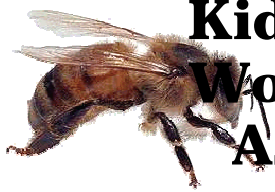


Hagley & Stourbridge, with Kidderminster & North East Worcestershire Beekeepers' Associations' Newsletter. Spring 2007



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 13 March 7.30 pm Tony Little Alternative Varroa Treatments New Road Methodist Church Hall Stourbridge

Sunday 1 April 9.30 am Note change of date. (Postponed from 11 March) Bees Go On Holiday to the OSR A Lesson in Migratory Beekeeping Branch Apiary Iverley

Saturday 14 April 2.00 pm County AGM Pershore College Evesham

Saturday 21 April 9.00 am BBKA Spring Convention National Agricultural Centre Stoneleigh

Sunday 29 April 2.30 pm 1st Apiary Meeting Branch Apiary Iverley

Thursday 10 to Sunday 13 May 9.00 am Spring Gardening Show Three Counties Show Ground Malvern

Friday 11 May 6.30 pm 2nd Apiary Meeting Branch Apiary Iverley

Saturday 19 May 2.00 pm Kidderminster Branch Roving Apiary Meeting Venues to Be Announced

Thursday 24 May 6.30 pm 3rd Apiary Meeting Branch Apiary Iverley

TOPICAL TOPICS

It's Spring, the most important time for beekeepers and all those jobs you saw and put off during the Winter are now there and ready to haunt you! Ignore them and you will all most certainly have a lousy season beekeeping or you can get on top of the situation and will stand a moderate chance of having a successful year, IF (that's a big if by the way) you have a plan! More on the plan later, but let's look at where you need to be with your beekeeping by now.

By now you should have had an equipment review. What equipment do you need and where will it come from? Have you got sufficient frames and wax and have you spent dark Winter evenings making up frames ready to wax the day you want to put them in the hive? How is the super situation, are they clean and bee proof, have you enough and how are your hive stands? All of these items need attention now because later you will find dealing with these things more difficult. For instance replacing a hive stand in Spring is routine,

in Summer when the hive is full of honey and bees it's a really difficult job!

Have any of your colonies died-out and if so why did they die? DON'T leave the hive on site unless the entrance is closed because if your bees died of disease and you haven't closed the entrance, then you are spreading the disease to every visiting bee. Have you made an assessment of why they died? The possibilities could be Varroa, disease, starvation, cold and damp or queen-failure or something else.

Varroa is becoming a really big problem for beekeepers because of "resistant" mites. Once upon a time life was easy, you bunged in a couple of plastic strips and hey-ho the mites went away, but no more!

So do you use something else to control Varroa and if so what do you use? There are three things that you need to find out as soon as you can that will come in handy later. One – how many mites are there living on your bees, second - how will

you deal with them and thirdly when will you deal with them. The "when" by the way is the most important point, because if you treat in the Spring the drones have a higher sperm count just when they need it, treat in the Summer and you will contaminate your honey crop, and Autumn is too early for Spring - but better than not at all. While words like "rock" and "a hard place" come to mind, you MUST have an idea how you will cope with Varroa this year or you will be an ex-beekeeper quite soon!

Following on from why did your bees die; if they died of starvation we won't tell anyone – honest; but how are the rest of your bees by the way? Heft the hive on one side, does it feel light? You can feed bees all year round but they will only take what they want, however in Winter you must feed with inverted sugar. Honey is inverted sugar and so are products like Ambrosia which is between £17 and £20 a big tub. Alternatively you can buy a Jar Attachment Feeder for £1.48 from Thornes to feed honey and

these are really handy especially if your bees are at the bottom of the garden.

The other reasons for your bees dying? Cold, damp and queen failure can be covered another time.

Now back to the plan. Have you got a plan for this season? For instance, the plan for the Hagley & Stourbridge branch apiary is to replace all the worn and damaged equipment to make up ten hives and to pay for this by moving three or four of the hives to areas where honey production is good. This plan will carry over into 2008.

Your plan could be to not let your beekeeping get out of hand and to limit your hives to five or increase honey production to 100lbs per hive or produce section honey or breed Queens or move your apiary around to get the best of the micro climate.

What ever your plan is, the season ahead will be the better for it. Having decided on a plan you next need to decided what it will take to get there and what you will need to do this. The "what" could be help or advice, money, a helping hand to lift hives, or even more hours in every day!

Review the plan as you go along to make sure that you are meeting your goal and readjust if need be, but most of all, enjoy your Spring beekeeping what ever happens!

FOR HIRE

The branch extractor is available for hire. Please contact Nick on 01562 882145 to book it. Cost is £6.00 per day inclusive of knife and two stage stainless steel filter. Ripening tanks (£1.00 per week) are also available. Cheques to Hagley & Stourbridge BKA please.

Also available, an electric uncapping tray and wax honey separator at £4.00 per day

FOR SALE

Loose sugar not for human consumption but fine for the bees, 40 pence a kilo contact Justus Klaar 01384 352177.

Honey Jars with white plastic lids. Contact David Mills. Stocks are very low so don't delay branch member £26 a gross, non members £37

Monel (forerunner of stainless steel) 75lb Settling tank with integral filters £60. Call 01562 882145

Good colony of bees on National frames. You supply the hive. £80. 07800 856386

H&S is continuing to develop a website at www.hsbka.org.



Your suggestions are always welcome on what you would like to see on a beekeeping website, anything is possible. Email admin@hsbka.org

DEAR EDITOR

That could be you! An editor for this publication is still needed. See your branch secretary!

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL BEE UNIT

Most of you will have read in the press of the worrying numbers of bee colonies that have died in the United States, for no obvious reason like Varroa, Accarine, Nosema, viruses, or crop spraying; there they call it "Colony Collapse Disorder". We have had it in this country on a smaller scale, often called "Marie-Celeste Syndrome": a previously healthy colony has just disappeared within a very

short period: very few bees left, sometimes none at all; usually plenty of stores remaining as one would expect from a strong healthy colony; and often affecting the whole apiary. Last Autumn Dave Sutton was called out to two spectacular cases where all the 18 and 27 apparently healthy colonies in these apiaries had collapsed, with no signs of any of the known diseases. And these cases can no longer be explained through Varroa treatment with the Pyrethroid strips, while the mites have built up a good deal of resistance to these drugs.

As the problem has been sprung on us rather by surprise, there is no money allowed for it in the Bee Unit's budget, but they are trying what they can, and have asked the Inspectors to send in comb samples, floor debris, and wax scrapings for analysis, hoping to get to the bottom of the problem.- What this means to you: if your colonies have died, and you are sure it was not through starvation, let your Inspector (that will be myself for most of you, or Richard Lindsey for most of NE Branch's members) know, for him to inspect the colonies and to take samples to send to the National Bee Unit.

PHIL HEALEY'S GAMBIAN PROJECT

A note for members who came to Phil's talk to our Branch Winter meeting last Autumn, about his Safari in Nepal, and on his project to help a village in Gambia Africa by establishing beekeeping. Shortly after his evening with us he and his wife went to visit the village. He has written to us to say that they found almost all the 25 hives occupied by bees (swarms), and the man from the next village whom he employs as Apiary Manager well in control of the situation. Naturally, he was quite pleased with the way the project has gone so far.

Justus Klaar