

# The Newsletter



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SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## Not this year

Beekeepers like to tell you just how bad and unusual the weather has been each year, but this season has been truly bizarre with the wettest and coldest of Springs followed by a heat wave and now more rain. It has played havoc with queen mating and honey harvests too. If that weren't enough, swarming kicked off early in April, then just when we thought it was all over, it started up again.

Many members are reporting swarms in July, which is unusual to say the least, and because of the appalling weather, the possibility of late mated queens is getting more and more remote. Many colonies have been left queen-less this season.

## Practical beekeeping sessions



The last session we held was reduced to a discussion forum, as the rain kicked in just as we were contemplating donning our bee-suits. The following session was called off because of the weather forecast which promised thunder and lightening, heavy rainstorms and heaven knows what else.

When it came to the Saturday morning I was expecting a plague of locusts, seas of frogs, pestilence, crop failure and death of the first born, but the sun shone all day, just to confound us. We were successful on the following Saturday morning - July 31<sup>st</sup>, although turn out was quite poor. Things have become so nonsensical that we will be meeting again the following Saturday (August 7<sup>th</sup>) as well, just to catch up.

Please don't give up on us just yet. Not every year is like this.



Did you know that some types of bees sleep between 5 & 8 hours a day, sometimes in flowers? Also, they like to sleep with other bees and hold each other's feet.

***From Katie Tobin - Our International correspondent***

## Sugar prices

Here is a comparison of the main supermarket prices for granulated white sugar as at July 31<sup>st</sup>. Eric McLaughlin raised the point at our July committee meeting that food deliveries have already been seriously compromised by the shortage of HGV drivers. We will all be needing sugar during September to feed our bees\*—, unless you leave them enough honey to see them through the winter. They will need approximately 40 lbs or about 20kgs of stores per full hive. That's equivalent to 10 brood frames full. If you can't buy sugar, your bees could well starve, so think ahead.

Retailer	1 kg	2 kg	5 kg	Bulk
Aldi	65p			
Sainsbury	75p		£3.50	
Tesco	65p	£1.25	£3.15	
Morrison	65p	£1.25		
Asda	65p	£1.25	£3.45	
Waitrose	65p	£1.25		
B & M	65p			
Booker Foods	66p	2.09	£6.99	25kg - £16.50
M&S foods	70p			

As a full member of Somerton Beekeepers and therefore Somerset Beekeepers and the BBKA, you will be able to shop at Booker Foods, who are wholesalers and have branches in Yeovil and Taunton, but interestingly, they are more expensive than every supermarket, bar one, and their 25kg sacks also work out at 1p dearer per kg than every high street supermarket, with the exception of M&S Foods. There is absolutely no saving in buying in bulk.

The message is simply this. Think ahead as prices are on the rise and there could well be shortages.

## **Apiary work party**

The apiary work party which should have been held last Saturday (July 24<sup>th</sup>) was postponed so as not to coincide with the Beginners' practical session, but that also had to be postponed, which is another story altogether.

The work party has now been re-scheduled for Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup> at 10.00am. The main objective is to re-coat the Fraser wing (clean equipment) and the Gould suite (toilet).

Everybody is welcome including our new beekeepers. All you need is a paint-brush and we could really use a ladder too, if anybody has the wherewithal to bring one along.

## **The Bath & West Country Festival**

The Bath & West Show didn't happen last year, in any shape or form, and this year it is being reduced to an event with no livestock, no tents and limited events in the show rings. It's also been renamed 'The Bath & West Country Festival' for this year.

Usually running over the Spring Bank holiday period, and coinciding with the half term school holidays, it has also been re-scheduled for the August Bank Holiday weekend from August 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>.

There will be a honey show and entry forms are available on the website -

<https://www.bathandwest.com/bees-honey-competition>

Entry to the competitions is free, and there are no cash prizes this year, but entry to the show-ground is £15.00 per adult, with up to two children having free entry.

Somerset Beekeepers will be represented in the Bees and Honey area.

**Mikes Bee Supplies**

**Click & Collect**  
[www.mikes-bee-supplies.com](http://www.mikes-bee-supplies.com)  
 E: [mikes-bees@outlook.com](mailto:mikes-bees@outlook.com)  
 T: 01278 445158

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**Apiinvert.** Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

**13kg 1 - 4 boxes £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 each**

**Apifonda.** If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

**1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each**

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter.

**Foundation.** National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

**Eddie Howe email:- [redrascal444@gmail.com](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**

## **New & unused National Hive for sale**

**This is a repeat from last month as there was absolutely no interest shown. It will be sold at a reasonable price, so there is a bargain to be had.**

One of our members recently purchased a brand-new National Hive - but unfortunately has been taken quite ill and has decided to give up beekeeping. As a result, her newly acquired National is now surplus to requirements. It has never been used and is fully assembled. It comprises a floor, brood box, queen excluder, crown board and roof (no supers). There are also quite a few unassembled frames.

If you are interested, please contact **Fred Clarke on 01278 722830**. Fred is handling the sale on behalf of the owner.

## **Fire caused by Greek beekeeper**



A 64-year-old beekeeper was charged on Wednesday (July 28<sup>th</sup>) for negligence over a forest fire that damaged homes and destroyed cars in the northern suburbs of Athens, a judicial official said.

The blaze raged at the base of Mount Penteli, where a fire in July 2018 went on to claim 102 lives in Greece's worst-ever toll from a forest inferno.

Tuesday's fire did not cause any casualties and was now "under control", fire-fighters said.

The beekeeper appeared before a prosecutor earlier on Wednesday and will stand trial facing the charge of arson by negligence, which is a misdemeanour, the judicial official told AFP. He was released.

The man has beehives on the hill overlooking the cemetery of the town of Stamata, where the fire seems to have started. He is suspected of burning foliage near his hives, according to the ministry of civil protection. Four other people arrested on Tuesday as part of the investigation were quickly released by Greek police.

The ministry said that "one house was burnt down, 12 others suffered damage, notably to their roofs" and around 10 cars were torched.

A total of 310 firefighters were mobilised to the area 30 kilometres (19 miles) north of Athens, backed by 10 helicopters and eight firefighting planes, the fire service said, with strong winds complicating operations.

Greece is hit by forest fires every summer, but experts have warned that global warming increases both their frequency and intensity.

Another heat wave is forecast for the country starting on Thursday, with temperatures expected to rise above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

## **EXTRACTOR HIRE**

Don't forget that we have a honey extractor which you can hire for £2.00 per day. See the back cover of this newsletter for contact details. The fee is only to encourage you to return it in a clean state, and a timely fashion.

## **Second hand equipment for sale**

Tome Done, one of our more experienced and seasoned beekeepers is retiring from beekeeping because of mobility issues and several members took advantage of the excellent prices he charged for his colonies of bees. Now Tom is selling off the rest of his equipment. There is far too much stuff to list here but if you get in touch with Tom on **01458 850402**, he will arrange a time for you to go to his house in Butleigh to view the items.

## Turkish bears and their honey



Bears love honey and that fact isn't about to change anytime soon. They just seem to get a taste for it and they will go to great lengths to make sure they get some for themselves. It is cute to watch but it can be frustrating for the person who is trying to save the honey.

When a group of bears came to visit a bee farm regularly, the farmer decided to make lemonade out of lemons, so to speak. Ibrahim Sedef is the beekeeper and he does his best to keep the bears away but it doesn't always work as well as he would like.

Ibrahim Sedef lives in Trabzon, Turkey and works as an agricultural engineer in beekeeping. He has been having a difficult time keeping the bears from getting into his hives.

He secured the hives with metal cages and even left other food out to try and distract the bears. Nothing seemed to work. That is when he decided to learn as much as he could about the bears by setting up cameras on the farm and he came up with the perfect plan. Rather than keeping them from tasting the honey, he would put it out to learn what the bears preferred. A table with 4 different types of honey was put out to see which the bears enjoyed, but it seems he couldn't count (I count five). Apparently, they enjoyed the smell of Anzer honey because they would taste it first. Sometimes they wouldn't even bother with the cherry blossom honey, which is a quality Turkish honey that sells for \$300 for 2 pounds.



## **Honey Jars - Bulk order**

We told you last month of our intention to bulk buy jars again. So far the take up has been low, but that was probably because you couldn't start to guess how much honey you would be harvesting, but hopefully the picture is a little clearer now.

We have to insist that you buy full boxes as we could get left with an excess of jars and storage space is at a premium in the apiary buildings. If you buy more than you require, they will keep until next Spring, and prices may well have gone up in that time. If we order the same amount of jars as we did last year, the prices will be the same, but, if not, they could be more expensive this year.

Amount of jars in a box according to size:-

**1 lb (454g) round jars with gold screw lids - 72 jars per box**

**12 oz (340g) hexagonal jars with gold twist off lids - 84 jars per box**

**12 oz (340g) round jars with twist off lids - 72 jars in a box**

**8 oz (227g) hexagonal jars with twist off lids - 108 jars in a box**

Whatever price we end up selling them for, we can assure you that it will be much less than you buying exactly what you require, direct from a bottle company, and in most cases you will have to pay for delivery on top, and will be unable to collect at present.

**We need to know your requirement by Tuesday August 10<sup>th</sup> at the very latest.**

We will then be able to tell you the cost and will need payment in advance. Our bill last year was well in excess of £3000, and you will understand that we can't possibly finance that from our funds. **Email [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) with your requirement.**

**If anybody is requiring extra lids, we have a stock of various twist off sizes at the apiary and can pass these on at 8p per lid, again a very cheap price. There may be a few 454g (1 lb) gold screw lids as well. To avail yourself of this offer,**

## Bulk order of MAQS varroa treatment

MAQS is a very effective way of treating varroa mites at the end of the season, and when you have taken your honey off. It is, however, the only treatment permitted for use when honey on the hive as it doesn't taint the honey.



It has two other advantages. Treatment only lasts seven days, and as it is temperature dependent like most other treatments, it is good to have a short treatment period. Furthermore, it penetrates the sealed brood cells where most of the varroa mites are at this time of year, and so the knock down rates are much higher.

Now for a slight down side. There was a time when we could negotiate a price but as Thornes have secured a sole agency for the product, the price is fixed. We have been able to hold the same price as last year though and will be charging £5.50 per treatment. You can order for as many, or few hives as you like. If you bought the minimum two treatments from Thornes it would cost you £15.00 plus £7.50 p&p (£11.25 each). If you ordered ten treatments direct it would cost you £55.00 plus £9.00 p&p (£6.40 each).

MAQS is best applied immediately after feeding, but don't leave it too late, as you want to ensure that you treat the mites before the winter bees, which have to live longest, and are therefore more liable to suffer the effects that the various associated viruses impart, become pupae and are more susceptible.

**Could you please let us have your requirement for MAQS by the same date as jars, that is Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup>. Email [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) with your order. We will then ask you for payment.**

## Re-use of honey jars

There has long been debate about whether or not it is permissible to re-use honey jars and lids. Several years ago I contacted the Food Standards Agency and was told categorically that it is not permissible to re-use either jars or lids. However, I contacted them again recently and this is the response I received.

### **Please read it very carefully as it is open to misinterpretation**

Thank you for your enquiry, I hope the following proves of assistance to your members.

Food Business Operators (FBO) are responsible for ensuring the food they place on the market is safe under retained European Regulation (EC) 178/2002 - Article 14, and thus the duty and onus is on the FBO to ensure that the food they place on the market is fit for human consumption. Decisions on whether to re-use returned jars and how potential risks should be managed is a decision of the business owner.

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2002/178/article/14>

Re-using glass containers like jam jars occasionally to supply food does not present a food safety concern. This means it is safe to sell home produced honey in re-used jars at village fetes and other occasional events. The key thing is good hygiene – if the jars are re-used they should be free from chips and cracks, and should be clean and sterilised prior to each use. The regulations on food contact materials apply to businesses and these regulations are unlikely to apply to the use of jars for occasional community and charity food provision.

For the lids, it is advisable not to re-use these as they have a gasket within that is designed for single use. In this instance, appropriate lids will therefore need to be procured as films are unlikely to be suitable for honey.

It would be the decision of the local enforcement authority as to whether any particular reuse constituted an infringement of the legislation, as they are tasked to examine compliance paperwork for food contact materials and the circumstances of the placing of the packaged food onto the market.

The legislation on the safety of the packaging your membership will need to comply with is can be viewed at : <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-contact-materials-regulations>

For any food contact material or article placed onto the market in England, the relevant regulations will be the Materials and Articles in Contact with Food (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended\*)

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2619/contents/made>.

\*The original Regulations for England have been amended as per the following individual amending Regulations and will also need to be referred to:

- The Materials and Articles in Contact with Food (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019
  - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/704/made>

The Food and Feed Hygiene & Safety (Misc. Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1504/contents/made>

- The Food and Feed Hygiene & Safety (Misc. Amendments) (England) Regulations 2020
  - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1410/body/made>

Unfortunately there isn't a consolidated version that you can refer to at the moment.

I hope this proves of value to you and your membership.

## **Mr Vincent Greenwood**

Policy Advisor | Food Contact Materials

**Food Standards Agency** 6th Floor | Clive House | 70 Petty France | London | SW1H 9EX | [Vincent.greenwood@food.gov.uk](mailto:Vincent.greenwood@food.gov.uk)

## Unreturned Library Books

Our Divisional Librarian is sending out a call for the return of library books still out. Some books have been out for a long time, but now the beekeeping exams are over and there's some opening up of Covid restrictions, could borrowers please see that their books are returned. The easiest way to do this is by dropping off at the divisional apiary, or directly to any member of the divisional committee.

If you've any problems getting books back, please let the librarian know.

**Contact: Sarah Kent on 07986 965320 or [translation@lawsonkent.co.uk](mailto:translation@lawsonkent.co.uk)**

# Honey Show 2021



## Somerton Beekeepers Honey Show is back

**Put Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup> in your diaries because the biggest and best Honey Show in the South West of England is back after a year's absence.**

Entry forms, schedules and recipes are all attached to this newsletter. This is your chance to show off what you have done this year. There are honey classes, wax classes and something for everyone. Photography, baking, cookery, mead making and lots more disciplines are represented. There are novice classes for those who have never entered a honey show or won a prize before and there are open classes too, so that the community or beekeepers from other areas can join in.

See more overleaf.....

Apart from all the competition classes, there is also an artisan market outside of the hall, with craft stalls, honey sales, artisan cider and an art stall dedicated to bees.

No admission charge and parking is free too.

Further details are in the schedule, which is attached.

### **From the Apiary**

A small group continue to monitor the bees at the apiary. Currently there are ten colonies in various stages. One swarm that was collected on site earlier in the season has responded well and following feeding is now on nine frames of brood with a super added last week. It might even produce a small honey crop if the flow continues. One colony is in a poor state with what appears to be a failing Queen and neglected brood. The others are all more or less ok. Two queen-less colonies have been successfully combined with one which is queen-right, using the newspaper method. One colony is very defensive and may need to be re-queened. Overall honey production will be poor this year.

There has been a lot of summer growth in the bee meadow and we have been encouraged to see that the decision to limit mowing has borne fruit with increasing numbers of wild flowers and orchids.

At some point a work party will be required to trim parts of the meadow, cut hedges and clear vegetation around the Bee space.

As the covid restrictions eased we were able to have our first committee meeting at the bee space for many months and it was a pleasure to meet in person rather than zoom.

The attempts to install a mains electricity supply continue but problems still continue as getting a consistent quote from Western Power Distribution remain. Quotes have ranged from two to six thousand pounds and WPD seem unable to accept our VAT status. Clearly the committee prefer the lower quote and negotiations continue. Hopefully we may have mains power before the nights draw in.

***Eric McLaughlin***

***Chairman***

**Dates for your diary**

**Online Zoom talks**

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

**Sixth Beginners Practical Session**

**At our apiary**

Saturday August 7th - 10.00am

**Somerton BKA**

**Annual Honey Show**

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

Chistles Ln, TA11 6FJ

Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup>

1.00 - 5.00pm

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