Bee Talk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
June 2009 www.blackburnbeekeepers.com Registered Charity

COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONTACT DETAILS

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Michael Birt (Non Committee member)Web Master/Beetalk Editor birt_192@hotmail.com

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John Zamorski	Hon. Sec	01200 427661	member@johnzamorski.wanadoo.co.uk
Philip Ainsworth	Hon. Treas.	0771 3161480	email philipainsworth@btconnect.com

MEMBERS SERVICES

Bayvoral - Apiguard - Oxalic Acid - Thymol - Fumidi'B'

These Chemicals for treating bees can be obtained from:
Bill Ainsworth. Phone 01282 614015
(Bill will have them available at beekeeper's meetings)

LIBRARY

There is an extensive range of books on all aspects of beekeeping that can be borrowed from the Association library.
Please contact
David Rayner on 01200 426898

MEMBERSHIP

REGISTERED MEMBER. Subscription will be £18.00

PARTNER MEMBER. This is for partners of registered members living in the same household wishing to keep bees and includes full insurance cover. However they will not receive their own copy of BBKA News. Subscription will be £11.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. This is for people who do not keep bees, but wish to receive BBKA News an d attend branch meetings etc. This class of member does not include any insurance cover. Subscription will be £10.00

ASSOCIATE MEMBER. A member of our branch only, without any benefits from the BBKA or County. Subscription will be £9.00

IMPORTANT INSURANCE NOTICE

Under the new constitution, prompt payment is essential. Basically, payment will be required by the 31 December each year as ***insurance*** is now based on the currant years membership. New and lapsed members insurance cover will not start until six weeks after paying their subscription.
For ***insurance*** purposes subs will need to be promptly, otherwise you will not have third party insurance

SUBS SHOULD BE PAID TO PHILIP AINSWORTH HON. TREAS.9 Duchess Street Darwen Blackburn BB3 0QQ
Phone 07713161480

The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2009

1. No Apologies as all commitee members were present at the meeting.
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th January were read out and agreed by all.
3. No matters were arising from the last meeting.
4. It was unanimously agreed to let our delegates at County vote to change the Lancashire association to a Federation unless there was something that they strongly objected to.
5. The appointment for the Branch Auditor was left aside so as our secretary could approach Joe Wrigley with regards to him excepting to position
6. It was agreed that a cup in honour of Ken Gaiger be called the Ken Gaiger Memorial Cup for the best exhibit by a novice. And also a shield, again in the name of Ken Gaiger should be presented for the best newcomer.
7. It was agreed that Mentors be attached to beginners so that when they have taken the education program run by Dave Rayner they have backup.
9. Date of next meeting is the 28th of June 2009 at the home of Mr and Mrs Jackson, Crosshills.
10. Michael Birt mentioned that with growing members and high losses of existing members bees that some kind of a bee bank be established to provide bees to newcomers and members who have lost bees. The commitee decided to look in to the matter further.

FUTURE BRANCH MEETINGS

	DATE	TIME	VENUE	ORGANISER/CONTACT
	Wed 25th Mar	7pm	Hillcrest Tea Rooms Mitton. BB7 9PQ Annual Dinner. You need to contact John right away to book a place.	John Zamorski
*	Sun 26th April	2pm	Mr. & Mrs. Wrigley Holden Clough. BB7 4PE Question time With C Coughlin, D Rayner & P Aldred. All your questions (On beekeeping!) will be answered.	Pauline Roberts
	Sun 31st May	2pm	Mr & Mrs David Bush, Clitheroe. BB7 1PL Updates on Swarm Control/Queen Rearing and General Updates. With Bill and John	David Bush
*	Sun 28th Jun	2pm	Mr & Mrs Jackson Crosshills. BD22 0LX Ian Molyneaux. Oxalic acid in Summer and Hive Demo	Mr Jackson
	Sun 26th Jul	2pm	Colne Masonic Hall. BB8 0BS Mr M Smith Chairman BBKA. This should be an interesting meeting!	Pauline Roberts
	Sun 23rd Aug	2pm	Lodge House Hut, Nelson. BB9 8HD Doug Jones Seasonal bee inspector	Pauline Roberts

Reminder to all committee members. Meetings marked * are also committee meetings which will start one hour before the main meeting.

We will where possible open hives so bring along your protective clothing just in case.

WHAT'S IN THE HONEY POT?

A few snippets of news and information that might be of interest

Editorial June 2009

Welcome to the new Beetalk. We have a new format which we hope will me more in tune to our club but will also include things that we think may be of interest on what's going on around the world.

Firstly though, I would like on behalf of the Commitee and I am sure 100% of our members and maybe lots of non members who have read Beetalk on the website, to say a big thank you for our past editors Bill Ainsworth and Arthur Bickerstaffe who since 2001 have taken our little magazine, started in humble beginnings by the late Ken Preedy, to the great magazine that it is today. After 8 years they have decided that it was time to call time and have passed on the roll of editor to me. I hope that if I am a tenth as good as them two lads we may have something worth reading. Time will tell. So again thanks Bill and Arthur, Thanks a millions lads.

Beetalk is made up of, at the moment, of six sections.

The first section is what our association is about and what the association can do for you. All the committee members details are included along with their contact details. Also in this section are members services,Library details and membership details for those who are renewing membership and for new members who wish to join the association.

The second section as details of committee meetings and Branch meetings dates and venues and will be updated as and if any changes are made.

The third section is the editorial section and also what should we be doing in the period between this issue of Beetalk and the next one. This part is only a rough guide but as been included more as a look up for beginners.

The fourth section is hoped to be made up of contributions from our members and what is going on with our association. So we need input from members to make this section a success. So please try and send in as much as you can.

If you have ANYTHING send it to me Michael Birt

My e-mail address is birt_192@hotmail.com

The fifth section is National and International contributions on all topics that we think my be of interest to us.

The sixth and last section is adverts from our supporters who we hope you in turn will support back.

So that's about it for this first editorial. I hope you are enjoying your season and that the bees and the weather have been good to you all and that you have enjoyed the meetings and events so far this year, Lets hope it turns out a great year for you all and may you continue to enjoy this great and rewarding hobby we call Beekeeping

You all take care and best wishes to you all

Michael Birt

Webmaster and Beetalk Editor

June to September.

Things that you should be doing with your bees

June.

All your artificial swam control, whichever method you use, and you will have to use some kind of method,should all be now done and dusted. Your new Queen should be laying. Check for Varroa with the aid of the open mesh floor and a little but not to much drone uncapping and if you have a build up act on it ASAP. Keep and eye on how the supers are filling up and give the bees more if needed. Watch in the brood chamber as this may need to be looked at if the bees are again short of room. Start to buy yourself some sugar for feeding and store it in a dry place. If you get a bit at a time it does not hurt the pocket as much as buying it all at once

July.

Check for Varroa with the aid of the open mesh floor and a little but not to much drone uncapping and if you have a build up act on it ASAP. Keep and eye on how the supers are filling up and give the bees more if needed. Watch in the brood chamber as this may need to be looked at if the bees are again short of room..

August

This is the time when you should be taking off the honey supers and extracting any honey you have. If you are thinking of treating your bees with Apistan or Bavoral now is the time to do it. If you have Varroa under control its best left until November and then treat with Oxalic Acid. Put any wet supers onto the bees to clean up then store them away. Close up entrances down to stop wasp robbing and other bees robbing out what my be a weak colony. Feed your bees now if they are not bringing in to much nector so as to get the queen laying the winter bees that will get the stocks through the winter. This is a very important time as it will reward you next season.

This list is of things is only a rough guide as things can and do change overnight. For example,the weather my change so restricting the honey flow. Your queen my slow up laying which could prompt another swarm when you least expect it. Wasp attack in August is a problem. Then you have all kinds of diseases that need to be looked for. Nasty bees need to be requeened, always try to get quiet bees and the best way to do that is to obtain British Black Bees and if anyone tells you any difference take no notice of them.
The golden rule is keep a look out all the time. Inspect your hives between these 3 months every week and if you are unsure of anything ask another member or if you are a beginner ask your mentor. That's what we are all here for to try to get use all on the right footing and working the same way as best we can. Always remember we are up in the north of the country and things you read in books sometimes do not apply to where we are in Lancashire and sometimes we can be a good month behind the south of the country so bear this in mind.

Branch News

We had our first meeting of the season on Sunday the 25th of April at the home of Joe and Ann Wrigleys. It was questions to our panel of experts on all topics of Beekeeping and lots of subjects were covered. Its a long time since we had such a large gathering with 60 plus members attending. Our thanks go out to the experts, to Joe and Ann for letting us use their lovely home for the venue, and to all members who attended.

Our Secretary John Zamorski with Kate Humble from Spring Watch. Lucky Bugger John. She told John that she may start keeping bees as she was totally fascinated by the what she learnt on the day. Nice one.

We have a meeting on the 28th of June which I think will be of great interest. Its at Brian Jacksons place and the speaker is our regional bee inspector Ian Molyneaux. Now if anyone as not been to any of Ian's talks you have missed something as all the talks I have been to have been fascinating. Not only is Ian a very knowledgeable beekeeper in is own right he is a fantastic speaker who always seems to get what he is talking about over in a manner that even the least experienced of us can understand. His talk this time is about using Oxalic acid in the summer time which I know a little about as I use it in the summer to control the Varroa. I wont say to much now as it would spoil the day but it will be a great talk so try to get along and not miss this very interesting subject.
Ed

A word of Caution

Hi Folks, I have been up to look at my bees at Castle Cement this afternoon and found them pretty wrecked. Some vandals have gained access and decided to have some fun tipping them over. They have used large lengths of tree trunk from nearby that had been chopped down last year and thrown them at the hives from a safe distance. Some stands smashed, roofs overturned,all boxes and supers over and lots of water inside them so it must have been a couple of days ago. Most of the brood was wet so may not hatch. Have a good think about where you keep yours and try and make sure they are secure. I thought I had the safest place in the world but it would seem not. Take care Regards John

New Beekeepers

With many beekeepers facing losses over the winter and not having to many bees to spare it would be a good idea if any new beekeepers who obtain stocks in their first year,instead of going for the honey that they instead concentrate on increasing their stocks so that maybe at the end of the season instead of having one stock of bees they have three. This will be of benefit should you lose any stocks over the following winter, not put any pressure on any beekeeper to supply bees and also save money as stocks of bees are now very expensive at anything up to £175 for a nuc. If you are unsure of how to increase, any one of the experienced beekeepers of the association will be able to show you how its done.

We are thinking of starting a letters to the editor column. So if you have anything to say about any aspect of your club such as suggestions, questions about any beekeeping topics relating to your hives, general beekeeping or the club or any photographs you may think are of interest. You can send them to me Michael Birt at birt_192@hotmail.com and we will try to answer the best we can and at the same time include it in either the web site or in future additions of beetalk

Ed

ICING SUGAR TREATMENT FOR VARROA
an Alternative Method of Control

At the County Lecture, Graham Royle suggested that using icing sugar once a week for three weeks and then once a fortnight to treat your colonies was the answer to the varroa mites. I looked it up, scientificbeekeeping.com. It might work if you also used another treatment. Treating with icing sugar once a week for the whole season you keep pace with the natural increase in the mite population and maybe by the end of the season you may have reduced the mite population a little. To treat with icing sugar fortnightly would reduce he mite population to half the population there would be if left untreated. Mites spend most of their time in capped brood cells where they remain untouched by the sugar. With the majority of the mites in sealed brood of those on the bees only 50% are knocked down with icing sugar, about 1/6th of the mites present in the hive. Mites can be found five to twelve times as often in cells with drone brood as in those with worker brood. Therefore the removal of drone brood could be the answer. You may have been putting a shallow frame in amongst the deeps in the brood chamber, cutting the drone cells off the bottom bar of the shallows when sealed.. But a much better method is to use a deep frame of drone foundation and exchange it with another of drone foundation once a month. The removed frame of sealed drone cells can be stored in the freezer and removed the night before using it again - protein for the bees!! Yes I know that from egg to emerging drones is 24 days, but the bees need a few days to prepare the cells and for the queen to lay the frame up.
If you have treated your bees with oxalic acid at Christmas time, early in the season there will be just an odd mite or none present in the colony. Drone removal would be a waste, but it could be used as a way to eliminate the drones from poor performing colonies, thus preventing them from mating with the new queens and leaving the drones from the quality stocks to emerge and flood the area, that is if you are producing queens. By June your queens will be mated and then the drone brood can be removed from all your stocks.

With Thanks to

Warwickshire Beekeepers

BEE HEALTH – VIRUSES ASSOCIATED WITH VARROA

There is a long and growing list of viruses associated with Varroa and none of them are good news. The overall effect of virus infection is to shorten the life of the individual bee, and usually to kill it quite quickly, and, where the viruses are rampant, the whole colony can be badly affected, and die as a result. So what does Varroa do which causes such problems? It pierces the outer covering of the body of the bee, or the pupa, and appears to spread viruses in this way. It may also act as an activator for viruses already present in the bee's body and it lowers the bee's immune system so that it is more susceptible to attack by other pathogens, including viruses. We can list the various viruses and describe some of their effects:

1. Deformed Wing Virus (DWV). This is likely to be the one which the beekeeper notices. Affected bees may have deformed, shrivelled wings and will not be able to fly. What is not generally realised is that these obviously damaged bees are only the tip of an iceberg and many others in the colony will have large amounts of the virus present, which will shorten their lives, without showing the classical symptoms. The damage to the wings occurs at the pupae stage.

2. Sacbrood is a familiar virus causing characteristic symptoms in the prepupa, which is unable to moult properly. It becomes a fluid-filled bag, lying along the length of the cell and shaped like a gondola. The fluid contains large amounts of the virus material. Adult bees become infected with the virus when they clean out the dead prepupa and can pass it onto other larvae as they feed them. It multiplies in the hypo pharyngeal gland of the adult bee and so persists from season to season. Infected adults do not forage for pollen usually and tend not to feed brood. The virus has been shown experimentally, to be spread by Varroa, but this is not the only means of spread and, unlike the other viruses described, Sacbrood was well known before the advent of Varroa.

3. Slow Paralysis Virus (SPV) has caused deaths of brood and adult bees. Once it gets going in a colony, removal of the mites will have no effect and the virus will continue to multiply.

4. Acute Paralysis Virus (APV) kills bees quickly and affects brood as well. There is now another form of this virus called Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV) which has shown up in several countries including the US where is appears to be associated with (although not the cause of) CCD. A third virus called Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV) is closely related to APV and IAPV. It is very serious, causing rapid decline in Varroa-infested colonies.

This list is somewhat frightening, and quite likely incomplete, especially as we cannot do much about viruses, and many of them are present in our colonies. Many infect both adults and brood causing even more damage to the bees and, once their numbers reach a reasonable level, they are able to pass between individuals in the hive, both adults and brood, by means other than the mites. The only way to control them is to keep the number of Varroa mites at as low a level as possible, and certainly below 1,000 so that the viruses do not get a hold in the colony.

Twelve Golden Rules of Apiary Behaviour

This has been 'foraged' from Notts BKA and e-BEES. Good advice for all beekeepers, I think, old and new! Here is an all-important set of rules you need to follow when working in your apiary. These rules are primarily for your safety and following these rules habitually will make your and the bees' lives much happier. Understanding the rules makes forming the right habits easy and they will quickly become second nature to you. So don't be intimidated by the number of rules. They're all just natural common sense once you have understood them and why they are important.

1 Smoke the hives before opening them Using the smoker is an absolute must if you are going to be opening the hive (where any frames are exposed. Lifting the top cover to inspect the feeder or refill syrup does not qualify as opening the hive.

2 Approach the hives from the back or the side Guard bees stand at the entrance of the hive, watching for intruders. Don't give them an opportunity to put the colony on alert. Always approach the hive from the back or the side and do all your work there – never from the front, except for a brief entrance examination in lieu of opening the hive.

3 Don't stand in the bees' flight path Honeybees don't appreciate running into unexpected objects in their flight path. If they run into you, they may get mad and be more prone to sting. (see Rule 2)

4 Move steadily and smoothly You should always avoid sudden, jerky movements when you are close to the hive. Bees are especially good at noticing movement. If you move around steadily and smoothly while you are in the apiary, you will not attract their attention.

5 Avoid any strong or unnatural odours Bees are especially sensitive to smell - their sense of smell is critical to the operation and social structure of the colony and to their ability to detect nectar sources. Since bees have been designed with an excellent sniffer, they will easily pick up strong, foreign odours near the hive.

6 Dress properly for the job Various jobs call for different dress. Opening the hive requires that you don your bee suit, bee hat and veil. If you have aggressive bees, you may also want to wear your gloves. But just performing a periodic inspection of the hive or refilling syrup should not require putting on all your garb.

7 Maintain a firm grip on everything Never drop any hive components and don't drop anything on or into the hive. When you are working the hive, don't wear gloves unless the bees are especially irritable that day. You can maintain a much better grip with your bare hands. If you have ill-tempered bees and must wear gloves, take extra care to ensure you are holding things securely, especially the frames.

8 Never bump the hive. Maintain a slight gap between your body and the hive. This practice, and keeping the apiary free from clutter means you don't trip on things and ensures you will not bump the hive which will cause the bees to go on alert.

9 Keep the apiary clean. Whoever said, "Cleanliness is next to godliness" never mowed, trimmed and cleaned an apiary on a hot summers' day while wearing a bee suit. Nevertheless, keeping your apiary clutter free, both at your feet and your head, pays dividends in convenience, safety and comfort each time you visit your bees.

10 Don't open the hives unless you need to do so One of the most fundamental practices to ensure the best honey production and the most docile bees to the absolutely minimise the number of times you open up your hives.

11 Only open the hives early or in good weather. Never attempt to open a hive when a storm or cold-front is imminent and never open a hive in the evening when it is becoming dark, or at night. Bees are especially defensive at these times and the foragers are also coming back into the hive before bad weather or nightfall. It is very likely that you will be greeted with stinging bees. Just don't do it.

12 Watch the bees' behaviour and react accordingly. Your goal in the apiary is that you seem invisible to the bees and they act as if they don't even notice you. Of course, they will notice you when you open the hive but if you properly apply smoke first and follow these rules of apiary etiquette, they will first be preoccupied with engorging on honey and then they will be too docile to care under most circumstances. Monitoring the bees' behaviour will ensure your safety and the success of your apiary visit.

Many Thanks to Notts BKA and e-BEES.

BEGINNERS ... note in particular, item 5 above.

I well remember an apiary visit years ago when a member arrived duly 'spruced up', having used a particularly pungent after shave. It was quite a sight - the previously docile bees took offence at this and proceeded to 'bomb' his bee-veil. There was nothing for it, he had to retreat in haste. Another smell they definitely don't like - although the manufacturers say they are "unaware of any problem", or they were some years ago - is that of 'Head & Shoulders' shampoo. Our neighbour - just the husband, no-one else in the family - used to be stung by our bees when he was in his garden. None of us could understand why and I had to mollify him with endless jars of honey, until the day he mentioned his problem to a bee-keeping colleague at work. This colleague immediately came up with the answer; neighbour stopped using that particular shampoo and the problem disappeared.

Many Thanks to Elizabeth Hatchell. Editor Ludlow and District Beekeepers Association

How to Deal with a Re-queening Colony

There are all sorts of situations where a colony is in the process of re-queening. The two most common are during and after swarming or when a colony has been split to make increase. In most cases, a colony will successfully develop a new laying queen without input from you. But if this doesn't happen – and the most usual cause is poor weather during the period when the new queen is trying to make mating flights – then the beekeeper must know about this and take the necessary actions to (hopefully) recover the situation. Time is of the essence because every day the bees in the queen less colony are getting older and the likelihood of successful re-queening at a second attempt is rapidly diminishing. A week in your life is not a long time but it is about 20%of the life of a worker bee in summer! Developments within a colony follow quite a logical sequence and adhere to quite a strict time table. It is important to know when various things happened and, unless you have much better time recall than I do, a written record is essential. The following is a series of logical steps describing the calculations, observations and beekeeping actions that cover all eventualities of the requeening process.

1. As with a pregnancy, the first thing to do is to calculate a due date for a new queen to hatch. The development time for a queen is 16 days from a newly laid egg to emergence. It is very rare to see an egg in a queen cell and know that the bees will carry through with the queen-making process. The decision to raise a queen starts with nurse bees feeding a newly-hatched larva with royal jelly, whilst simultaneously extending the walls of the cell. If a new queen is to develop properly this decision must be taken on day 3 or very soon thereafter. If you see a cup with a very young larva in a pool of royal jelly then the decision has been taken and, unless bees decide otherwise, will become a queen in 13 days. There are 5 days of feeding only for a queen larva and the queen cell is sealed on day 8 (worker cells are sealed on day 9 and drones on day 10). So if you see an open queen cell it is between 8 and 13 days from hatching. With a little experience, you can guess from the size and development of the cell roughly at what stage (which day) it is at. Once the queen cell is sealed it is more difficult to tell how old it is. You could sacrifice a surplus queen cell, breaking it open to see if it is still a larva (days 8-9 old), a mush (days 10-11) or a recognisable queen (day 12 on). This will not necessarily give an accurate prediction because other queen cells may be of different ages – but you only need a rough estimate anyway. If it is an emergency re-queering situation, as when you make a split or due to death of the queen, the bees will usually start some queen cells using young larvae (not eggs) and these will be the first to hatch in about 13 day's time.

2. A commonly occurring situation is for the beekeeper to open a colony and find that it has already swarmed. You will be able to identify this condition by an obvious lack of bees (supers that were full of bees are now empty); there are no newly laid eggs and no queen, of course. You can identify the approximate date of swarming from the brood that is left behind. If the swarm took off less than 9 days ago the youngest unsealed brood will tell you on which day the swarm occurred. If you assume swarming took place when the first queen cells were sealed, then 8 days minus the number of days since the swarm will give you a due date for the first queen hatching. Urgent action is now required if you are to avoid cast swarming in a few days time. You need to carefully search all the frames for queen cells and reduce their number to one (1 queen cell). You can play safe (or safer) and leave two queen cells if you are confident that they are of approximately the same age. Two queen cells side-by-side are usually the same age. Frames that have a lot of bees on them must be gently shaken to ensure you do not miss any queen cells and do not forget to look in those hidden corners down the side E bars.

3. If there is no unsealed worker brood in the hive then you are in deep trouble and the colony may already have cast swarmed or be about to do so. In this situation, you are likely to see hatched and unhatched queen cells, so what do you do – there may already be a virgin queen (or queens) running round the hive? Is she there or isn't she? Unless, by good luck, you happen to see a virgin queen, all you can do is thin the remaining queen cells to 1 and pray! At least you know when to look for a new queen starting to lay, which is about 14 days from now. In this situation you may find that several queen cells hatch whilst you are looking through the colony and deciding what to do. This is because your blunderings have distracted the guards that were keeping them in their cell for later use. You now may have several virgin queens wandering around in the hive. This is not as bad as it sounds because at least you know there is a queen (or queens) in the hive. What you do now is to destroy all remaining queen cells and close up the hive. These newly hatched queens will not be able to fly with a swarm for at least 24 hours by which time the bees will have discovered they have no back-up queen cells. The colony will choose from the available virgin queens and select one to go on to make mating flights and stability will be restored. Again you will be expecting a new laying queen in about 14 days.

4. Once a new queen has emerged she will take 2-4 days to start on her mating flights, assuming the weather is favourable. This is the time to NOT mess around with the hive unless absolutely essential. If you really must open the hive (and I find it is difficult to think of a sensible reason) it should be outside business (mating) hours, 9.00am-18.00, and certainly not when drones are on the wing. After mating, which may take several days, depending on the weather, the queen needs time to set up her sperm bank and commence egg production. The minimum time from emergence to commencement of egg laying is about 10 days but it is normally not less than a fortnight (14 days).

With thanks to Wilts BKA newsletter and B.E.E.S.- This originally came from Shropshire Bee Association in 1995

Beekeepers Think They Know What Causes Colony Collapse Disorder

A Very Tiny Suspect..... No. 1 in a Very Large Mystery

Thanks to Kim Flottum : Editor of Bee Culture

There is a slowly growing consensus, by some beekeepers anyway, that they know what causes Colony Collapse Disorder is. And the more they find out about this beast -- apathogen -- the more convinced they are. Well, most of them anyway.The thinking is that at the heart of the problem is this new Nosema cerana disease that has reared its ugly head and invaded our beehives. Nosema is a tiny, tiny creature, a microscopic protozoan-like animal that goes from place to place host to host as a very tough little spore. We've had one species of this animal in the U.S. for years and years called Nosema apis. It was a problem, but not much of one. To become infected, an adult honey bee consumes some of those spores, received either from another infected bee or picked up while cleaning the hive. This can be somewhat common in the late winter and early spring when there are fewer bees in a hive and they are confined indoors because of the weather. Nosema is more of a problem for bees in the north with its winters, than for bees in the south which let's them off easy during that time of year.

When the spores are ingested they eventually migrate to the lining of the honey bee's stomach where they embed themselves and begin to grow. There they attack and consume the cells that make up the lining and as these cells are destroyed the honey bees are less and less able to digest and absorb food. This is why infected bees die at a younger age – about a week younger ... week five out of a normal six. They just can't get enough food. Obvious signs of an infection are almost non existent, although sometimes a severely infected colony will show signs of dysentery in the spring, but this ailment can be caused by other problems as well, so it's difficult to tell. There is some indication that the wounds caused when these cells are destroyed are a pathway for viruses to enter the rest of the body of the bee, but that's yet to be proven. As awful as this sounds it's not usually a severe problem. It is often likened to high blood pressure because it is debilitating without significant outward signs. This new cousin though, this one is a killer.

At first, Nosema cerena behaves much like its more docile relative Nosema apis. It, too, travels as a spore and is ingested by adult bees. Once in, it heads to the same location and like Nosema apis, this creature attacks the stomach lining ... but then it continues attacking internal organs and tissues. It becomes very destructive, and it multiplies at a very rapid rate, spreading spores all over the place. These spores are discarded by the infected bee both inside and outside the hive and they are fed to other bees. The scary thing about this is that infected bees don't really show problems other than not living as long as they should. But as more and more bees become infected, the number of adult bees that are dying begins to rapidly increase, and soon more are dying than are being born and the colony population essentially collapses, leaving a queen, lots of brood, and a few young bees... does this sound familiar? These wounds, too, are suspected of allowing viruses to enter the scene and become established especially since they are so much more severe, and once in they do their dirty work. Some of the common honey bee viruses, when given free rein in a wounded bee can make very short work of their host. So add to bees disappearing because of this new Nosema disease, and perhaps some disappearing because of infections of viruses and the probability that a colony will show some sort of population decline is inevitable. Some assume this is the beginning and end of CCD. Perhaps they are right. A severe disease, an internal wound, an opportunistic virus and eventually an empty colony. Another bit of support they have is that if beekeepers control this disease – Nosema cerena – in their hives, the collapse syndrome seems to pretty much go away. Break the cycle and you break the back of CCD. Some think there's more to it than that, while others want more details: What virus, for instance, can do this? One of the old ones? A new one? Meanwhile, some are still looking at the role agricultural pesticides could be playing in this mess, and even though it's looking more and more like that's not in the CCD equation, they are still at the top of the list of things Beekeepers Hate. For this fall, sound advice for beekeepers is to control the newest menace on the block, that nasty Nosema cerena. No matter what CCD is caused by, you'll be glad you did.

BEE STINGS

It might be wise to carry a penny in your pocket while working in the yard.....BEE STINGS!

A couple of weeks ago, I was stung by both a bee and hornet while working in the garden. My arm swelled up, so I went to the clinic. The doctor gave me cream and an antihistamine. The next day the swelling was getting progressively worse, so I went to my regular doctor. The arm was infected and needed an antibiotic. The doctor told me - ' The next time you get stung, put a penny on the bite for 15 minutes'.

That night, my niece was stung by two bees. I looked at the bite and it had already started to swell. So, I taped a penny to her arm for 15 minutes. The next morning, there was no sign of a bite. We decided that she just wasn't allergic to the sting.

Soon, I was again gardening outside. I got stung again, twice by a hornet on my left hand. I thought, here I go again to the doctor for another antibiotic. I promptly got my money out and taped two pennies to my bites, then sat and sulked for 15 minutes. The penny took the string out of the bite immediately.

In the meantime the hornets were attacking, and my friend was stung on the thumb. Again the penny.. The next morning I could only see the spot where the hornet had stung me. No redness, no swelling.

Thanks to Mary Adams for submitting this advice that she spotted. Considering the size, I presume an old penny works better than our present day decimal versions!

And while we're on the subject, here is another solution from the Notts. BKA Newsletter via B.E.E.S

BEE STINGS Thanks to Bob Logan

The item in the last Beemaster about stings reminded me of a tip I was given by a chemist who was also a beekeeper. "Always carry some Dissolvable Aspirin" (now marketed under Aspro Clear). If you ever have a sting (wasp or bee) place a tablet on your tongue and when it froths put it (the tablet not the tongue!) and the froth on the sting site. If you do this within 15 minutes of being stung, you should avoid any swelling and inflammation. I've used it on numerous occasions and it works for me.

AND

SOME KILL OR CURE REMEDIES FOR BEE STINGS

•To stop the smarting of a bee sting apply some clay kneaded and thinned with urine.
•A bee sting treated with ammonia and whisky will relieve you in a measure.
•Cure a bee sting by covering it with earwax.
•Immediate relief from a bee sting can be secured by covering it with a piece of lean raw meat.
•If you are stung by a bee, use hartshorn: if bitten by a snake get drunk.
•If you would prefer to treat bee stings naturally, use fresh cow manure. Others suggest smearing with mud or clay - less smelly!
•If any person should be stung by a bee or other insect, rub some spirits of turpentine on the place, and the pain will nearly cease in one minute.
•Rub the bee that has stung us, or any other bee, around the wound. This is making the body the antidote to the tail.
•An old English Apiarian advises a person who has been stung, to catch as speedily as possible another bee, and make it sting on the same spot!
Ed Hell fire!!!

Thanks to Warwick BKA via BEES for these suggestions!

Bees in Warfare by Conrad Bérubé

It would probably be easier to enumerate the cultures which do not chronicle some kind of use of bees as weapons since this motif is so pervasive. Most of these accounts are historical rather than mythical. One of the earliest of these, from the first century B.C., records the misfortunes of a Roman campaign, led by Pompeii the Great, against the Heptakometes in Asia Minor. Interestingly, it is not the bees themselves that are employed in this instance but, rather, their honey. About one thousand of Pompeii's Roman troops were passing through a narrow mountain pass when they encountered a cache of honey. The soldiers, accustomed to raiding and looting to augment their provisions, halted their advance and eagerly devoured the honey-- and soon became afflicted with delirium and violent seizures of vomiting and purges! In such a condition they were easily defeated by the local Heptakomete defenders who took their cue to attack. It seems that the honey had been left in the soldiers' path not in an act of flight from the advancing forces but as a poisonous bait to stupefy them.

The locals would have been well aware that honey produced during certain times of the year was naturally poisonous. Honey yielded from the nectar of such plants as Rhododendron ponticum and Azalea pontica contain alkaloids that are toxic to humans but harmless to bees. After the offending blooms have stopped flowering, beekeepers in areas where these plants are common (such as the area of present-day Turkey where this incident occurred) routinely remove this toxic honey so it doesn't contaminate subsequently produced stores. The poisonous honey is then fed back to the bees during time of dearth-- if it hasn't been used first for national defense.

South and Central American Indians used similar honey for ceremonial purges and perhaps for "vision questing"-- see notes following Chapter Two, "The Honeymoon's Over". Deaths have been reported in New Zealand which were attributed to the consumption of honey originating from the "wharangi bush", Melicope ternata. Another New Zealand plant, Coriaria arborea, produces nectar that is safe for incorporation into honey but furnishes toxic honeydew. Other locales where toxic honey has been reported on occasion include Mexico Datura spp., Hungary Datura spp., belladonna=Atropa spp. and Hyoscamus niger, Brazil Serjania lethalis and the southwest U.S. Gelsemium sempervirens.

Mead, an intoxicating drink made from a honey base has also been used to gain tactical military advantage. In 946, the Slavic St. Olga, on the occasion of her son's funeral, provided limitless quantities of mead. She invited her enemies only, who, presumably, had somehow been instrumental in the death of her child, and five thousand inebriated `mourners' were slain in their stupor by Olga's allies. Similarly, in 1489, 10,000 Tatars were dispatched by Russians whom the Turkish invaders had been pursuing. The Russians left mead behind in their flight and returned after sufficient time for the Tatars to drink themselves into a daze.
Of course, there are plenty of instances when bees have been used in the more obvious way, as "meat-seeking missiles". The Romans, for instance, having prudently learned not to exact a tax of honey in Asia Minor also learned, in the great Roman tradition of imitation and innovation, to use bees in the wars they waged. They were less deceptive in this than the Heptakometes, however, and instead of employing the subterfuge of poisoned honey they simply sent beehives catapulting into the ranks or fortifications of their enemies. The unleashed fury of the bees, enraged when their hives were smashed, is credited with being the decisive stroke of more than one battle. Turn-about being fair play the Dacians, of what is today Romania, defeated the armored legions of Rome, at least temporarily, with their own salvo of skeps.

Jumping to the eleventh century, Emperor Henry I's troops, commanded by General Immo, defended their fortifications by launching a barrage of beehives at the siege forces of Duke Geiselbert of Lorraine and sent them scurrying. King Richard is recorded as having used hives of bees as catapult-launched bombs against the Saracens during the Third Crusade in the twelfth century. In 1289 in Gussing, Hungary, an Austrian invasion lead by Duke Albert was repulsed with a fusillade of hot water, fire and bees thrown from the battlements of the city. In 1513 under the reign of Emmanuel the Fortunate, King of Portugal, a General Baruiga was turned from Tauris in Xantiane by the Moors-- who threw hives down on his troops from the citadel's walls. In the 18th century battle of Alba Graexa, the Turks, who had succeeded in breaching a wall of the city, found to their dismay that the inhabitants had piled beehives there as a barricade and were thus prevented from entering the city. Bees have even been used in naval battle: in the Mediterranean Sea the crew of a small corsair vessel, only about fifty men, boarded and captured a much larger galley manned by 500 soldiers-- after the pirates cast beehives from the masts of their ship down onto the crew of the galley, who had intended to apprehend them.

Military application of bees has continued into modern times. In a novel approach practiced by the Tiv of Nigeria, bees were kept in special horns also containing powdered poisons. Thus dusted to increase the efficacy of their own venom the bees would be released in the heat of battle to attack the Tiv's enemies (it is not, however, recorded why the bees do not succumb to the poison themselves or how the bees distinguish between the Tiv and their foes. During the American Civil War, Union troops were almost routed when southern artillery shattered a row of hives in a yard through which they were passing. Bees pitched at the enemy or booby trapped to topple over with trip wires were used to the advantage of both sides during skirmishes in World War I . There are even some reports that the Viet Cong used sabotaged Apis dorsata nests against Americans during the Vietnam war . And, in a footnote to the war in South-East Asia, what was presumed to be a biological warfare agent turned out, in fact, to be the `yellow rain' produced by Apis dorsata during massed defecation flights.

Bees have been used for personal protection as well as national defense. The Classical Roman poet Vergil is said to have thwarted soldiers from looting his valuables by storing them in his beehives. The town of Beyenburg (which translates to "Beetown"), in northern Germany, is said to owe its name to an episode in which a marauding band was foiled in its plundering when they attempted to enter the local convent. The nuns turned loose their bees and sought shelter, leaving the bees to drive off the intruders. Similarly, in 1933, again in Germany, an old beekeeper who was being robbed by three thugs managed to upset a hive. All four men were stung, but the beekeeper, accustomed as he was to receiving stings, was little the worse for it. The three thieves, however, took flight-- but were so well marked by the wounds they'd received that they were easily identified and apprehended by police shortly thereafter. Daniel Wildman, a showman of 18th century England, is reported to have fended off the attack of three large mastiffs by casting swarms of bees at the animals as they rushed towards him. (In my opinion, a mistreatment, for mere entertainment, of both the dogs and the bees).

Such tales could not be expected to remain within the confines of the strictly credible and have found a place as well in the annals of folklore. A fairly straightforward telling of an incident in the life of the sixth century Saint Gobnat of Ireland has her shaking the bees out of one of her hives to ward off a gang of cattle rustlers. In more colorful accounts the bees are miraculously changed into soldiers and the hive from which these myrmidons issued is transformed into a brass helmet .In another Irish account, bees were at the root of a dispute that ended in war. Congal, the heir to the throne of Ulster, was stung in the eye by a bee while a guest in the house of Domnall, king of Ireland. He was blinded (and was known by the moniker "Caech", meaning "One-eye", thereafter). His kinsmen demanded the forfeiture of the eye of Domnall's son as retribution but Domnall ordered that the colony of bees should be destroyed instead-- to ensure that the guilty bee would perish. (Evidently, Domnall was a better king than he was a beekeeper, as any beekeeper knows that a bee dies after it stings.) The Ulstermen were not satisfied with Domnall's verdict and eventually carried their grievance to the battlefield (where they were soundly defeated). Punitive edicts similar to that issued by Domnall have been recorded elsewhere: in 864 the Council of Worms in western Germany decreed that a swarm of bees should be publicly executed by suffocation in retribution for the death of a man who had been stung.

The New World, too, has its own version of a tale of bees in warfare. The ancient Quiche Maya are said to have repelled a siege by posting mannequins along the parapets of their city. The sham warriors were outfitted with cloaks, spears and shields, even war bonnets for the gourds that served them as heads-- and which were full of wasps, horseflies and bees that the defenders had collected. When the advancing army was close to the battlements the gourds were smashed and the assailants were overcome by the stinging insects.

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