

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Let there be lights

Our chairman Eric McLaughlin deserves a medal for his persistence in getting power to the 'Beespace'. Western Power Distribution have finally managed to get their act together, and we have a live power cable to the building, after only three years of trying. Of course, it isn't that simple as Eric describes in a very controlled manner, on the next page.

Ramblings from the Chair

I had a nasty surprise last week when inspecting my colonies. One was on brood and a half. I removed two reasonably heavy supers and started to look at the half. Three frames in I discovered twisted and deformed larva. Given the prevalence of EFB in Somerset, I feared the worst, closed the hive up and telephoned Megan Seymour our Regional Bee Inspector describing what I had found. She requested photographs. After inspecting them she was unsure but suspected neglected brood. We agreed I would close the entrance to one bee space and carry out a full inspection. This confirmed Megan's tentative diagnosis. A failing colony, not good news but better than EFB.

When I had first contacted Megan I was concerned for neighbouring beekeepers as I knew of at least three apiaries nearby. When she checked on Bee Base they were not registered. She told me that some beekeepers think that because they are members of BBKA they are automatically placed on Bee Base. This is not the case. Individuals must register themselves. If a case of EFB is discovered the bee inspector will contact neighbouring beekeepers to try to control the spread of the disease. They can only do that if they know where they are. It is important that as many beekeepers are registered as possible. If you are not registered please do so.

On a happier note WPD have at last connected the Bee Space to the power grid. A meter should be installed during the next few weeks and then we can switch on the lights (and the kettle).

Some members had requested that the committee consider bulk purchase of frames and foundation to reduce costs of materials and carriage. We contacted a number of suppliers and decided to use David Pearce as he quoted a reasonable price and we know the quality of his produce. We placed an order for 500 DN4 frames, 500SN1 frames and foundation to match. The first 100 of each has been delivered. These can be sold as single frames or groups of 10 or 11.

Prices

DN4 (Hoffman) £1.35 per frame Thorne price £1.78

SN1 £1.00 per frame Thorne price £1.47

Brood foundation £1.30 per sheet

Super foundation £0.80 per sheet

Currently a group are at the apiary Tuesday mornings and members wishing to purchase can turn up between 10am and midday. The committee are considering a Saturday morning should demand be there.

I hope your spring harvest was a good one and that your autumn one will be even better.

Eric McLaughlin
Chair.

Following on from Eric's comments about registering your bees with Beebase, about a year ago it became mandatory to notify the National Bee Unit if you have a colony with varroa mites. I doubt that any of us have a hive that doesn't have varroa. If you register your bees with Beebase you will, as part of the process, be notifying the National Bee Unit that you have varroa, and will therefore have complied with the law. You can sign up to Beebase here <https://nationalbeeunit.com/public/register.cfm>.

In a very subtle way, the Government have managed to make registration of beehives compulsory.

Signing up to BeeBase as a Beekeeper will enable you to take advantage of the free services they offer. No charge is made for an apiary visit by a fully qualified Bee-inspector. The inspector will check for signs of disease or pests, and will provide you with help and advice on good husbandry, and how to tackle any potential problems they may find. All have extensive experience of managing colonies of bees and are keen apiarists themselves. They will always try and keep any disruption during a visit to an absolute minimum and provide you with up to date information and advice. You will also have access to all the latest information regarding disease and pest outbreaks and the results of various research projects and latest advisory information.

Bees are fish

You may have seen a brief report on a California court ruling to protect bees. Here is a fuller version.

If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck. But a new California court ruling means that if it looks like a bee, flies like a bee and buzzes like a bee — it's a fish. California's Third Appellate District Court of Appeal ruled at the end of May that bees could be protected under a state law to protect endangered species because bees meet the state's legal definition of fish. This wacky ruling requires some explaining, and even though it's still a bit weird even with the benefit of the explanation, the ruling is for the best. It provides much-needed protection for important species (bees) that in turn will be helpful to another species (humans).

In 2018, three groups petitioned California to protect four species of bee (the western bumble bee, Franklin's bumble bee, the Crotch bumble bee and the Suckley cuckoo bumble bee) that had seen population declines, a move opposed by agriculture groups due to how this could interfere with crop production.

In making its ruling in May, the court relied on the California Endangered Species Act's language saying that an endangered species can be "a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant." From just this, it seems obvious that certain species would be ineligible to be protected by the law, including bees. All of the categories of animal listed are vertebrates, or animals with backbones. Bees don't have backbones, and as such would not qualify for protection. Imperilled snails, crabs and octopuses would also be out of luck. 202001:54

Section 45 of the California Fish and Game Code defines fish as: "a wild fish, mollusc, crustacean, invertebrate, amphibian, or part, spawn, or ovum of any of those animals." It doesn't take much to

Semantics aside, it's important that bees be protected. Bees are an important provider of ecosystem services, or benefits provided by the environment. Approximately a third of the world's food supply relies on bees for pollination, providing services worth \$15 billion to \$20 billion in just the United States. No bees would mean that we would have to undertake the arduous task of pollinating plants ourselves or else go without apples, chocolate, coffee, strawberries, vanilla and many other foods.



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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 Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

Australian Varroa problem

You may have heard that varroa destructor mites have been found in sentinel hives in the port of Newcastle, New South Wales. Here's how the Australians intend to deal with it. I'll let you form your own opinions.

The movement of bees within New South Wales has been halted following the discovery last week of a deadly parasite at the Port of Newcastle. The state-wide emergency order, which took effect at 6pm on Sunday, aims to prevent the spread of *Varroa destructor*, commonly called varroa mite, and described as the number one threat for Australia's bee industry.

Police, along with biosecurity officers from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services, have been tasked with overseeing compliance. It means that all hives or bee products are in a state of lockdown. Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW Dugald Saunders said they weren't sure how and when the parasite got into the country but investigations were ongoing.

He also said the government was not taking any risks. "The lockdown is a fairly strict one and it's a message to all beekeepers both hobby and professionally that we need them to be helping monitor the situation and making sure that we don't see varroa mite spread across the state," he said.

An industry worth more than \$70 million annually is at stake if the mite were to take hold. "We know that people value the ability from an Australian beekeeper point of view and from a New South Wales point of view to say we are varroa mite-free," Mr Saunders said. "It means no reliance on chemicals to keep them at bay and it means we are the cleanest and greenest producers of honey around the world."

The mite was first detected last Wednesday in two of the six hives used to monitor bio-security at the port following a routine inspection. It was also discovered in the hives of a nearby commercial beekeeper. A fourth site in the vicinity has since emerged with hives across all the affected areas now destroyed. An emergency 10-kilometre zone set up on Friday will remain in place where "eradication plans will be enacted". Monitoring will also occur within a 25km surveillance zone around the Port of Newcastle.

"There is compensation available for beekeepers who have hives destroyed in the emergency zones, so it will be devastating for them just from losing those hives, but also an emotional impact, so the industry will be rallying behind

everyone involved in this emergency." Government contact tracers found a commercial beekeeper near the port had recently sent some of his hives to Trangie, 450 kilometres away.

While that batch did not contain the parasite they will be destroyed as a precaution.

Mr Le Feuvre said these measures gave the industry some hope the outbreak could be contained. "We've had incursions in the past ... and we're really confident that we've still got this contained, we haven't got any new detections outside the Port of Newcastle"

"However, should it get out of the zone, beekeepers will be impacted, and it will impact pollination services and honey production across the state.

"We're still very hopeful we can eradicate it. It's very early days so there's no way to know how long this crisis might take."

A slight over-reaction perhaps???



Last month's poser



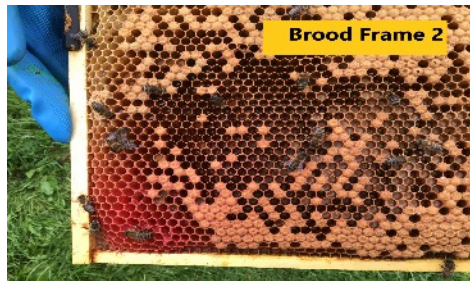
The most likely cause of wax removal in the regions of the wire was in my view a lack of nectar being foraged by the bees coupled with an overwhelming requirement for wax. It is not uncommon for wax to be taken from the edges of combs. The foundation photo is simply an extreme example. Without “income” from nectar taken from plants, or sugar syrup supplied by the beekeeper, or honey robbed from an unguarded source, the bees simply cannot make wax.

I was taught when I started beekeeping that wax debris accumulated during inspections should be collected and stored for subsequent melting down. Under no circumstances should wax be left exposed in the apiary because it would be a vector for disease.

Over the years there have been times when collecting scraps of wax was inconvenient, maybe my tin was full, or I forgot to put it in my bee box. Whatever the reason I acquired the habit of tossing wax back into the hive that it was taken from. It slowly dawned on me that I never saw wax ejected from the hive, nor was the wax left in the hive untouched. I drew the conclusion that the wax was being used by the bees, maybe to repair the damage that I had caused during inspection. So, I modified my management. There would have to be a very good reason not to put wax back into the hive and indeed I now disturb the frames and the wax attached to them as little as possible. The bees draw comb for very good reasons so destroying their work will simply require them to re-do it.

Whilst there are times when the beekeeper might well choose to give the bees lots to do, for example when spreading the brood, or trying to deter (or defer) swarming, or, later in the season making splits, I strongly believe that in general there should be as little disturbance of the hive comb structures as possible.

We have established that the nibbled foundation may have been caused by bees needing wax when there was insufficient income to make it. What about the frame with a red patch in the corner?



I had been wanting to prove that my bees were using wax that I returned to them but couldn't think of how to do it, until one day last summer I thought of tossing some coloured wax into the hive and seeing what happened. My good beekeeper friend Catherine Frazer kindly provided me with some red foundation and I duly put some scraps into a colony. This coincided with a visit by our (then) Regional Bee Inspector Simon Jones and, working the hive in question came across the frame with the red corner! I had not inspected the hive since putting in the red wax and so I was as flabbergasted as Simon by what the bees had done. If Simon had not been there, I might have overlooked the evidence as I am "red/green" colour blind.

I have noticed that Simon disturbs the structure of the combs as little as possible during inspections and I strongly recommend that we all follow his lead. Tidying up a hive according to our ideas will cause more work for the bees, greater colony stress and the greater likelihood of lowering resistance to disease. And ultimately less honey if that is what interests you.

Roy White

Our second garden apiary visit of the season

After our first post covid restrictions Garden Apiary Visit at Hambridge in May, we were delighted to join Jeffrey and Pauline Wilson at their home at Silent Elms, Wearne for the second on Sunday June 12th.

Jeffrey had a number of hives available for us to inspect, all of them interesting across a wide range of issues from small nuclei, no longer so small, that were ready to move on to their final hive to mature colonies experiencing the challenges of the “June Gap”.

We all enjoyed a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon with something for new beekeepers, seeing queen marking practice on drones, to experienced beekeepers themselves grappling with the seasonal challenges that we face every year.

We ended the afternoon sitting on the patio in the sunshine enjoying each other’s company with a splendid tea provided by Jeffrey and Pauline. A huge thank you to Pauline and Jeffrey who, as always, were very generous hosts.

This coming month we have been invited by Catherine Fraser to visit her apiary at Montacute House on Saturday July 16th. Final details will come out shortly in an email to all members.

We look forward to seeing you there .

Joe King

01749 890357

Somerton & District Honey Show

Saturday 17th September 2022

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall



Just to remind you, in case you have forgotten, our annual Honey Show date is getting nearer and nearer.

The committee hope you are busy planning your entries. Entry forms and show schedules will be available in the very near future. For those who want to get cracking on their entries there is little change to last year's schedule.

The photographic section last year was, according to the judge, of a very good standard. With that in mind we have been reminded by a very experienced and capable photographer that now is the time to take flower shots as there will not be such an abundance nearer the Honey Show date.

Our request for volunteers in last month's newsletter has not met with much success. So we can only imagine you have forgotten to submit your names. Please let the committee know if you are willing to help as lots of hands make light work and our show "the best in the west".

David Rose

Alison Dykes

Fred Clarke (pauline.fred@outlook.com)

Dates for your diary

Beginners Practical Sessions

At our apiary

Fifth session

Taking the honey

Saturday August 6th

10.00am

Visit to Catherine Fraser's

Montacute Apiary

Sunday July 16th at 2.00pm

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 17th

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

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