnbeekeepers.com*

We will, at every lesson and meeting open hives so you must bring along your protective clothing.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in any of the articles in 'Bee Talk' represent the personal opinions of the Contributors and in no way should they be regarded as the official opinions or views of the 'Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association' nor of our local Branch of this association 'The Blackburn & East Lancashire Branch'

For Sale

Protective Clothing

1. Cotton Bee Protective Boiler Suits all sizes a bargain at £20 each
2. Net Veils that need to be fitted onto a hat at £3 each
3. Box of thin but very strong gloves at £3 for a box of 50 pairs.

These are available by ringing Bob Fulton on
01254-772780

3. Available from Early March 2014 Fitted Veil at £15.
All in all if you buy the protective Suit, Veil and Gloves you will have yourself fully protected at a cost of £35
compared to something like £85 to £100 from other suppliers.

UK Honey Labelling Regulations

Below is our simple advice on honey labelling. For more detailed information - go to the website of the Food Standards Agency. www.food.gov.uk

1. The Word "HONEY" is required.
2. The weight must be on the label - we will ensure it is the legal size and format.
3. You can specify the area where the honey is produced. For example, Lincolnshire, Forest of Dean, Scottish Borders.
4. You can specify the type of honey. For example, Heather, Borage. The honey must be at least 75% of that particular type.
5. If you are selling the honey, you must have your name and address on the label. It does not need to be complete but you should be able to be found from the information.
6. If you are selling the honey through a third party, you must have a lot number.
7. New for 2003 You must have a best before date on the jar. We suggest 2-5 years from now.
8. New for 2003 You must have a country of origin on the jar. For example - Produce of England, Product of Scotland, Harvested in Wales. Adding the country to the end of your address is not acceptable.

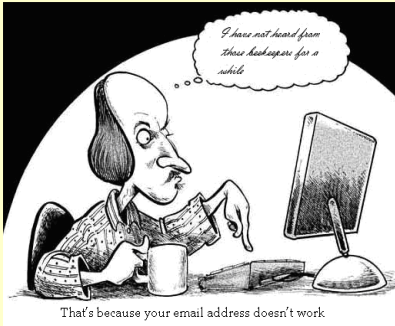
*E H Thorne (Beehives) Ltd disclaims all responsibility for all consequences of any person acting on, or refraining from acting in reliance on, information contained above.
From EH Thorne's online catalogue 2010 - other sources are available*



What's in the Honey Pot

A few snippets of news and information that may be of use to you

Editorial



Our membership secretary reports that several members' email addresses no longer work and emails are bounced straight back at him by the "mailer-daemon". If you've been feeling neglected by your Association lately, please check that we have your correct email address. You can rectify this problem, if it applies to you, by emailing

webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

Editorial.

Hi everyone and welcome to the new Beetalk, which is the new newsletter of Darwen and District Beekeeping Group.

As you may well be aware, the Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of the BBKA decided to finish with the old website and also Beetalk.

We felt that with the website having had nearly 60,000 hits and Beetalk existing for over 13 years that beekeepers were missing out on the wealth of information that was in this little magazine and on the website, so decided to start this little group, carry on with a website and Beetalk and go our own way.

So there we are.

Hope you enjoy this little newsletter and if you would care to visit us at the main website of the group, please feel free to do so.

The website address is

www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

If you wish to include any articles you may feel may be worthy of inclusion, however small, please send them to the

webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

Meet a couple of our members.



Bob Fulton.

Bob is our education man. All the lessons are carried out at Bobs home in Darwen and at his Apiary, also in Darwen.

Bob as been keeping bees for over 40 years and as gained more practical experience that most beekeepers have forgot.

You will always be in safe hands with BOB.



Michael Birt.

Michael as been keeping bees since 1977. He now lives part of the time in Thailand where he is the education officer for the largest educational bee farm in the Far East. He also manages over 200 hives over there.

When in the UK Michael and Bob both teach the beginners Beekeeping course and he as also wrote a book on Beekeeping for beginners.

Again with Michael your are in safe hands

Things to do in January and February. In fact all the winter months.

Lots of us beekeepers make the mistake of doing nothing when the bees are bedded down for the winter. Oxalic Acid treatment carried out and the jobs a gud un, so we say in this neck of the woods. The truth is there are lots of jobs to be doing in the workshop/ bee house, which are best done over the winter months. We will list a few below.

Firstly you cannot do anything to the bees as they are now in a cluster, with the candy you put on last month, along with the mouse guards. It's up to you how you have looked after them and built up your bees ready for going through the winter, along with some luck and decent, cold, dry weather, and you will know if you have won when the bees start to fly again. Don't do into them, leave them alone as you can do more harm than good if you do.

Make sure your hives are secure and protected from any winter rain and storms, put some weight of the roof and tilt the hive forwards. Make sure you have an open mesh floor on the hive which will give the bees plenty of ventilation. Cold will not kill bees but dampness will.

Check and replace any damaged frames in any stored equipment and replace any dirty combs. If you take the wax foundation out ready for melting, always sterilize the frames with a blowtorch which will get rid of any disease that may be in them.

Any brood boxes or honey supers can be sterilized, again by taking out any frames and going over the boxes with a blow torch. This will again get rid of any problems that may be there.

Storage of your brood boxes and supers. These should be stored above acetic acid. The easy way is to place an eke on the floor, then put a bowl of acetic acid on the floor also. By doing this you will keep the acid away from the frames. On top of the eke can be stored the brood boxes and supers with the frames and wax foundation. About 6 high is about right. In top put a crown board so that everything is sealed in. By doing all this, all will be air tight and will let the fumes circulate around. It is a sure way to keep out any wax moth which can be a big problem with stored equipment. They say it also helps control any nosema spores that may be about. About a week before you are ready to use them all you need to do is air everything out and the jobs a good one.

Make sure you have one extra, clean set of equipment for each hive you have. Many beekeepers make the mistake of not having enough equipment of hand when the honey flow starts and are left running around and panicking. This is the time when things are quiet to get at least one set of equipment ready and have enough of everything to carry out your swarm control method when the time comes.

Make sure you have enough clean supers ready for the honey flow as you will be, again running around when you come to look for them and nothing is ready.

On a nice day check to see if your bees are flying as this is the time the bees will go out on cleansing flights. Honeybees are capable of retaining their waste products in the bowel which can be greatly expanded to almost fill the abdomen and as soon as they get a mild day they will come out and empty them. It's nice to see them flying as you know that they are ok. Again don't go into the hive as you will cause more harm than good and if you did there is nothing at all you can do.

Check your protective clothing, wash and mend.

Instead of going and buying any equipment, start to make some of your own. Equipment can be very expensive and there are lots of things you can make yourselves. We have, on the website, under the banner, Plans for Hives and other Equipment, lots of plans, where you can have a go at making your own stuff, which will save you a small fortune. Have a go and you will be surprised what you can do.

Read a few books and maybe, if you are inclined, study for some of the BBKA Modules. The best place to get books is at Northern Bee Books, where you will find more than anything you will ever need. If you want to go for the BBKA modules and it matters little if you don't want to bother. You will have to join the BBKA.

Ok that's about it. If you need any advice and you are a member of Darwen and District Beekeepers you can always contact Bob or Michael. The website for all you twitters is www.blackburnbeekeepers.com.

Facebook and Twitter.

We have put a Facebook and Twitter page online.
Not sure how they work as its all new to me, but seems very interesting.

Have a look and make a contribution or a Twit.

They are at.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1442937712600956/>

And

<https://twitter.com/darwenbees>

Tip from Steve Ganner

If the hive has blown over and off the stand and the frames are dislodged and on the floor, they should make it right by leaving the hive where it has come to rest but don't replace the floor. In other words place the hive in an upright position on top of the cluster with all frames replaced (they usually fall like a pack of cards and are still in order) ensuring the bees have an opening to get in and out. They will re cluster where they are for the time being until the winds die down) they won't necessarily fly back up to the original opening (too cold or new bees) the following day, the hive can be quietly reassembled on the original site.

Steve Ganner.

If anyone has anything to add or thinks otherwise, by all means send their views as well

HONEY& DIABETICS.

Honey is composed mainly of a variety of sugars, traces of pollen and water. There are also enzymes present. Because the sugars in Honey depend upon a carrier to move them across the membrane barrier, they are limited by how much carrier is available. This means that there is less of a "rush" of sugar to the body with honey i.e. ...Less of a strain on the pancreas to suddenly produce large amounts of insulin... Less likelihood of large peaks and valleys in the insulin /sugar curve... Less likelihood of hypoglycemia.

The main practical difference in behaviour between that of cane sugar and the complex sugars in honey is the manner in which the body absorbs them. Sugar is absorbed via osmosis. This means that it simply enters the bloodstream, penetrating directly through membranes, when it is being digested. The implication is that large amounts of sugar can rapidly enter the system. This rapid entry can cause an overreaction of insulin production by the pancreas, resulting in the quick burning of the sugar in the system. A crash back to lower levels of sugar (caused by the over stimulation of insulin production/rapid digestion of sugar) may occur.

The complex sugars contained in honey are absorbed by a process known as "active transport." While the term "active" may seem to denote that this occurs quickly, the opposite is true... Since the transport of the sugars through membranes and into the bloodstream is accomplished by an actual carrying agent (a chemical that binds the sugar), the speed with which it is absorbed is regulated by the availability of the transport agent. So complex sugars move into the bloodstream at a slower rate and are, therefore, less likely to cause an over stimulation of insulin production. Add to this the fact that honey is twice as sweet as sugar, you can use half as much in a given recipe, and you can see that diabetics are far less likely to shock themselves with honey as a sweetening agent than sugar.

Winter feeding your bees.

We are now in Mid January, The weather as been wet but not cold, so chances are your queen could be laying. If she is, then you could, if you have not fed hard enough before they went into winter, be faced with them feeding the brood and themselves and running out of food.

This is, unfortunately what as happened to quite a lot of beekeepers over the last year or so.

So what can we do ?

Its never to late to put on some winter fondant onto the bees and here is what to do. Make sure you do it quickly so as not to chill any brood that may be in there.

Fondant for the winter.

Fondant is ideal for winter-feeding the bees, this can be fed directly to the bees.

4 parts white sugar (by volume) + 4 parts 2:1 syrup mix (by volume) + 3 parts water (by volume).

In this case, boil the water and slowly add the sugar and syrup, stirring until all is dissolved. Keep heating until the temperature reaches 114° C (238°F). Let the mixture cool, without mixing, and when just warm to the touch begin to mix again and allow the mixture to air, it should lighten in colour. Pour into shallow dishes and save for later use.

We recommend storing the fondant in small plastic containers (old takeaway containers work very well) with lids and when ready to feed the bees, remove the lid and place the container upside down on top of the frames in the brood chamber. Put them all over, so as the bees can get at them.

Some beekeepers leave fondant on all winter, so that if the bees need a feed it is available to them. Others like to check regularly and feed as and when required. It's all personal preference, but whatever your way of feeding just ensure the bees do not starve.

Preventing the Sugar Fermenting

If sugar syrup is left for a while, the syrup can start to ferment and go moldy. To prevent this you can add small amounts of Thymol and surgical spirit.

Add a teaspoon of Thymol and Surgical Spirit to every gallon of syrup mix, these are such small amounts that they have absolutely no effect on the bees - in fact, it is the healthiest option, and protects the bees from mold and bacteria that could potentially wipe out an entire hive.

Also later on you will need to give them some pollen substitute. Here is a recipe for you to make.

Pollen Patties and why should you feed?

Many beekeepers can easily tell if their hives have stores of honey. But what is usually missed going into winter and in pre-spring is pollen stores. Without stores of pollen adult bees become weak and there is little to feed the winter brood or available for the spring build up. As an added bonus, bees in pollen or protein rich hives live longer, sometimes as much as 15 days longer. This adds to the overall hive health and the ability to produce and care for more bees both in winter and at spring build up.

How much pollen or patties do you need?

As a rule of thumb, one kilogram of pollen is needed for every one kilogram of bees (9,000 - 10,000 bees). Near the same amount is needed in patties. Once you start supplying patties you must continue until natural pollen is available or the hive will decline and/or collapse.

Where to place your pollen substitute patties.

In mid-February, remove hive cover and smoke the bees down below the top bars. The patty, flattened into a cake about 1.5 cm (1/2 inch) thick, should be placed on the top bars directly over the centre of the cluster. IT MUST BE PLACED WITHIN INCHES OF THE BROOD TO BE EFFECTIVE. This leaves the upper box available for grease patties and so on.

How to use the pollen patty.

The top of the cake must be covered with waxed paper to prevent dehydration and hardening of the patty. The inner cover, when used, should be inverted with rim side down to provide space for the cake. New cakes should be added before the previous cakes are consumed.

Feeding patties at seven to ten day intervals is generally satisfactory .

To make 24 (1 lb.) patties:
0.5 kg pollen - or more (800 ml or 3.3 cups)
2.5 kg hot water (2.5 l or 10.6 cups)
5.0 kg white sugar (5.3 l or 22.5 cups)
4.0 kg brewer's yeast (6 l or 25.5 cups)
(plus up to 600g or 900ml extra yeast as necessary)
(Up to 125g or 225ml more yeast)

WASHING SODA – THE MAGIC SOLUTION!

When your grandmother did her spring cleaning or her laundry and used a fine white granular substance which was not soap powder, it is likely that she was using soda crystals or, to give them their technical term, sodium carbonate decahydrate ($\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ for the scientists amongst us). These are a derivative of Soda Ash and dissolve really quickly in water (hot or cold). They have many uses around the house, in the garden and, as they are free of bleach, enzymes and phosphates, are just perfect for cleaning up around our bees.

Soda crystals have been used for generations to clean, loosen dirt, cut through grease, lime scale and soap scum plus they soften hard water.

As beekeepers we are surrounded by all the above in various forms if you consider beeswax, propolis which sticks to everything and general grubbiness surrounding our beehives, whether they be in the garden or a field, on a low loader or on the top of buildings.

Beekeeping suits and overalls can be washed in the washing machine in the usual way. If you add a handful of soda crystals to roughly half the quantity of your usual detergent, you will find that any sticky propolis is removed, your suit will come up nice and clean AND you will lessen your environmental impact by reducing the detergent used as the soda crystals soften the local water. Less lime scale deposit on the inside of your washing machine and pipes leads to a reduction in repair bills, so a big thumbs up all round to soda crystals!

Propolis gets everywhere in the summer months when it is warm. We find our gloves, hive tools, smokers and bee-suits covered in this marvelous substance, but how to remove it? A good soak in a solution of soda crystals will dissolve the propolis and any beeswax that has come with it (1lb:1gallon / 500g:5litres of water is an approximate ratio which gives an antibacterial pH of 13 so I am told). Adding a squirt of washing up liquid will help disperse any scum. Do please wear appropriate protective clothing including rubber gloves as the solution will be mildly corrosive and do not use anything made of aluminum as the soda crystals solution will attack the metal, pit it and ultimately eat their way through.

Soda crystal solution is ideal to disinfect your hive tool(s) between apiaries or between hives – best to keep it in a plastic container, an ice cream tub or a bucket with a lid. You will find that the association tools are kept in such a way. The solution should get changed every fortnight or so to prevent re-spreading the deposit. Try not to get the soda solution on your hands as it might irritate – there are plastic inspection gloves available if you need them. The use of a nylon scrubbing pad will not scratch your hive tool and will help remove any deposits. This same mix can be used to clean all the parts of the hive too. Brood and super frames, when stripped of their foundation and comb, can be soaked in the solution to remove the old wax and propolis and a gentle scrub with a cheap washing up brush will complete the job. After soaking the frames, rinse them in fresh water and hang them up to dry. Excess soda will be absorbed by the wooden frames and as they dry a white fluffy dust might appear, especially on the exposed ends. Soak the frames in diluted white vinegar and the soda will be neutralised. Wooden floors and crown boards can be given a good scrub with the soda solution and then scorched with a blow torch.

Polystyrene and plastic hives can also have a good scrub down with the soda solution, but don't scorch these ones! Your smoker can also be given the same treatment, but keep the bellows clear of the liquid. Put plastic queen excluders in a hot mix, it will bring them up clean and spotless as they clearly cannot be flamed like the metal ones.

Make a point to clean seasonal equipment like bee escapes, mouse-guards and super frames as soon as the items are removed and scorch wooden parts (after a good disinfect if required or a good scrub down with your soda solution). Do not store dirty equipment, it is not worth it and you may need it sooner than you imagine! If, like me, you manage to deposit honey in the strangest of places when extracting, or if you use a hot air gun to uncup your supers and those small melted dots of white wax fly around the room, a hot soda solution will clear it all up in no time and clean the floor at the same time – not recommended for waxed floors though, as the wax finish will be stripped off. Vinyl or ceramic tiles will clean up beautifully and you could give the grouting a good going over with an old toothbrush at the same time! The kitchen sink will gleam as grease, fat and wax will just disappear with a soda crystal solution rubbed over and a hot mix flushed down the drain will keep the pipes clear of blockages and fresh(er) smelling.

Talking of smells – you can take a strong soda solution to your dustbin (good idea to do this before the summer) to loosen and remove dirt, grime and sludge – good for the inside of water butts too.

The deposits from a melted beeswax candle on a favourite table cloth or item of clothing can be removed with an overnight soak (check washing labels first though) and the wax will be removed without damaging the material by scraping, scrubbing or using a hot iron and brown paper.

There are plenty more ways to use these magic crystals. We use them for cleaning paintwork in the house, cleaning windows, glassware, the barbecue gets a good going over before it is first used in the summer and mopping over the porch floor with a hot solution brings it up beautifully. Old fashioned maybe, but our grandmothers definitely knew best!

This excellent advice on the use of Washing Soda is courtesy of Cambridgeshire BKA, via Taunton & District BKA and eBEES

Some nice Bee Pictures.



HIVE HEALTH CHECK LIST.

Inspecting the brood combs of a honeybee colony is the only way to determine the health and general condition of the colony. However, you have to know what you are looking at and what it means in order to make a diagnosis. In general, a healthy brood comb simply 'looks healthy'. The brood capping's have a 'digestive biscuit' colour; the larvae are white, glistening and 'fat'. The capping's of the brood cells are uniform and the overall pattern is solid, with few holes. A good queen will start laying eggs in the lower centre of the combs and radiate out from there. Once the oldest brood emerges, the queen lays in those cells, and the youngest brood on the comb will now be in the centre. Once the brood-rearing cycle gets underway in the spring or following the introduction of a new queen, all stages of brood should be found at each inspection.

A handy checklist

The following check list was recently found which would be helpful when inspecting your colonies. Here are some conditions you may observe during your brood inspections and their possible causes:

No eggs, no brood present

- (a) Not brood-rearing season.
- (b) No queen.
- (c) New queen not yet laying.
- (d) Extended shortage of pollen.

No eggs, but brood present

- (a) Brood-rearing ceased - end of the season.
- (b) Queen has died or colony is preparing to swarm
- (c) Lack of pollen curtailed brood-rearing.

Test for Presence of a Queen If there are no eggs and you can't determine if there is a queen present, put in a brood comb with young larvae from Another colony. Check back in three days; if the suspect hive starts queen cells, it has no queen.

Eggs present, but no brood

Brood-rearing has just resumed after being halted for some reason.

Wet-looking pollen - in the centre of the brood nest

If there is no queen and during the off-season, pollen may be stored in the centre of the brood nest and can take on an unkempt look - wet or glazed over. When the workers anticipate needing the pollen to feed brood, they move the pollen and freshen it up and it has a dry look.

Clean, empty cells - in the centre of the brood nest

The opposite of the wet-pollen look. When the workers anticipate that brood cells will be needed for eggs, they move nectar and pollen out of the way and give the cells a polish.

Too many eggs per cell

- (a) Young, inexperienced queen, usually settles down quickly to laying one egg per cell.
- (b) Something happened to queen and laying workers developed.

Scattered brood

Same-age brood scattered over the comb, not in adjacent cells, means:

- (a) A failing queen running out of sperm.
- (b) Something is killing the brood. In early spring, cold nights when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm can result in chilled brood. Sometimes pesticides or poison pollen can cause scattered patterns.

Clue: Is only one colony showing the symptoms, or are several?

Raised capping's on worker cells

The capping's look like the ends of bullets. Cause: Drone brood is developing in worker cells, because:

- (a) Queen has become a drone-layer. Usually her sperm reserves are depleted, due to her age.
- (b) Laying workers; lay only infertile eggs, resulting in drones.

Raised capping's in drone cells

Normal drone brood has a 'bullet' look, but not as pronounced as when it is in worker cells. Normally, queens lay unfertilized eggs in the larger (both in circumference and depth)

drone cells. These are frequently found around the bottom edges of the brood comb and in areas where the comb has been damaged. The presence of some drone brood indicates a vigorous, well-nourished colony.

Queen cells

Queen cells are constructed along a vertical plane, as contrasted with the horizontal plane of worker and drone brood cells. They somewhat resemble peanuts (in the shells).

- (a) Queen cells near the centre of the comb, growing out of worker brood cells – these are replacement cells the workers have developed in emergency, loss of a queen.
- (b) Queen cells everywhere, particularly near bottom of comb. This is swarm preparation—the old queen will soon depart with about half the bees (called the 'prime swarm'). Tip: For a quick check of swarm preparation, in a hive with two brood boxes, break the boxes apart and look along the bottom bars and bottoms of the combs in the top box. Most colonies preparing to swarm will show cells along comb bottoms.

Dead larvae (not white)

- (a) Chilled due to cold snap (usually in spring) when there are too few adult bees to keep the brood warm.
- (b) Died due to lack of care for some reason.
- (c) Disease: Sacbrood, American foulbrood, European foulbrood. Call the Bee Inspector.
- (d) Pesticide damage.

Mummified larvae Older stage larvae turn white and hard.

This is probably Chalkbrood.

Mouldy pollen

Soft, white stuff in pollen cells - probably due to insufficient hive ventilation.

What about mites? After some training, you can pretty easily identify Varroa mites on adult bees' abdomens and on your open mesh floor tray. Also, you can uncap pupae and pull them out of the cells and check for dark Varroa attached to the white pupae. Varroa are especially attracted to drone brood and can often be found in the bottom end of the cells from which drone pupae are extracted. They may run out of the cells as pupae are being extracted.

Swarm Collecting: Cautionary Notes

Collecting a swarm has got to be one of the most satisfying parts of beekeeping, especially if it's large and not one of yours.

There it is hanging from a single branch, five feet off the ground, one tap and a cup of tea later and you've boxed a swarm and have the best machine known to man for drawing out the much needed comb. But what if it's hanging ten feet up a tree, or it's integrated in the soffit and the gutter? There are a thousand different scenarios that bees can get themselves into. In today's world of health and safety and the 'you sue me, I'll sue you' culture that we live in, are you sure that the British Beekeepers

Association insurance will cover you for any mishap? It will definitely not cover you for personal injury and was the swarm worth six weeks off work with a broken ankle?

The insurance says it covers you for beekeeping activities including swarm collection, but we all know when it's time to pay up insurance companies have a tendency to bring out the rule book and the small print. Were you qualified to remove the roof tile, that caused a leak, that ruined the roof, that collapsed the ceiling that fell on the owner - who was very grateful when you removed the swarm but can see a large payout coming his way? Was the ladder you used the correct one for working in that environment? It may well have been good enough when you fixed your own gutter but did it comply with the British Standard for anything other than personal use on your property? When it slipped and went through the conservatory or the windscreen of the new Jaguar car, were you trained to work at height? (That came in during 2005).

We then come to the really grey area of having to dispatch a swarm or a colony that have established themselves in a chimney or roof and there isn't a viable way to get them out other than to use a chemical of some kind. Wasp killer will do it, but unless you're registered and trained you will only be able to get amateur use only and using that on someone else's property is it still deemed as amateur? What if you have killed the bees, do you know what the legislation insists you do then? A qualified pest controller was fined £15,000 in 2008 for not following the correct procedure.

I am not trying to put anyone off collecting swarms but please be aware of the possible consequences that may or could happen, people always appear so grateful when you get the swarm, but when it's all over they then start to think differently! Don't put yourself in the firing line and please don't put yourselves at risk. If in doubt don't let your ego get the better of you, tell the occupier to phone a qualified pest controller who specializes in wasps and bees including bumblebees.

What to look for with queen cells



Left. A hatched queen cell. Centre: A sealed queen cell.

Right: A torn down queen cell.

Thanks to Ludlow & District BKA via e bees

The Other Bees

For those of you who are on the swarm list, it is felt that you should be aware of the other types of bees that you may be called out for.

The Tree Bee (*Bombus hypnorum*) which is one of the seven most common bumblebees, is the one that we have had most communication about from the public. One of their favourite habitats is a bird-box. They are to be found in a variety of habitats from woodlands to town gardens and allotments primarily in lowland areas which, of course, includes us. Like most bumblebees, the last litter they have will be next year's queens who will hibernate elsewhere so they only have to wait until the end of August for them to not be there any more.



The mason bee is another to be aware of. It is a solitary bee and they tend to live in holes in walls and can be also be found living in bamboo stems and other hollow wooden structures. This week I have visited some living in holes in a wooden gate in Sawston. They lay eggs at the end of the season which they leave with pollen and then the larva hatch in the spring when the weather warms up. Their brood cells are constructed in a linear fashion and the nest plugs are made of mud. The uninitiated envisage that when the bees disappear into a hole in their wall that they have made a huge cavity behind the entrance hole. They haven't, it is still just a hole quite often in the mortar between the bricks that occur quite naturally with time but sometimes if the mortar is old the bees will tunnel a hole in it.



There are quite a lot of the solitary mining bee (*andrena fulva*) around at the moment. They live in holes in the ground and are common in all sorts of habitats. They also look quite like a honeybee.



Then we come to the other six varieties of bumblebee. The big furry bees which are seen around at the present time are the queens which have hibernated over winter and are now having their first litters which are the little, almost round bees. They choose just about anywhere to make their nests for the season from bird boxes to compost heaps, under patios and door steps which are made of perhaps slabs which could leave a gap underneath. Their colonies vary in number but are never more than a few hundred individuals. They have a sting but rarely use it. They are a social creature which is quite happy to share our gardens with us and as long as they are not provoked are not a problem. People should learn to appreciate them. Children taught to watch them but not touch. A lot of bees are protected and the public should understand that they are not dangerous and they should be left alone to get on with their lives and pollinate our plants. If they have had bumblebees living with them this year they are not likely to have them in the same place next year so if they don't want them back they should fill in the cavity the bees have been using once the season has finished i.e. the end of August.

If you go onto the www.bwars.com website there is information about all of these bees.

Judith Evans

Secretary Cambridgeshire Bee Keepers Association

MANUKA HONEY FRAUD UNCOVERED. 'MORE SOLD THAN MADE'. *SURPRISED?*

New Zealand's NZ\$120-million manuka honey sector is in crisis as tests around the world find the product often has nothing but price to set it apart from other honey. All manuka honey comes from New Zealand and Unique Manuka Factor Honey Association research shows 1,700 tonnes produced each year. But 1,800 tonnes of "manuka" honey is sold in Britain alone each year with as much as 10,000 tonnes sold worldwide.

Of the 73 samples of honey tested by the association, 41 failed to show the non-peroxide activity (NPA) claimed for manuka honey. Hong Kong authorities found 14 of 55 manuka honey samples tested were adulterated with syrup. Other tests found some of the honey was not even manuka.

The '*New Zealand Herald*' reports that the UK's Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) tested a small sample of five brands of manuka honey from shop shelves. Only one, made by the biggest manuka honey producer, was up to standard. The other four showed no detectable non-peroxide activity, the anti-bacterial properties special to manuka honey. Fera then issued a nationwide warning about misleading claims on the labels of manuka honey jars.

Manuka honey can command prices many times higher than other types of honey because of its enhanced anti-bacterial properties and the New Zealand Food Safety Minister warned that the NZ government and the honey industry need to move quickly to set an international labelling standard. A spokesperson for the NZ Honey Association said "There is potentially huge fraud.

There are higher and ever-increasing volumes of honey labelled as manuka which are not manuka. We knew we sold more 'manuka' overseas than has ever been produced . . . we've been spending everything we've got to work out how to stop this fraud. We should have done it sooner."

Alan Harman in '*Catch the Buzz*' from *Bee Culture* – the magazine of American beekeeping

Pheromones

Report by Peter Darley

- Bournemouth & Dorset South Beekeepers Association

(via ebees)

Report on a talk given in November by Ivor Davies, a physicist turned beekeeper. Dr Davies's talk began by saying that if we could smell pear drops and bananas we would be better bee-keepers. Read on to find out why

Pheromones are semi chemicals and are one of three types of semi chemicals: pheromones, which are intraspecific;

Allomones, which help each other, and kairomones, used by predators to the disadvantage of the producer.

There is some thought that inside the hive the bees 'shut down' their eyes, their visual perception, as there is no need for it. Pheromones come in two types. 'Primers' which affect the bees' physiology, have a low vapour pressure and provide a long term control; and 'Releasers', which are instant are made of volatile compounds and provoke a short term reaction.

Transmission of pheromones is by glands on various parts of the body and they are received mainly by the antennae, but also by pegs on the feet. Whereas a worker may have 3,000 receptor cells, a queen 5,000 cells, the drone has 30,000 cells and an extra antennal segment to carry all these sensors.

Queen pheromone differs with different queens and on emergence a queen has no queen pheromone so is completely ignored by the colony as a queen. As she matures and develops pheromones, eventually the workers force her from the hive to get mated. Also a swarm will, by different concentrations of the different pheromones, balance itself to give a better representation of bees of all ages. The scout bees that lead the swarm to the new home, and fly through the swarm to give a visual direction, also release scent from the Nasonov gland laying a scent trail as well.

The cocktail of pheromones coupled with the scent from the forage being brought in gives each colony a unique odour and, if our noses are sensitive enough, a smell like **bananas** when a colony is opened is a good sign, but the smell of **pear drops** means, '*leave them alone and walk away.*'

The balance of numbers between house bees and foragers is controlled by pheromones; the juvenile hormone increases in foragers and so suppresses the maturing of house and nurse bees; fewer foragers means less juvenile hormone and the consequent quicker maturing of the house bees to make up the forager numbers.

The 'dance floor' near the entrance to the hive is saturated with short term lasting pheromones so if the dance floor is moved, the bees move with it; but only for 24 hours. By then the pheromone will have been lost and a new dance floor back near the entrance will have been created. Also the 'waggle dance' has about a 5 degree accuracy so the dancing bee will fly back to the source laying a pheromone trail to ensure accurate location.

Larval pheromones inform nurse bees of the stage of development of the larva and consequent nutritional requirements and also when the cell needs capping. This ingenious and complicated system of control by scents was admirably described by Dr Davies.

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