

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Not long to wait now

Spring is just around the corner, honestly. My bees have been totally confused all winter. Long spells of mild weather with rain and then a cold snap, followed by more mild weather. Then a cold snap. No wonder they have been consuming fondant so readily. I remember not so many years ago, when feeding bees during the colder months was considered a sign of a bad beekeeper. That should have all been taken care of in the autumn. The changing weather patterns mean that we can't predict exactly how much our bees will need over the winter. The received wisdom was 30lbs of stores which became 40lbs of stores and now many beekeepers leave a tub of fondant over the feed hole on the crown-board as a tell-tale.

Caring and considerate beekeepers leave a whole super of honey, or so I'm told.

New Beekeepers' Course

It was good to be back in the comfortable surroundings of Tor Rugby Club. The first time since 2019 - thanks to COVID. There was an excellent turn-out with 35, of the expected 40, making it through, a blanket fog, on what the Scots call a 'dreek' night. It was crystal clear by the time we all headed home, but my car had given up the ghost and it took a further 30 minutes to coax it into life. Aren't batteries expensive for hybrids?

Joe King covered the introduction to the course while Stewart Gould heckled from the background. The roles are reversed next week. We have to remember that we wouldn't be there at all if it wasn't for the good offices of Alison Dykes and her connection with the Rugby Club.

The attendees were very inter-active, which is always good, and it looks as if we can expect a good few new beekeepers from the class of 2023.



Many beekeepers have shopped for equipment from this well respected supplier for many years, and there was an audible intake of breath when the following notice appeared on various social media pages.

We're Having To Say Goodbye!

We are deeply saddened to be closing our beloved company and will be forever grateful that we played a helping hand in raising awareness of the importance of bees and made beekeeping accessible to many more people over the years.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, so we want to reassure everyone that we will continue to be business as usual until we cease trading in March.

Simon

While on the subject of suppliers



It has been found that C. Wynne Jones has been selling Api-BioXal with an expiry date of **April 2022**. Unfortunately some of us did not notice until updating our Veterinary Medicines records for this year!

C. Wynne Jones

They have now removed the product from their website which they have recently continued to sell as a Sale item. It is of course illegal for any supplier to sell, or even give away, an expired veterinary medicine as published in the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. So if you have unknowingly (or even knowingly) purchased out-of-date Api-BioXal from C. Wynne Jones during 2022 apply for a refund.

Thanks to West Sussex Beekeepers

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 Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114



Somerset Beekeepers Annual Lecture Day - Saturday February 11th.

This is an excellent day for the obsessed, with visitors coming from all over the south of England. There hasn't been a Lecture Day since 2019, but - - It's back after having been prevented by the COVID pandemic. This event has moved from the slightly inaccessible Edgar Hall in Somerton, to the Canalside Conference Centre in Bridgwater - a new venue, providing much more room and ability to broaden the spectrum of workshops and lectures. Details of how to get tickets are on the back page. The list of lectures could change, but at present stands at:-

Vertical Swarm Control and Simple Queen Raising: *Dan Basterfield*

Food Safety Law and how it applies to the beekeeper: *Andy Pedley*

Research into the Somerset strain of EFB - *Hollie Pufal*

Workshops include the following

Becoming a bee detective - *Simon Jones*

Introduction to microscopy: External anatomy of a bee: *Bridget Knutson*

Towards treatment-free beekeeping: *Alan and Tricia Nelson*

Honey ferments: *Angie Kirk*

PLUS a trade hall, raffle and plenty of bee chat!

For more information and to secure tickets, visit our [Eventbrite page](#).

* programme subject to change

We hope to see you on Saturday, 11 February!

PLEASE BE VERY CAREFUL

Not all advice given in written form or on the internet is necessarily sensible, and sometimes things slip through the net. It would seem that something did just that in the latest edition of BBKA News. On page 43 is the following piece of advice, presumably aimed at newer beekeepers.

'The eggs that are laid six weeks before the dandelion season starts, will have grown, hatched and matured into foragers to gather the upcoming dandelion resources. Knowing this you can choose to open feed some warm 1:1 syrup (1lb white granulated sugar: 1 pint water or 1 kg sugar: 1.25 litres water) on the milder days. You do not have to put the syrup into the hives. If, near to your house, you have an open feeder i.e. a syrup container with grass or straw floating on top, or an upturned honey bucket with holes drilled in, you may be able to enjoy the sight of foraging bees from time to time'. Karl Colyer – Cheshire BKA

I would strongly advise against open feeding at any time, as it can easily spread disease and, in warmer months, cause robbing and internecine combat, the like of which is hard to imagine. It will draw bees from miles around, and if they are thwarted, they may turn their attention to the hives in your apiary.

I noticed this and shared with a senior member of Somerset BKA, a Master Beekeeper and NDB, who was somewhat surprised that it had 'slipped through the net'.

If you wish to feed your bees at present, it is best to use fondant, either purchased from Eddie Howe (see advert. on page 3, or by making your own). Only when temperatures are consistently above 10°C is it advisable to feed syrup and the only inside the hive for which it is intended.

The same applies to cleaning up used frames. Leaving them out for the bees to clean up is definitely not a wise move, for exactly the same reasons.

The National Bee Unit is dead set against open feeding, and I shudder to think what Meg Seymour, our Regional Bee Inspector would say about this suggestion.

From the Chair

Just before Christmas I was at a local market and a seller there had what he described as “Raw Honey” of foreign origin. When I sought clarification of the use of the term “Raw Honey” the seller became evasive. I do not like the term Raw Honey as this is very ambiguous. When is honey raw? How much processing can be done and it still be raw? It is important that our honey “a premium product” is properly described and labelled to distinguish it from dubious supermarket and imported products.

President of the BBKA, Anne Rowberry, has a Honey labelling petition to get the matter discussed by parliament.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/624402/>

This is very important to all of us and future beekeepers. So please insure you sign the petition as soon as possible.

The breakfast buffet at the Barcelo Hotel in Malaga had what could be referred to as Natural Honey from the hive.



Looking at the winter season we have had so far the weather conditions have not been ideal for our bees, mild wet weather up to Christmas and New year. The bees will be more active consuming more of their stores than anticipated. I think at the first opportunity I will give them some fondant over the cluster. I wish you all a happy and successful beekeeping year.

Jack Barr - Chairman

January in the apiary

If ever there is a quiet time in our apiary it is in January. At present we are meeting every other Tuesday morning to “heft” the hives to make sure that they have enough stores.

Each hive has its wire netting round to prevent green woodpecker attack. My impression is that January and February are the most likely times for their attacks as the ground is too hard to forage for their favourite food which is ants. I have wondered in the past if it might be drumming to let the girls know how lovely they are as the breeding season approaches, but Stewart assures me that green woodpeckers don’t drum!

Colonies in these days of global warming need forty pounds of stores to get them through the winter. When I started years ago, when real men wore vests, it was thirty pounds of stores since winters were colder, queens went off the lay for longer and hence far less food was consumed to maintain the brood temperature. Those colonies that we have found that are a little on the light side we have put a slab of fondant on the crown board immediately over the feed hole once we have peeled back the plastic that makes up the packet. If you are making your own fondant then I use the plastic containers that you get from the Chinese restaurant. These are nice to use since you can see the bees at work through the semi-opaque plastic and it gives you a good idea how much is left. If you have any doubts then feed some fondant. There is nothing more exasperating than letting your bees starve to death just before the spring. Several years ago we planted two cuttings of *salix aegyptiana* at the end of the apiary. These are a very early flowering form of willow. They have grown well but we were really surprised to see a cloud of bees gathering pollen earlier in the month before the latest cold snap.

What is always nice is when we see the first signs of spring. Our daffodils are well up and the snow drops will be flowering soon. The cowslips in the wild flower meadow are looking very promising, as slowly we turn a back-filled quarry into a bee meadow.

You are always welcome to come and join us on a Tuesday morning, good work is done on the coffee and kitkats, although you might like to ring me to check which Tuesdays we are there. Soon we will go back to our usual every Tuesday morning working party. See you soon.

Joe King

01749 890357

Derogation of ban on neo-nicotinoids - Again

On 23rd January 2023, less than three months after publishing its Healthy Bee Plan 2030, the UK government has, for the third year in succession, given emergency authorisation for the use of a type of pesticide banned because of the harm it can cause bees. Permission to use a neo-nicotinoid on sugar beet seeds has been given to protect the crop from a particularly damaging virus spread by aphids. The authorisation was given against the advice of an independent panel of pesticide experts. Campaign group Friends of the Earth labelled the move "incredibly brazen."

But Michael Sly, chairman of the NFU Sugar board, welcomed the decision, saying that he was relieved. "The British sugar beet crop continues to be threatened by virus yellows disease, which in recent years has caused crop losses of up to 80%. The home-grown sugar industry is working hard to find viable, long-term solutions to this disease," he said.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said strict conditions would be in place and the pesticide - a seed treatment called thiamethoxam - could only be used if independent modelling predicted a yellows virus incidence of 63% or above. If that threshold is met and the pesticide used, other conditions will minimise risks to the environment, it said. The overall ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides remains in place.

Farming Minister Mark Spencer said the emergency authorisation was taken after "careful consideration" and as "a necessary measure to protect the industry". The decision was informed by advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the independent UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) and Defra's own Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Gideon Henderson. However, the ECP did not support the authorisation, saying: "In light of the risk assessment conducted, a reduction in survival of honey bees and impacts on homing flight ability (which also influences survival of foragers) could occur." The HSE also said the risks posed to bees foraging on the pollen and nectar from flowering crops planted in fields after treated sugar beet posed "a potential concern."

But Professor Henderson said that could be dealt with by insisting on a 32-month minimum period before a flowering crop could be planted. In his advice, he also said: "There is clear and abundant evidence that these neonicotinoids are harmful to species other than those they are intended to

control, and particularly to pollinators, including bees." In granting authorisation, the Minister conceded that there was still "a degree of uncertainty in relation to the risks to bees."

Sandra Bell, of Friends of the Earth, described the decision as "incredibly brazen", adding: "The government has gone directly against the advice of its own scientific advisors with potentially devastating consequences for bees and other vital pollinators. "The health of us all and the planet depends on their survival. The government must fulfil its duty to protect wildlife and keep pesticides off our crops for good."

The UK's decision comes just days after the Court of Justice of the European Union said that EU member states could no longer offer exemptions to the bloc's ban on crop seeds treated with neo-nicotinoids.

Courtesy of Lune Valley Community Beekeepers

Mikes Bee Supplies

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BOOK NOW!



Friday 21 - Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 April 2023

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts

Bumper Trade Show Saturday 22nd

Speakers and Tutors include: Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St.John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, **and to book** from 30th January see the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

Dates for your diary

**Somerset BKA
Annual Lecture Day
Saturday Feb. 11th
Canalside Conference Centre
Marsh Lane, Bridgwater
TA6 6LQ**

Tickets Available here
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/somerset-bka-lecture-day-2023-tickets-509329898437>

**BBKA Spring Convention
22nd - 23rd April
Harper Adams University
Newport , Shropshire TF10 8NB**

See Spring Convention pages at
www.bbka.org.uk

**Taunton Division
Sunday 2nd April - 2.00pm
Auction of S/H Equipment
Ruishton Village Hall
Cheats Road, Ruishton TA3 5JW**

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