



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

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Number 603

Hon. Secretary:
Vacant

The Federation, its Council, and its Officers cannot be held responsible for the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.

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Future Events

19th-21st October 2006

National Honey Show

RAF Museum Hendon

BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

Your Berkshire Beekeepers Federation is in need of a volunteer to act as General Secretary.

IN THE APIARY: October.

There is a splendid MDF mounted display board that belongs to a Berkshire association that is temporarily in my possession entitled 'The Beekeeper's Year'

Nicely tinted and coloured illustrations showing industrious apiarists with slightly more flair to the cut of the trouser and length to the hair than today but helpful in preparing this piece because it firmly states "October: feeding time".

It's likely that many apiarists these days are feeding later produced honey to their colonies, perhaps 'ivy' of which more later and perhaps some of those at the cutting edge of our hobby maybe investing in such specialist products as 'Meliose' offered by Thornes and produced by Roquette in France (They own several sweetener companies throughout the world including two in the UK that I know of) claiming essential nutrients for the bees as well as the carbohydrate content. However if like me you have been taught that bees often do better fed on sugar syrup in the autumn even when left with adequate honey stores we will proceed on that topic if gentle reader you wish to continue.

The 1960's Beekeeper's Year in the October illustration does confirm the belief that "it's honey over cluster that counts. Bees can starve with oodles of honey on sides if they cannot break the cluster to move" and also "feed light colonies generously" referring of course to hefting the hives to assess the weight of stores. If the hives literally feel 'glued-down' then they are OK but should have a full super above the brood (with excluder removed) if with one arm you can move them then they are "light." The excluder should be removed to allow the clustered bees to move-up to the stores above carrying the queen with them and because metal surfaces may condense water in the coldest conditions.

Most of us know to feed heavy syrup, 2 lbs of white sugar to 1 pint of warm water ratio in the Autumn (light syrup 1 lb to a pint in early spring) I'm glad to see that in their 2006/2007 brochure Thornes have clarified their instructions for the use of their contact feeder somewhat i.e. they no longer indicate that you can just fill to within 1 inch of the top and then top-up with water, they do stress the importance of stirring the syrup down until the sugar is substantially dissolved, if you don't do that you'll probably find that some sugar has re-crystallized into glassy pieces in the feeder and the bees have taken more water than they should, this can contribute to bee dysentery.

On this subject many of us will have noticed that hard –set honey in the hive leave a crystalline residue in the cells, again this means the bees are getting less than ideal rations from the likes of ivy and rape honey over the winter. Dead bees have been found with ivy nectar already granulated in the honey stomach, though whether this occurred pre or post mortem apparently is not known yet.

Generous feed I suggest is 3 gallons to a colony, check after 2-3 days to see how they're taking it. I use a mixture of 1-gallon contact feeders and quick feeders myself; its best to invert the contact feeders in the sink indoors as there is some spillage until the vacuum is drawn. Quick feeders can just be topped up from a jug every 1-2 days and are very convenient.

Just a word of warning about the legislation on the amount of sucrose permitted as a content of honey for sale viz; it's maximum 5 grammes per 100, the bees will convert sugar feed into a high sucrose honey, so best to concentrate on extracting nice newly filled supers in the spring rather than something 'over wintered'.

Personally I find this seasonal feeding of the bees a rather pleasant occupation, there is no reason why it should effect the Apistan strips I have placed in September, the weather is often fine and it's a quick job to carry the feeders down and place them on the hives using an empty super as an eke to give the roof sufficient clearance. It also reminds me of the marvellous system the bees have of knowing what's happening in their environment. If I leave the kitchen door ajar for the 20 minutes or so it takes to treat 4 colonies when I return there is always (and they rarely enter otherwise) a bee in the kitchen investigating the empty sugar bags.

To end on a weather forecasting note; I have a book with 'signs from nature' that says "when the golden rod blooms first frost in 60 days" at time of writing i.e. last day in August the bees are visiting the golden rod in full bloom near the apiary. Better look to your feeding in early October!

Triad

Failing Queens:

Beekeepers from all over the country have had problems with queens, abnormal superseding, queens disappearing, faulty brood patterns, poor mating etc. It seems that this experience is not confined to the United Kingdom or even Europe. It is not unusual for 50% or more new queens to be superseded within 5 months or in the following spring, many blame Varroa and the use of Apistan and Bayvarol for introducing the cause of the problem.

This from Bee Health News NBU South West Region: Beekeepers are complaining that their queens aren't lasting and supersede, sometimes within weeks of laying their first eggs. It has now been proven in the USA that Apistan affects Drone survival, and their sperm count. Also the Queen weight is reduced when the colony is subjected to overdosing with Apistan. The answer must be breeding more fit Drones, stop using Apistan and reduce the overuse of other varroacides! Integrated Pest Management can help in reducing the exposure to chemicals.

Is it possible that we are too hasty to blame Varroa entirely? In view of the reduction in the populations of other insects, birds and other creatures perhaps we should look elsewhere but at the same time acknowledging that Varroa as a vector for spreading viruses has probably compounded the situation.

Melanosis as a cause of queen sterility is mentioned in Honey Bee Pathology by Les Bailey (circa 1960) long before Varroa was introduced to Europe, also, in ensuing years, in articles by Bailey and Ball. In those days it was claimed that Melanosis and Kashmir virus was introduced to Canada in packages and queens from the antipodes. Surely a case for banning imports of queens or bees! In the days in which I knew no better, I listened to others with more experience than me and was also guilty of importing queens, I have learned my lesson but others have still to learn.

(Melanosis, a disease of queen honey bees (Hymenoptera: Apoidea), characterized by discolouration of the egg cells and trophocytes, which turn from yellow-brown to black, and producing sterility in affected queens (Steinhaus and Martignoni); see B-melanosis and H-melanosis)

In one of my own apiaries there have been supersedures of 2005 queens resulting in no or little honey, most of the 2006 queens have been superseded, failed to mate or have disappeared. This has happened in other apiaries that I have been involved with; there have been other reports in the Association area. Dead larvae and black eggs have been observed in several colonies, I feel that this could, in some cases, mask foul brood, indeed, samples have been sent to CSL to make sure. The results were negative for foul brood, unfortunately CSL do not tell us what else is present. Brenda Ball was the expert on this; regrettably we are losing other researchers from Rothamsted.

There have been articles on this problem in several bee journals including BeeCraft which is received by many of our members so I have taken extracts from Roger Patterson's article in Bee Improvement and Conservation (<http://www.bibba.com> this is well worth joining)

Extract:

I had an e-mail from a bee researcher at the University of Georgia stating that 50% of their queens supersede within 5 months, and it is the same throughout the U.S.

A lady who took two swarms and both queens started laying well, but both soon "disappeared"

All of these cases are typical of reports I am receiving, but most of them are anecdotal and from beekeepers who may not keep records. In order to seek research funding we need to demonstrate there is a widespread problem, and the nature of it. I am therefore asking as many beekeepers as possible to report any problems they may (or may not) have in 2006. This is quite easy and involves a questionnaire where I ask for simple details, such as county, varroa treatments, queen raising methods etc, so I can understand their situation when reports come in. When this is received a very simple reporting form is sent out and kept until a problem occurs. This is filled in and sent back.

Roger Patterson appeals to all beekeepers who have or have had any problems to contact him.

Roger Patterson. E-mail: r.patterson@pattersonpressings.co.uk Tel: 01403 790 637

R.F.C

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: - Mr. Ian Homer. Fax/Telephone number: 01308 482 161

South Eastern Region: - Mr. Alan Byham Fax/Telephone number: 020 8571 6450

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors are:

Berkshire	Vacant	
Oxfordshire & South Bucks	Mrs. Margaret Holland	01327 857328
Hampshire	Mr. David Purchase	01256 781288

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

It seems over the last week autumn has crept in, heavy dew on the grass in the mornings and that nip in the air. I have just had a trip down to Devon for a few days to help pick up some hives that should be bringing in the last of the heather off the moors. Not so good, the heather has been late to yield and so they have been left on a windswept hillside for another couple of weeks. Rather than me!

Our AGM is fast approaching, Wednesday 18th October at 7.30. I hope this is firmly in your diaries, and we do need nominations to come forward to fill vacancies in the committee and officer posts. Please let me know if you are interested as it does give a better insight into the running of our successful Association and new input is always welcome.

Thursday to Saturday October 19 -21 is the National Honey Show at RAF Museum, Hendon, and our 15th November meeting is a talk by Robert Field on a "Bee Farmer's experience".

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Sunday 13th August Reading beekeepers assembled at Jon Davey's garden apiary for the annual 'Chairman's meeting.

The chairman currently has four colonies in WBC, Smiths (with 14 inch deeps) and national hives and needs to limit the number of colonies he keeps at home and is a 'donator' of colonies should there be interest.

Despite a rainy start to the day the weather brightened as we opened the WBC and found reasonably good tempered bees with plenty of brood and larvae at all stages. There were a few problems getting the brood frames unstuck from the floor, this colony is fond of propolizing! However with a little waggling we managed it with only one breakage of a frame of stores at the far-side, stuck to both side and floor. Our demonstrator housed-this in a de-spidered unused nuke to reduce the risk of a robbing session by the bees until it could be added to the top of a colony above the crown board. The Chairman on being questioned admitted it was at least four weeks since the previous opening and was quite justifiably chid!

A further colony had rather numerous boxes below the excluder and only one above. It was explained that despite normal brood pattern below, patches of brood had appeared above and the shallows moved-down accordingly. On this inspection all is well in the brood box and though no larvae or sealed brood in the top super, a small area was seen of cleaned-out cells with what appeared to be a single egg in each. Our demonstrator Michael Blackburn had us scrutinizing the bees to look for a queen and none being found shook all bees from this super and one below which appeared to be all stores in front of the hive. Any second queen or drone layer should be in dealt with when they enter the brood box 'downstairs' the two supers concerned placed above the excluder (which appears to be in good condition) The Chairman is to monitor this colony and check what transpires.

The chairman's bees appear to be healthy and the efforts of the beekeeping team in sorting him out is much appreciated as his idiosyncratic tendency to use differing equipment in his apiary makes things rather hard work!

Tea was taken with appreciation to Jill Davey and all who attended and worked so well.

Our October meeting is the first of our winter programme and is held at the usual venue at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall at 7.30 sharp on Thursday 12th October. Our speaker is Alan Johnson from Bishop's Waltham, Southampton and the topic is " The Future of Beekeeping". Alan is a past president of BBKA. Reading and District beekeepers would like to invite other Berks associations members to what promises to be a stimulating talk.

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, 114 Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading RG6 7LU Tel. 0118 966 5358

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

We have all been busy taking off honey (or lamenting the lack of it in a lot of cases) and anticipating the coming months in our apiaries. Some of us have been preparing entries for the Show. Otherwise there is not much to report.

Recently a friend brought me a beer bottle (empty!) of Sweet Farmer's Ale, which was "Brewed with genuine Maldon Honey by the Maldon Brewing Co. Ltd." She said it was a rather nice drink with a pleasant honey flavour. I didn't know such a beer was available, but Ron says it is quite easy to get hold of and that it is made by big brewers such as Fuller's as well as by small local ones.

I looked it up in my "Making Mead" book and it looks easy enough to make. You only need a pound of honey and an ounce of hops and the usual citric acid, brewers 'yeast and some nutrients to make a gallon.

The Anglo-Saxon word for mead was "alu" and it is thought that the drink the Vikings drank so copiously in their mead-halls was probably more of a beer than a wine. During the Napoleonic wars the strength of mead supplied to the troops was reduced from 6% to 4%. This is the strength of an ale rather than a wine. So it appears that Sweet Farmer's Ale has a respectable history. Next time I'm in the pub I'll try some!

Rosemary Baylis

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Jim Cooper, our Apiary Supervisor, reports that by the time you receive this newsletter the bees will have been prepared for the winter. A work party was organised to feed the bees and to clear out the shed and clean equipment in preparation for next season. The spare equipment has had wax moth and anti-mouse prevention measures taken. We have ensured that all colonies are going into the winter in a queen right condition and with adequate stores. They have all been put on open mesh floors and a super of empty combs will be placed below the brood box and above the mesh floor in late October. This is to try the theory that Ian Homer communicated to us at his last talk, that this procedure may help prevent draughts to the cluster and that by using this super in the Spring as the first honey box placed above the excluder, the bees will enter it more readily due to it having the scent of the colony. At the same time, the woodpecker cages will be placed around the hives.

Your committee would like to thank all those who have supported the apiary this year. We can report a great deal of interest by new beekeepers and having more experienced beekeepers attending has meant that we can split into small groups for hands-on experience. We look forward to this trend continuing next year. As always, a strong apiary is a valuable asset to the Society and helps to keep our subscriptions at a reasonable level. This can only be achieved with a lot of help.

Our Annual Honey Show is being held on our next meeting night, Tuesday the 10th October, when the produce from our bees will be judged in front of us. The schedule should have reached you by now, either by e-mail or with your newsletter. In case you have mislaid it, another is being sent this month. We usually spend an informative and enjoyable evening, watching the results of our efforts getting the 'third degree'. If you are new to showing or have never won a prize before, then our re-introduced Novice Class is for you. There are also several other Cups being competed for in the other classes. These will be presented during the refreshments, which will be served afterwards as usual.

Only one jar of honey is required in each class and you can enter on the night. However, it would be helpful if you are entering several classes, to let me know details ahead of the meeting so that labels can be prepared in advance. We look forward to seeing you all at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. Don't forget that the hall will be open for staging from 7.00pm and that judging starts at 7.30pm.

Our library and copies of the latest leaflets on varroa management and the tropilaelaps mite are also available at all winter meetings, along with any surplus library books left for sale.