



Beetalk June 2015

General info and news about bees

Hello and welcome.

Beetalk is a compilation of news from across the bee keeping word.

Its not affiliated to any beekeeping group so you wont get things like the next meeting and what we are doing and such like.

We hope that the articles provided will be useful to anyone interested in the a rewarding hobby and in some way we also hope that you may gain some pleasure in reading some of the article that are included.

Also we intend to include articles that may be helpful to anyone new to the hobby.

Being based in Lancashire it would be great for any contributions from Beekeepers from the county. But as stated above, please nothing about your association or group.

Hope you enjoy.

Editor

If you have any articles that you think may be useful to have included in Beetalk.

Please e-mail them to the editor

at

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NEED FOR LATE WINTER INSPECTION **Doug Colter, Alberta BKA**

Each year, you try to do your best to assure the presence of a healthy, young queen of preferred bee stock, to provide adequate food reserves, to maintain disease-free colony conditions and to provide winter protection for all of your colonies. At this time of year, it is important to check on your colonies during a late winter colony inspection. The purpose of a late winter inspection is to answer several important questions: Is a colony alive or dead? How available are the food reserves to the cluster? What is the health status of the colony? Quite simply, a dead or severely dwindled colony should be dismantled and moved out of the apiary to a bee tight storage area or closed up until it can be moved out. This will effectively eliminate the dead or weak colony from becoming a potential source of diseases or pests to neighbouring colonies due to robbing or drifting behaviour.

Later examination of the hive equipment may allow for determination of the cause(s) of the colony's demise. Queens generally begin egg-laying mid-late January and brood rearing will expand if sufficient pollen stores are available within the cluster - even when outside temperatures are below freezing. Winter survival problems can arise, even with adequate food reserves, when the cluster cannot maintain contact with its food reserves. Generally, the cluster will not leave the brood to maintain contact with its food reserves. This is especially the case with small clusters that can cover only a few frames.

Sometimes, the cluster will simply eat its way in one direction, lose contact with its food reserves and starve in one corner of the brood chamber. The cluster may be able to expand during mild weather breaks, but due to a sudden return of cold temperatures, cannot move quickly enough to get into contact again with its food reserves. As a result, a large number of small colonies can die in January and February. This can even happen in more populous colonies if food reserves are inadequate or improperly positioned in the hive. Prior to the actual examination, you should assemble everything you may need beforehand.

You must be able to assess each colony quickly and respond accordingly to each situation observed. With your smoker ready, gently pry up the inner cover. Use a little smoke to calm the honeybees. Leave any adhering honeybees on the cover and put them aside, exposed side up. Look down between the frames in the top box to check for adequate honey reserves in contact with the cluster. A fully capped frame of honey equals about 6.5 pounds of food reserves. The colony, in a standard hive, should have from four to six frames of honey in contact with the cluster. Such a colony should be secure for another three to four weeks. Colonies that have sufficient but positioned food reserves can be quickly adjusted.

Move combs of honey to the cluster, rather than the other way around. If you need to centre the entire cluster to surround it with food reserves, you must move the frames as a single unit. Do this as carefully as possible so as not to break up or disturb the cluster. Do not remove frames that contain pollen. If you need to feed a colony, honey is best at this time of year. A frame of honey, saved during the harvest, for each colony is an ideal source of food. You can also use granulated honey. However, in both choices, disease free sources must be used. Placing an inside frame feeder filled with granulated honey or dry granulated sugar, in position adjacent to the cluster, is an effective way to feed bees. Feeding sugar syrup at this time can cause excessive moisture, and possibly dysentery problems, especially in small colonies. It can also chill the bees, cause the cluster to become restless and can stimulate food consumption. Any sugar syrup that you feed should be warm and as concentrated as possible (2:1 sugar water) and limited in volume initially. If you determine there is a shortage of pollen near the cluster, a pollen substitute or a pollen supplement should be provided. Sometimes you may find a colony that is near starvation.

The whole cluster appears restless and shivering. If the colony is worth saving (considering labour and time involved versus expected results), there are a few alternative methods you can use to try to salvage the bees. Use of a frame feeder may not be effective as the bees may be too weak to move to the feeder. You can also provide a frame with warm syrup or honey poured into the cells. When the bees appear to have recovered, you can then place a frame feeder filled with honey or dry sugar next to the cluster. Another quick-fix remedy is to use frames of honey. If the honey is capped, you may have to remove the cappings to allow the cluster quick access to the honey. Where colonies are populous, many beekeepers provide extra feed by using a division board or frame feeder filled with granulated honey or warm sugar syrup.

Some fill empty brood combs with syrup using a sprayer. Others prefer to feed granulated sugar placed onto the inner cover, leaving the feedhole open to allow the honeybee's access to the sugar. However, feeding sugar - dry or syrup - at this time of the year is stressful for the colony. When you provide supplemental feed, you should limit the amounts initially, gradually increasing the quantity on your next visits. Feeding large amounts at one time will usually have a negative effect on colony build-up. The colony has to divert energy to handle the sugar rather than to rear brood and maintain hive temperatures. The brood nest may also become "plugged" with excess syrup, interfering with egg laying by the queen. Another method that has been used to feed a colony until other forms of supplement can be applied is the "candy-board." If you do use this method, it is recommended to use the soft or fondant formulation. One problem of the candy board is the same as when granulated honey or dry sugar is used to feed colonies. The honeybees do need some moisture to allow them to liquefy the sugar.

There may be sufficient moisture in the hive from the condensed water vapour produced by the cluster as they respire. There is a need to monitor your colonies for the presence of bee diseases and parasitic mites. The best time to monitor and to sample your colonies is now. For information on sampling and detection methods, consult IPM recommendations. The late winter inspection with its necessary adjustments and/or supplemental feedings of honey, sugar, pollen substitutes or supplements will generally assure the survival and normal development of your colonies until natural sources of pollen and nectar are available. When winters are severe, you may have to inspect your colonies every two to three weeks and apply additional food reserves. Mid-winter to late winter checks, if done quickly and carefully, will not greatly stress your colonies.

Removing the hive cover will not cause problems but disturbing the cluster can. Winter losses due to inadequate food reserves can be prevented by your inspection of each colony as early as possible. However, if many colonies require feeding at this time of year, you may have to re-examine your winter preparation schedule to ensure adequate food reserves in future years.

NOSEMA: A CALL TO ARMS Bill Troup and Klinker, NOSEMA: A CALL TO ARMS Maryland Bee Inspectors.

(Klinker is a Nosema detector/sniffer dog! Ed.) osema may be present in the gut of honeybees at all times but not at the sporulation stage. What triggers spores to multiply (sporulate) to high infection levels at various times of the year is not yet clearly understood.

We know that when we were only dealing with Nosema apis spore disease, symptoms appeared during winter months of long intervals of confinement: periods when bees cannot fly to cleanse themselves due to long cluster cold spells.

Also, poor food source or stores aggravated this condition, such as winter stores with too high moisture content or natural nectar/honey from sources such as buckwheat, aster and goldenrod with a high concentrate of indigestible components.

Winter spells of short confinement, coupled with regular cleansing flights and water gathering and consumption normally do not result in bees weakened or dead from Nosema disease. That is why we recommend treating your bees in early fall with Fumagillin in the last feedings of sugar water, so bees will store the Fumagillin for winter use.

Feeding Fumagillin in fall for storage is like taking out an insurance policy on your bees. If we have a long hard winter, no flight days, poor food stores, then your insurance policy will pay for itself with healthy Nosema-free late winter bees.

If we experience the opposite, a mild winter, lots of flight days for voiding and water gathering for diluting poor food stores and ripening high moisture food stores, then your insurance policy was for nothing.

It would be nice if we could forecast the weather that far in advance! Please be aware that you should not feed or treat with Fumagillin prophylactically as sometimes we do for Varroa mites, etc. because Nosema spore-free bees can become deathly ill if fed Fumagillin. Bees without Nosema spores do not digest Fumagillin well or if at all, but will become almost poisoned by its presence.

So you are wondering: “How do bees with no Nosema spores sporulating in their gut, eating winter stores with Fumagillin present, get sick?” This has not been the case since we have been using Fumagillin for N. apis on wintering bees.

But feeding bees prophylactically when no sporulation exists in their gut can cause fatal results Perhaps this needs to be explored more by bee scientists since a lot has changed in beekeeping since Varroa mites, Tracheal mites, BPMS, Cruddy Brood, etc and the appearance of Nosema ceranae. Not to mention to viruses, paralysis (viral), CCD, pesticide kills and other bacterial infections being magnified by vectoring Varroa mites.

Now to address N. ceranae and what we know about it. N. ceranae occurs normally during spring through the summer months, with emphasis on summer months. However, this can happen at any time of the year. Causes are not clearly understood at this time, but again it goes back to the similar factors in N. apis: poor food sources.

Poor food sources could be those carried over from wintering bees who depended on honey and possibly pollen foraged from a poor plant source, such as buttercups, mountain laurel (rhododendron), fermented honey and sugar water, molasses, brown sugar, coke syrup, sorghum, maple syrup, etc.

Field symptoms for N. apis and N. ceranae may be similar; however, N. ceranae is sometimes called “dry Nosema” since it does not usually cause the characteristic faecal staining associated with N. apis. High infection levels of N. apis and ceranae still point to poor food sources, but don’t forget stress.

Package bees are stressed by confinement, shipping and handling, temperature changes, etc. Most recommend that the syrup shipped with package bees be treated with Fumagillin. “Is it?” is the big question: probably not! Thus we strongly recommend that newly installed packages be fed Fumagillin to treat for spores present due to stress.

Think: how often do early package bees get installed on dead-out winter combs with poor or fermented winter stores and/or when there is no nectar flow on and poor flying conditions exist? A good percentage of the time, I suspect.

None of these are good conditions and they promote Nosema. Stress! Stress! Stress! It is becoming apparent that Nosema is taking more of a toll on our bees than we realize. Years ago, it was a wintertime problem/concern only.

But now with incidents of N. ceranae on the rise, it is a year-round issue. Nosema-infected worker bees may not be very productive, but a Nosema-infected queen is not productive at all.

I suggest that you screen your bees early for Nosema in the summer months (mid July–August). If spore counts exceed one million and up over to five million, treatment is highly recommended so your bees enter early winter as Nosema-free as possible. Even with high thresholds of infected spores, your bees may still look healthy; but not for long and they are doomed as early winter confinement begins.

Let me remind you, feeding bees prophylactically with Fumagillin is not the way. Early detection through screening your bees for Nosema spore levels is the answer. Contact your regional Apiary Inspector for procedures and guidelines. As always, read the manufacturer’s label instructions for proper use of Fumagillin.

Please adhere to label instructions strictly, since Fumagillin is an antibiotic and we do not want resistant strains of Nosema to appear. Remember what happened due to the misuse of Terramycin and the creation of resistant strains of AFB. Beekeeper misuse of this product over a short time led to that development.

As with severe infections of Varroa mites leading to abundant symptoms of BPMS, DWV, CWV, IAPV, and Cruddy Brood, treatments may not be effective if detected too late.

Such is true of over-threshold levels of Nosema spores—treatment may not be effective. Early detection is the answer. In summary: In summary: We beekeepers must not only be more diligent with survey/sampling/screening techniques for Varroa, Tracheal, AFB, EFB, Small Hive Beetle, but also now Nosema.

QUESTIONS

What can be said about October as a month for things to do, beekeeping wise? One could ask oneself a few questions like: Could I have done things differently this year, bearing in mind that every 'bee year' is a new experience? April offered a great opportunity to make nuclei for queen replacement, despite May and June being so bad.

Many beekeepers, who relied on their bees making swarm preparations before splitting were still waiting in expectation of virgins mating as late as August – where successful, such colonies would require to be reinforced with frames of sealed brood from stronger colonies in the apiary or united to colonies having queens of 'borderline' age for successful over-wintering.

So, the next few questions need looking at seriously!

Am I where I want to be at this present time or should the colonies be stronger – should I consider uniting weak colonies? o Am I content with the condition of the queens heading my colonies? o Should I cut my losses and unite colonies with queens more than two winters old to colonies headed by younger (perhaps more vigorous) queens?

Do I feel comfortable that I have achieved optimum conditions for colony winter survival? o Am I sure the bees have been adequately fed or should I augment my late autumn syrup feed with a slab of candy, fondant or even a few thoroughly wetted sugar bags? o The colonies should have been fed at least 1:1 syrup continuously throughout September.

If when checking hive weight by hefting from behind – the beekeeper has to adjust his/her feet position due to misjudging the heaviness of the hive – this is an excellent indicator that the colony is 'good' for over wintering, all other aspects being OK!

Are my colonies housed in winter weatherproof accommodation? Are all the hive components, floor, deep box(es), supers, crown board lined up straight and true without gaps due to misalignment into which robbers, rain, frost, wind and snow could penetrate? If the hives had faults of the kind mentioned, the late autumn wasp 'frenzy' for food would have demonstrated to the observant beekeeper where any weaknesses lay.

Are the colonies in the best locations for overwintering? o Are the hives sitting under large trees with large branches which could drip, drip, onto the hive roofs all winter like a Chinese water torture or where they could be crushed in the event of gales? It happens!!

There is a classic tale of hives in the wrong place, for the right reasons.

A beekeeper some years ago decided to bring his bees into his workshop/shed for the winter period, having read all about the advantages of the European bee-houses. Checking his colonies in early spring he was appalled to find they were all dead. He had worked all winter using his woodworking power tools and machinery and the constant vibration had disturbed the bees literally to death!

Are the hives facing a southerly aspect? Exposure to winter sunshine can be an extremely critical factor. Especially if the hives are located in a 'frost trap' with no air drainag

On a bright day sunny day around noon, after a night of hard frost, lift the roof of any hive in direct sunlight. Do the same with a hive shaded from this life-giving sunlight. It won't budge! It will be 'cold welded' to the hive.
A few degrees Celsius either way can be life or death for your bees!

Am I sure that the anti-Varroa treatment carried out is adequate? Bearing in mind that mite tolerance of the pyrethroids is on the increase and that mite is no longer a safe alternative treatment. Do not be afraid to apply the well tried and tested organic acid treatments – you have a choice – go with the obsolete official treatments and risk losing your bees or think about your own peace of mind and the welfare of your bees. This is a 'no brainer' decision!

Is my 'Varroa Drop' monitoring regime correct?

Is the accumulated detritus sufficiently light to allow a clear Varroa count to be made? Some literature suggests the Varroa insert should be read on a weekly time scale, even during the active season – this advice is given by folk who obviously don't use the insert, otherwise they would know that, like in politics, a week can be a long time and, in a bee colony, the insert will have acquired an almost impenetrable carpet of accumulated hive debris, making for very difficult mite fall observations.

Did I check the 'natural' mite fall, before I applied the seasonal treatments?

What level of mite drop per day am I prepared to accept as 'safe'? A natural mite drop of 1 mite/2 days in late December is considered to be the most acceptable – this relates to approximately 50 mites total in the colony. It is now widely accepted and scientifically proven that the queen continues to lay, albeit at a much reduced level during the 'dormant' period and that these winter bees will enhance colony survival chances by replacing a proportion of the older bees lost to 'winter wastage.'

However every egg laid will supply a host for over-wintering mites. In a strongly infested colony the larvae produced will have little chance of survival and the result will be increasing numbers of mites and decreasing numbers of bees. Rocket science is not required to predict the outcome of such a scenario. An oxalic acid treatment around late December could go a long way to reducing winter losses from such a situation.

Have I checked my hives in out apiaries after high winds? Always? The questioning could go on ad infinitum – try it! For me, I have already written more than I intended!

WEIGH TO TELL STORES WEIGH TO TELL STORES Roy Thurber's "Bee Chats, Tips, and Gadgets"

You wouldn't believe the amount of stuff –junk, gadgets, plus usable and unused equipment – I could drag out of the loft of the stables and basement. Whatever you can think of that was made during the last 50 years either I have it, I gave it away, or my wife, despite my cries of pain and protest made me take it to the dump. Still, many gadgets are needed around a beekeeping operation. One that is needed at this time of year is a spring balance.

Hive weights should be monitored carefully, lest your colonies consume all their stores before the weather opens up and new honey is being produced. A two storey hive should go into winter with 10-12 frames of honey. This will bring the hive weight to around 135 pounds. As fresh pollens become available in mid-February the queens start to lay flat out. The honey stores then disappear at an alarming rate. I have seen my scale hive's weight drop two pounds per day. Relying on a scale hive to judge all the hives in a yard really doesn't work, though. It does give you clues, but each colony is an individual and must be weighed one way or another. Some beekeepers have tripod rigs to use in the weighing.

They set the tripod up alongside the hive, attach a set of straps to the hive and hook a spring balance to the straps. A lever is attached to the spring balance with its fulcrum at the top of the tripod. You pull down the other end of the lever, raising the hive off the ground and registering the weight on the spring balance. This method is a wee bit unhandy and it can be expensive to rig a suitable tripod. It does render an accurate weight of the hive. One alternative commonly used is to go down the row of hives hefting on the back of each one. It's not very accurate unless you have a lot of experience, but it is cheap and fast. Another way to get an idea of the hives weight is to hook the spring balance under the back or side of the hive and pull it up by hand.

Presumably you can double the reading to arrive at the apparent weight. This is more accurate than hefting and guessing, but there are two problems. First, if you compare the weights from the front and back of the hive you will see that the landing board's protruding from the front throws off the readings' Even when reading from the side, you will find that some hives seem to eat more of the honey on one side of the hive, maybe because that's the warmer side. You can see that just weighing one side can be far from accurate. I think there is no practical way to compensate for variations from front to back and side to side.

However, if you will weigh one side of the hive, then the other, and add the results together, you can get a true weight of the hive. This is provided you just barely lift each side of the hive off its support, be it blocks or hive stand. If a hive went into winter weighing 135 pounds, for example, and you weighed it in late winter, the difference between the two weights would be the amount of stores it has consumed. You could weigh a similar arrangement of empty equipment – supers, bottom and cover – add a reasonable amount for bees, pollen and Ratio of sugar to water by weight Ratio of sugar to water by weight

Concentration kg litres lbs pints 2:1 5 2.5 2.5 1 1.92:1 5 2.6 2.4 1 1.85:1 5 2.7 2.3 1 1.81:1 5 2.75 2.26 1 1.78:1 5 2.8 2.22 1 1.72:1 5 2.9 2.15 1 1.67:1 5 3.0 2.0 1

For those who prefer imperial measures, the same concentration would be achieved by dissolving 2¼ lbs sugar in one pint of water, i.e. slightly stronger than the usual recipe. 706 brood to see just how much honey you have left in the hive. In my operation, if a given hive weighs less than 80 pounds, I start feeding immediately.

IS THIS WHY BEE INSPECTORS ARE SCARCE?

Scientists have discovered the heaviest element yet known to science. The new element, Governmentium (Gv), has one neutron, 25 assistant neutrons, 88 deputy neutrons, and 198 assistant deputy neutrons, giving it an Atomic Mass of 312.

These 312 particles are held together by forces called morons, which are surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since Governmentium has no electrons, it is inert; however, it can be detected, because it impedes every reaction with which it comes into contact.

A tiny amount of Governmentium can cause a reaction that would normally take less than a second, to take from four days to four years to complete. Governmentium has a normal half-life of two to six years.

It does not decay, but instead undergoes a reorganization in which a notional number of the assistant neutrons and deputy neutrons exchange places. In fact, Governmentium's mass will actually increase over time, since each reorganization will cause more morons to become neutrons, forming isodopes.

This characteristic of moron's promotion leads some scientists to believe that Governmentium is formed whenever morons reach a critical concentration. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as Critical Morass.

When catalysed with money, Governmentium becomes Administratium, an element that radiates just as much energy as Governmentium since it has half as many peons but twice as many morons.

TYPES OF BEEKEEPER

The Anxious and the Contented Type

Every season we meet the anxious type of beekeeper, the type who cannot rest, and will not let his bees rest either. He is continually disturbing his colonies, anxious about their stores, whether to give fondant/candy, their queen, their brood and anxious about signs of swarming. In essence he is anxious about everything. To be sure his bees will give him cause for anxiety just as long as he continues to worry over them. In contrast we have the contented type who has done all he can at the right time and can do no more; who sees that feeding is completed in the early autumn, who knows how many combs his bees cover, knows the age of the queen and knows that she is still there. He knows he can forget about them for the time being. Problems are studied as they arise; solutions are calmly worked out and put into practice. Manipulations are carried out when, and only when they are called for, and beekeeping is regarded as a serene and tranquil pastime. The Type who has a system that he can't simply lose We are almost forgetting the type, who like racing enthusiasts (the horse type) has a system, which simply can't lose. Beekeeping systems for him are concerned with getting honey, with rearing queens and with stopping swarming. He very often comes unstuck. You can be sure that this type of beekeeper will try any and every system that he hears and comes across, and is in practice, just the opposite of systematic.

The Fisherman's Tale Type

This is the one who holds forth at Association meetings, drawing an audience of new and inexperienced beekeepers with "fishermen's tales" of his honey-takes, irrespective of the season, or the area where he keeps his bees and so forth. Some are theatrical types, whilst others have a natural knack of being listened to as great saviours of beekeeping. When most beekeepers have a moderate season, this type of beekeeper throws modesty to the wind! They have extracted ten supers per hive (without the hives having left the apiary) and two supers from the heather (all without extra management), and whilst you deal in pounds harvested, they deal in tonnes. Yet when the local Association calls for honey to support a local event, they have none to spare; they have to supply shops at premium prices, as it would be foolish to sell in a market at a reduced rate. "We're not daft you know". To all intents and purposes, they fool some newcomers part of the time, but never the whole time. Very often the request from a newcomer to-go-a-beekeeping with them, to learn from these erudite members of the Association, is met with excuses that would leave most politicians speechless.

The "Know-All"

at the Association's Lecture Meeting Type All" at the Association's Lecture Meeting Type All" at the Association's Lecture Meeting Type Then there is the type who cannot resist undermining the visiting lecturer at an Association's meeting. This he does by pulling apart the lecturer's topic in front of an audience of mixed abilities and knowledge. Such behaviour is an embarrassment to the chairman of the meeting. Having experienced this behaviour myself, it is no wonder that people are no longer prepared to give lectures, to turn out on dark, cold, wet evenings, having probably travelled a long distance and returning home almost at midnight. They often find, that having given up an evening, no doubt in much cosier surroundings, having spent a couple of evenings preparing for the discourse, that the meeting is poorly attended.

The Politician Type

This is the type whose skills are anything but beekeeping; they are the ones who attend the Association's Annual General Meeting by chance and become members on the spot. By his very nature, he is essentially a committeeman and politician. Quick to his feet, with an instant answer to any argument, unrelenting in his pursuit of an opponent, his forcefulness of character allows him to have a ready speech and a readiness to circumvent regulations. By their temperament, they quickly tire of parochial interests to become big shots in beekeeping affairs at county and national levels. They are the type who has endless quantities of time and energy, a driving force, which thrives on opposition with a tremendous urge to succeed. His forceful personality quite often holds back the timorous, those members who are quite happy to help out, who are content to be involved with little or no ambition to be leaders. It can be the quiet type that really makes an association tick.

The Widow's Comforter Type.

The Widow's Comforter Type er Type This is the type who (he seems to know just when to arrive) calls in at the most appropriate time to relieve a grieving widow of her cares and worries in respect of the disposal of her departed husband's beekeeping wares. This he does by selecting the best stuff for himself and disposing the rest at a mere fraction of its true value. Fortunately, the beekeeping auction assists in the disposal of departed beekeepers' merchandise, whether the equipment is good or indifferent. Such events serve everyone, the seller gets the market price, the buyer is generally satisfied and the Association gets a welcome commission to boost its funds, with those who knew the beekeeper feeling satisfied that his family has been justly served.

The "Leave Alone"

Fortunately a beekeeper of the pre-Varroa age, a beekeeper of the past. The possible only virtue for the arrival of the Varroa mite is the passing of the "leave-alone" type of beekeeper. In the days before the arrival of the parasitic mite, this beekeeper was a menace; he rarely if ever looked at his bees below the queen excluder from one year to the next and he never undertook an annual change-of-comb regime of brood combs, so the combs became cemented into the hive runners, making it nigh impossible to get combs out without breaking the lugs, and thus getting the bees upset in the process. The swarming and casting of his bees created a nuisance to an unsuspecting public, who at best are ignorant of a bee's natural habits of reproduction. These swarms come out and hang in places like chimney stacks, the roof under drawing or as easy finds for youngsters to throw bricks at; and as the weather changes, they still hang around, getting hungry and becoming bad tempered. Fortunately swarms are no longer as prevalent as they were a decade or more ago, so the nuisance factor has almost disappeared.

The Rarest Type

This beekeeper is, in the main, the lone type. Most beekeepers I have come across over the years, although different in many respects are alike in one. They are neighbourly folk and eager to help one another. Fired by a common interest, which in most cases is enthusiasm, something I have found infectious, they mix easily. There is little room for the one who will not fit into the community.

The Lady Beekeeper

We must not overlook our opposites in the gender stakes, what about the ladies? It has to be said that all the beekeeping types mentioned previously are presumed to be male beekeepers. My great aunt Alice was a great beekeeper, and neither bee nor man ever got the better of her. I witnessed this first hand. In the main they are as a rule gentler than their male counterparts, as they manipulate with great care. It may be of course that they have greater fear of the effects of a severe stinging, therefore keeping rather more than the usual half-eye upon a troublesome bee. However, I can truthfully say, all the female beekeepers that I have encountered are/were of the very best. Like lots of lady beekeepers, they believed that there were very few men who could teach them much about the craft. In respect of the economical side of beekeeping, it is a certainty that women do have a more practical outlook than men, and they are more likely to balance their time and money spent against the return of honey and wax. As Aunt Alice's husband warned me at a tender age, rightly in his case, "Wives are always right, that's why we cherish them so much." The Writer Type The Writer Type And, finally, the person whose bees are mainly in his bonnet, but who cares, anyhow?

Book Review

The BBKA Guide to Beekeeping by Ivor Davis and Roger Cullum-Kenyon.

This book is designed to accompany the BBKA White Course in-a-Case and covers the same areas. It can be used as a very useful guide to compliment the course by participants or can be used on its own as a comprehensive introduction to beekeeping. However, the book is much more than this. The text is easy to read and clear and is accompanied by a good set of photographs illustrating the points well. Important points are included in boxes at the side of the pages making them easy to find and usefully cover points that may be asked as part of assessments.

For 'early years' beekeepers the book can provide a set of references to many of the queries that occur during that period of learning and also a quick guide to what and how to do any normal operations during a normal season. For more experienced beekeepers the snippets of background information and history are always useful and if all beekeepers could meet the standards referred to in the book, beekeeping in general would be of a higher standard across the country. The book starts with an introduction to beekeeping and its importance to farming and the environment owing to the decline of natural pollinators and follows this with a description of honey bees and all the other types of bees that may be found.

Many members of the general public and hence beginners are unaware of the different types of bees and most consider a bumble bee as the bee that collects honey. This is followed by a brief description of the management of colonies of bees and the basic anatomy. The second chapter covers how a colony of bees works and how it should be considered as a single entity not just as a collection of individuals. This is most important for management purposes.

The next chapter concerns the physical construction of a hive and different hive types and quite rightly considers all types from the very earliest now long out of use to the modern and describes the pros and cons of all without making judgements except to recommend that any choice should be made to match the hives used locally and for which good advice and training are available. Chapter 4 covers the long term evolution of bees from wasps through to the modern western honey bee and then considers how over time honey bees have been managed and kept. There are many books on many of the individual elements of this chapter but the author gives a very good and readable summary of this topic.

The book now moves on to some more practical elements of beekeeping by describing the cycle of the colony and how practical work of inspections and other management fits in with the requirements of the bees and the colony and the need to keep a strong healthy colony as with any other livestock. If all of the advice was followed a good beekeeping standard would be achieved

The remaining chapters cover subjects such as the queen and her replacement, swarming and swarming control, diseases and foraging and managing the honey crop. This differs from many books in that the subjects are covered by giving the background reasons followed by the actions required by the beekeeper to manage a colony that is linked to the background and can be seen to make more sense than simply a set of instructions.

The subjects of removing the crop and extracting are dealt with fairly briefly but this is reasonable as these are best learnt helping another beekeeper. The last chapter deals with how to start and gives the sound advice to learn before getting hives and bees preferably with practical handling of bees included and covers the possible sources of information and follows this with details of all the equipment needed. Possibilities and requirements for apiary sites are included. In general this is a very sound starting point for a new beekeeper and will give hard facts and pictures to back up a beginners CiC course and will work well as a freestanding work. A good addition to the ever growing number of beekeeping books and much better than many recent publications.

The authors have generously donated future royalties to the BBKA to be used to fund the ongoing education programme and should be thanked for this.



Honey Legislation in Europe



Developments on honey legislation in Europe are expected imminently. Commission proposals seeking to amend the current honey legislation (Council Directive 2001/110) in response to the ECJ ruling last autumn are set to be tabled in early October. The Court ruled on 6th September 2011 that honey containing pollen derived from Genetically Modified crops cannot be marketed in the EU without prior authorisation. At the time, the ruling sparked fears of honey shortages as the EU produces around 200k tonnes per year, but has to import a further 148k tonnes to satisfy demand. Speaking at the GMO-Free Europe Conference in the European Parliament, Director of the Health and Consumer Affairs Directorate, Eric Pondelet confirmed that the new rules would seek to classify pollen as a constituent of honey, rather than an ingredient.

Protein and the Honey Bee by Dr David Aston

Dr David Aston - BBKA Chairman, was welcomed as guest speaker to the first of this seasons winter Woodhatch meetings on the 5th September. His talk expanded upon a topic raised in the opening paragraph of his 'Chairman's Letter' in the BBKA News September edition... 'The importance of honey bee nutrition.' In that letter,

David makes the point that it was something that cannot be underestimated. During the talk itself, packed with information, data and new insights; the point was well made that currently beekeepers in general probably do grossly underestimate both the nutritional needs of the bees and the extent to which they are able to satisfy those needs from their pollen gathering efforts. Honey bee nutrition management skills need to be understood and adopted.

There is also a need to counter a national preoccupation with keeping our 'green' areas too tidy; a lack of understanding of the food chains and their interconnections; a general poor supply of forage; and disturbed and changeable weather patterns.

The natural distribution and recycling of hard won protein within the colony to both regulate and respond to brood development can be seriously disrupted even by beekeepers well meant interventions.

It has been estimated that a single colony needs more than 30Kg of pollen per year to satisfy their protein needs. Impressive enough, but then consider that bees from only seven apiaries, in close proximity, each with say five hives, would be needing to collect over 1 tonne of pollen per year from within their shared area of foraging!

And how many other colonies would they be competing with, within their 'patch'? On top of that, not all pollens are equal when it comes to their protein value! It is now realised that pollens from some crops have such low Crude Protein Content (CPC), that colonies reliant on them for a period can remain or even become undernourished, despite what appears to be 'a good crop'.

A minimum CPC of 20% is required, with colonies reliant on levels below 30% likely to produce short lived bees vulnerable to disease and poor at over-wintering.

Whilst colonies able to access sufficient pollen with a CPC over 60% will be stronger and produce longer lived bees. A real understanding of and research into the subject is at best limited. And what is available can be difficult for us mere beekeepers to fully grasp or usefully act upon.

Most data available and used by David, has been gathered in Austria and can be found in a report by Robert Brodschneider and Karl Crailsheim titled 'Nutrition and health in honey bees', published in 2010. There is currently no equivalent data specific to UK foraging sources and cultivated crop management.

Whilst being a very good way to determine nutritional 'health', it would seem that the elaborate laboratory equipment needed to measure the actual protein content of our bees will be beyond the hobby beekeeper.

The bees cannot tell us that they are being undernourished, we can only perhaps deduce that from how they behave once they are, and then maybe too late to be able to rectify the situation. David's key message was to urge that the role of nutrition be included in beekeeping training.

Additionally, BBKA needs to combine forces with other wild life and habitat organisations to press for reversing the current reduction in foraging habitats and the provision of more mixed origins of forage throughout the season.

Definitely food for thought for us to ponder upon during the winter months.

A Tale of Two Freezers

Advice for members looking for a chest freezer big enough to take supers and brood boxes.

In summer I realised that our forty-one year old 250 litre Bosch chest freezer was coming to the end of its natural life. As far as I was concerned it had the great merit of being big enough to take a National super or brood box (subject of course to prior negotiation with the freezer keeper). So equipped with a super, I set off to visit all the chest freezers in Comet and Currys, including the current range of Bosch chest freezers. But to no avail: they were all too short on the front to back dimension to take my super.

My search was overtaken by other events later in the year, and it was not until this summer that I was able to resume my quest. To my delight I found that Bosch had introduced a new model of their 250 litre freezer - so new in fact that Bosch UK had not even got its details onto its own website. I found it listed on one of the PriceRunner sites, and to my joy it is big enough to meet my requirement.

We now have one installed and for those members who are interested, the essential details are as follows: Bosch 250 litre chest freezer Model No: GCM24AW20G. The relevant internal dimensions are: 480 mm front to back 525 mm side to side in the deepest part of the freezer. This just gives comfortable space for the hands when putting and taking supers from the freezer.



Plastic Storage Boxes

Advice for members looking for storage boxes to take supers and brood boxes. Strong sealable storage boxes which are large enough to easily hold brood boxes and other hive parts are not easy to find. So I was pleased to find a source of suitable boxes including those with internal dimensions of Length, Width, Height of 600x500x350 mm.

The boxes have strong snap seal clips, wheels for easy moving about, and can be stacked on top of each other to reduce the overall storage space required. Available in both grey colour and clear plastic, I prefer the clear version because the contents are easily visible. When not in use they nest inside each other. Price of the boxes this size which are designated 140 litre capacity are £19.95 each incl. VAT. Smaller sizes are also available. They are called 'Totem Plastic Storage trunks'.

The supplier is Solent Plastics who are located in Southampton, they offer good service and will ship the boxes to you for a reasonable fee. Contact details are :- [www.http://solentplastics.co.uk/big-boxes-plastic-storage-trunks](http://www.solentplastics.co.uk/big-boxes-plastic-storage-trunks) or telephone 023 8057 2500. I recommend these boxes as great storage to keep the many beekeeping bits that we seem to collect, and as excellent protection from the many pests who want to take advantage of those bits that are not safely and securely stored.



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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.*

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Holidays

Tired with the noise and pollution and the same old Costa Holiday?????Then why not try a different Costa Holiday.

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Price per week 650 euros. Short stay B & B @ 30 euro per night

Interested, need to know more ring Jenny on 0039052576169



The last of Apis cerana?

The Asian hive bee is suffering a precipitous decline and is threatened with extinction in its entire native habitat.

This has already happened in Japan where this native bee species has been completely replaced by the European honeybee.

Today in Japan only a few beekeepers and research institutes maintain Apis cerana colonies. In China, out of more than 8.5 million colonies of bees kept in modern hives, 70% are exotic Apis mellifera.

Similarly, in South Korea, only 16% of beekeeping is with native Apis cerana. In the Hindu Kush, Himalayan range, beekeeping with Apis cerana is being replaced by Apis mellifera at such a rate that the population of the native Apis cerana is declining to a level that is no longer viable. From Bee World Dec 11.