

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter August 2013

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Calendar at-a-glance

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|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 22 nd September | Honey show |
| 12 th October | County honey show |
| 24-26 th October | National Honey Show |

Squashing Queens

I'm sure we all replace frames into the hive with the utmost care, especially the frame on which the queen had been seen. But don't forget that she continues to crawl and may even end up under the lugs of the frames. Therefore ensure you also take care when pushing the frames back into the original locations prior to closing up the hive. My heart sank about a month ago when I saw a red-painted carcass under a lug when I opened a hive for a weekly inspection, the murder confirmed by a lack of eggs and a handful of emergency queen cells.

National Honey Show

The following is an advertorial from the National Honey Show.

The National Honey Show is the 'gold standard' honey show, the equivalent of Wimbledon for tennis players, this year the 82nd National Honey Show. There are almost 250 classes and beekeepers come from all over the world to enter. Walking around the displays is an education in itself. A full programme of workshops and lectures will run during the show and there will be a wide selection of trade stands with lots of equipment and books to buy. Guest speakers this year will include, once again, a great cast from the world of beekeeping: Norman Carreck, Celia Davis, Ricarda Kather, Mike Palmer and Dr Robert Paxton will all be on the main lecture stage, BeeCraft have a great lecture theatre in the recital room on Friday and there will be a full day of lectures in the recital room on

Saturday for those relatively new to beekeeping or those waiting to refresh on some common themes. For the first time this year there will be lectures on Thursday morning starting at 9.30am, with the official opening at 1.45pm. On top of that is another great line up of very popular workshops and The Honey Show. If that isn't enough then you can get some bargains, advice and socialise in the trade hall.

Also new for 2013: on the Saturday we have a New to Beekeeping day with a lecture programme for new beekeepers but all are welcome, in the Recital Room. There will be lectures on Swarms and Swarm Control; Common Bee Diseases; Products of the Hive; Tasks Throughout the Year.

If you have already had success at your local or county show, why not enter some of the classes? Many counties have their own classes within the show – or you can put yourself up against the experts in the open classes to see how you measure up. As you do your extracting, why not keep that perfect frame aside? A little planning now will give you lots of potential show entries.

The 2013 schedule of classes will be published in August 2013 but in the meantime, you can get a good idea of what is needed by looking at the 2012 schedule. You can find this and lots of interesting information about the show on the N.H.S. website - www.honeyshow.co.uk

The show is at St Georges College, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2QS on Thursday 24th (1.45pm to 6pm) Friday 25th (9am to 6pm) and Saturday 26th October (9am to 4.30pm). Admission for non-members is £15 but you can become a member of the National Honey Show for £12 and then entry is free. Accompanied children of 16 years and under are also free. You can join at the door or visit the website - www.honeyshow.co.uk.

For sale

EZ Bee Tray



It still works well even though the thermostat controls are a little slow to respond. £125, buyer collects (Newport Pagnell) or maybe delivered in MK only.

Latex gloves

Large slightly powered , a box of 100, £4.50 collected or delivered to Calverton apiary (these sell for £6.00 on the market).

Contact Ed Reney, 01908 612058, 07799636740.

Regular Columns

August Apiary Notes from Andrew Beer

I trust you and your bees have had a marvellous July. Around here in Stewkley, conditions could not have been better. Much forage, especially lime, clover and brambles, damp (from last winter's rains), and hot, almost windless weather increasing the flow. And unlike most years, this season's rape crop was spasmodic and as a result super frames have largely, to date, been easily cleared.

Tonight, 27th July, we have had heavy storms and one senses that if wet weather sets in for more than a day or two, the flow will dramatically slow down but if the recent fine conditions return shortly, the strong flow could continue until, say, 10th August. I don't want to spoil the party but the truth of the matter is "2014, here we come". Well, that is what the bees would be saying if they could talk. They well might add "We are not interested in honey targets, just trying to survive as a colony until next Spring!"

Everything we now do for the benefit of the bees can help take them into Winter and emerge in Spring in the strongest possible order. May I offer you the following list of things to do towards that result:

1. Protection against robbing.

Whatever their strength put all colonies on 1-inch entrances but weak and all nucs on one bee space. These measures will severely reduce access and egress and bees may congregate at entrances but this is preferable to a stock being robbed out in days. Check for all entry nooks and crannies, for example at the edges of boxes worn away by injudicious sterilisation or torching, or damaged during operations because the robbers will soon find them – tape up the holes, or, better still, use drawing pins/metal strips and make a note to repair the boxes at the earliest moment, probably in Spring.

N.B. If a stock is under attack because robbers have got in you will simply invite more trouble if you open it up to transfer combs to a more secure box. Just seal up holes, as above. If robbing does start, a pane of glass laid against the hive, above its entrance, to form a tunnel helps confuse would-be robbers, especially if grass is loosely incorporated within this tunnel. Alternatively, move the stock in trouble to a temporary site without other stock close by. I am constantly staggered to come across hives without even entrance blocks in August – beekeeping madness!

To sum up, put hives on “a war footing”, the enemy – bees and wasps – will attack at the slightest weakness. Robbing is easy to prevent – once under way the whole apiary and other bees/wasps join in.

2. Bringing in the crop.

From now, clear supers using Porter or similar escape devices. As far as possible do these operations (including return of supers for licking clean) when bees have stopped flying and of course clean up/wash down the slightest spill. When getting supers back to your house, leave in a bee-secure place and make sure nothing “beesy” is left outside because robbers will find it in minutes. If you follow this regime from now until winter frosts life will be considerably more pleasant for you and your neighbours. When supers have been removed, heft the hive to check stores. It is possible bees will need an immediate feed! Our excellent beginners hefted a brood box at Cosgrove last weekend – light as a feather !

3. Fit for Winter.

It is time to assess each colony/nuc and the steps are set out in the books but I will sum up as follows:

i. Is the stock healthy?

How can you possibly know as a beginner? Ask an expert !

ii. Is the stock occupying at least 6 frames (National deeps or equivalent)?

I have a suspicion that a prime reason for the heavy losses last winter was the many stocks going into winter short of numbers. So unite weak stocks as necessary after first killing off the queen you do not wish to retain. N.B. A chance to get rid of a stock with undesirable characteristics. Don't be too drastic. On August 1st for example a small nuc with a fine queen on, say, 3 frames, can easily cover 6 or more frames by October, PROVIDING IT HAS A CONSTANT SUPPLY OF FEED GIVEN TO IT.

iii. Does the stock have enough stores?

A colony needs to go into winter with 40lbs of stores (or seven deep National frames containing stores). Make a note of any shortfall and make good any deficiency during winter feeding (below).

iv. Apply any Varroa treatment.

In March, I treated with HiveClean. I shall be applying HiveClean in August and Oxalic Acid in December. They have worked for me, but I am not in a position to advise. To me it is highly regrettable that the National Bee Unit (presumably on legal advice) has not taken a lead by offering a list of preferred treatments. How can we beekeepers possibly know what is best?

v. Winter Feeding.

You need to get the job done by 20th September but at a push (and for me it is always a push!) by 30th September. If you are too late, your bees cannot seal down the stores and

you may have dysentery and perhaps dead bees. Syrup mix (2lb of sugar to a pint of water). For amounts to give, see above.

vi. Tidying up in the Apiary.

Does your apiary look like a dance floor the morning after a good party ?

It is time to tidy up, sorting out nucs where queens failed to mate, colonies previously united and double boxed, etc., etc.. Do it.

If you have a hive which you want to move, the popular advice is to move the hive towards its required destination by 3ft per day, so bees can always fly back to their home. Fun when you have a hive with 4 heavy supers! Much better to wait until February. Then after a period when the bees have not been able to fly for at least a week and freezing weather is not expected for a few days, close the hive entrance at night and next day gently move the hive where you wish. The bees will automatically locate to the new site. A hive with one brood chamber will be easier to move too!

vii. Equipment up to scratch?

Nothing kills bees quicker than winter damp. Winter will find the slightest leak. Do get equipment sorted now. It is not a bad idea to have one or two spare roofs – they are so easy to make. If you want to try, may I suggest you make, say, a one inch gap between the inner facing sides of the roof and the outer-facing sides of the hive. It will help prevent water running down the hive body. Incidentally, I keep my hives on milk crates and 2x3 wooden planks and use entrance blocks throughout the year. Providing the height of the entrance is not more than the standard height (3/8th inch) this has always proved an adequate defence against mice. I do not use mouse guards, ever.

Queen raising.

We had a successful meeting in Stewkley and, hopefully, two queen led stocks will be on the way to a couple of beginners. I am attempting to raise a few more queens this year, if interested, please contact me in the next day or two. Nothing guaranteed, I am just a simple beekeeper! Contact me by phone, please. If I had my wish, the computer would have been discovered the day after I die! The computer at our house (assuming it works) is looked at as a last resort!

A beekeeping problem and a Chilean solution.

One of the Association's more notorious queens at Cosgrove got above the queen excluder and into three full supers, including a lot of wild comb. Trying to find her might have resulted in her being killed by falling comb! Solution – leave her undisturbed in this situation but on each inspection check just the brood chamber. As soon as you find her there slap on the queen excluder. Chilean? Yes, Chileans never use queen excluders because the inflow of nectar is so great that the queen is driven downstairs! If, in this situation, the bees had only recently gone into supers, a big blast of smoke into the supers (with the queen excluder removed) will usually do the trick !

Best Regards

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