



# Quantock Quest

The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers Association (QBKA)

Issue 22

March 2020

## 2020: The challenge facing us all!

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### Have you got yours?

- \* QBKA have been fortunate enough to acquire some Asian Hornet traps and attractant. These traps are FREE, and there is one for every member!
- \* Please ask a Committee member to provide one, if you have not already done so.
- \* Monitoring for this threat is vitally important. So make sure that you have your trap and that you know exactly what to do in the event of actually trapping one!



## STOP PRESS

As the Coronavirus spreads and the Country enters a period of uncertainty and worry the QBKA Committee have taken the not unexpected step of following Government guidelines and will be cancelling its meetings. More importantly, they have also taken the decision to suspend the regular Drop In sessions and the "Rent a Hive" programme. Essentially, all [group activity at the Barn will now cease.](#)



Coronavirus. How will it affect QBKA?

In order for the Apiary to be maintained and managed some Committee members will work, according to Government guidelines on contact and personal separation, on ensuring that Queen raising and Nucleus founding carry on to ensure that "Rent a Hivers" will have colonies this year, and that the existing colony welfare is maintained. The Committee have also agreed that any beekeeper who needs assistance or advice can receive this from mentors via telephone. But remember, our Bees need us, especially at the moment. Although we cannot fulfil our social gatherings and personal mentoring we can still ensure that our colonies have a good start to the year. Watch out for a further bulletin on these measures and don't forget to check on the Web Site for the latest information. The full text of Barry's email is as follows:

*As you may have predicted we have been obliged to cancel forthcoming meetings at the apiary. This will include this Saturday's beginners' meeting (Sue Anderson has contacted new members with an alternative suggestion). We will continue to work on apiary maintenance and making increase, with members of the committee working in isolation as far as possible. This will ensure, we hope, that Rent a hive members will still get their bees this year.*

*If anyone has any problems or questions concerning their bees or access to the apiary, please contact me or other members of the committee. Please also continue to be vigilant about the Asian Hornets - another alien threat - whose queens, if present, will be emerging now.*

*I am very sorry to have to make this decision, but you will be aware of the national situation and the fact that for different reasons some of our members would be considered 'at risk' if we continued to meet as a group.*

*All best wishes and hopes for a return to normality.*

*Barry Hulatt—QBKA Chairman*

# The Chairman's New Year Musings!

## New Year, New Resolutions?

Yes, we will all be better beekeepers this year! Maybe we will measure this in terms of the amount of honey we aim for, improved hygiene and health, the upkeep of our hives and equipment, or the gentler disposition of the bees we raise. Each of us will no doubt have different priorities as the seasons progress, but first we must get our bees through to the spring.

Last year I had several relatively new beekeepers tell me that in the late winter they had lost their bees due to the cold. This was disheartening for them. However, on further investigation it emerged, as is often the case, that it was not the cold which had killed the bees but starvation. When the hives were hefted they were very light and dead bees were found with their heads buried in the cells. In one case there were actually some stores but the cluster had become separated from it. The moral of this, of course, is to ensure that we leave sufficient stores and / or give a good autumn feed. If we are at all unsure (after hefting the hives) the old insurance policy of a cake of candy over the feedhole should be employed. Generally speaking it is not midwinter but late winter / early spring when colonies die. Once things warm up (early March?) a dilute syrup can be given in a contact feeder, especially if we are trying to build up for making an increase or need a strong colony ready for pollination or oilseed rape.

A few of us recently attended a meeting run by the South West Beekeepers on methods proposed to combat the Asian Hornet, if (and probably when) it arrives here. The experience of Jersey beekeepers, where the hornet is now pretty well established, was very useful and the main advice was to kill as many of the overwintered queens as possible. However, the current view was that we should not employ killing traps as these caused the deaths of a range of 'bycatch' insects such as wasps, hoverflies and native hornets. Rather, it was suggested, attractants should be placed in open saucers etc with stones or tissue to stop drowning. The hornets can then be caught in a jar, net, or with a plunger style queen catcher. Away from their nests the hornets are not aggressive. By the way, monitoring

stations do not need to be near your bees and would be easier to observe outside the kitchen window etc. We have a stock of attractant at the apiary. Any suspected Asian / Yellow-legged hornet should be put in the freezer, photographed and reported to the Non-native Species Secretariat. This can be done via the free Asian Hornet Watch app. Or by email to [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

All best wishes for the coming year. I hope to see you at some time during the forthcoming Beekeeping season.

### **Editors footnote:**

Barry had included a paragraph reminding you all to check the programme of events on the website and also available in a previous newsletter. He added that the programme may be subject to change due to the weather, ***OR OTHER UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES!*** *Maybe our Chairman has just discovered a future in the Clairvoyance! business!*



# Disease Focus - Nosema

There are two species of Nosema that have been identified in the UK, *Nosema Apis* and *Nosema Ceranae*. These are both fungal pathogens which invade digestive cells lining the mid-gut of the bee.

## Causes

*Nosema* occurs when fungal spores are ingested by adult honey bees. Symptoms are more apparent when nutrition is poor, weather conditions are cold and wet and during long periods of confinement, typically spring in the UK.

## Symptoms

*Nosema* may be hard to diagnose as there are no real symptoms of the disease. Dysentery is often associated with *Nosema Apis* infection and can be characterized by brown spotting across the hive. It is not caused by the pathogen but as a result of infection. During long periods of confinement, some will defecate in the hive, leading to further infection. Infection by *Nosema Apis* is also associated with bees crawling around the hive entrance, sometimes with wings held at odd angles. Some bees will have swollen and greasy abdomens and in severe cases may appear to be trembling. With *Nosema Ceranae*, it has been reported that infections are characterised by a reduced number of bees in the colony, increased likelihood of disease and eventual collapse.

## Spread

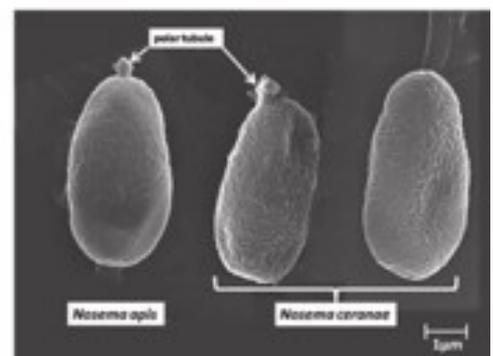
Beekeepers can spread *Nosema* by transferring contaminated combs between colonies. The spores can remain viable for up to a year. Bees can also spread the disease by feeding on contaminated food and water, cleaning contaminated combs, robbing contaminated hives or drifting to new hives.

## Diagnosis

The simplest method to diagnose a *Nosema* infection is by microscopic examination. Both species are virtually identical when viewed using conventional microscopy, but can be distinguished by an expert eye.

## Treatment

Beekeepers can no longer use Fumidil B to treat for *Nosema* (authorisation expired on the 31st December 2011). The best way to deal with *Nosema* is with preventative measures i.e. maintaining strong, well fed colonies headed by young queens which are more able to withstand infections. It may help to requeen susceptible colonies with a queen from more tolerant stocks better able to cope with a *Nosema* infection.



## The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers

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President : Mr G Fraser

Chairman : Mr Barry Hulatt

Secretary : Mr Ken Edwards

Treasurer / Membership: Mrs Alison Monteith



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# An Inspector Calls

## Who and what are Bee Inspectors?

Bee Inspectors! They sound scary, don't they? In reality, bee inspectors are avid beekeepers who care about our bees. They work for the National Bee Unit under the Animal and Plant Health Agency and essentially inspect colonies for notifiable diseases. The two diseases they look for in particular are American Foulbrood and European Foulbrood and they work to control outbreaks to stop it spreading to other apiaries. They base their inspections on a traffic light system where colonies within a certain distance of a diseased apiary will be top priority.

Inspectors also take part in the Bee Health Days which are well worth booking on to. There are usually only one of these per region per year so make sure to find out when yours is on. These days are made up of workshops which deal with a variety of beekeeping issues such as pests, diseases, apiary hygiene and also include an apiary session. It is a great opportunity to learn about bee health, meet up with your beekeeping friends and to familiarise yourself with your local and regional bee inspectors.

Inspectors will provide you with help and advice on good husbandry, and how to tackle any potential problems they may find. 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.

If you do get a call from an inspector, do not panic. They are not trying to catch you out! There is probably disease nearby and they are making sure your bees are not infected so they can rule you out from their rounds. It is always best to know for certain that your bees are healthy, even if you think they are fine. Inspectors can give you invaluable advice on all aspects of beekeeping if you are fortunate enough to get a call. If you are worried your bees may have a disease, you can ring your local inspector and they will be able to help you. And best of all, there is no charge for their services!

Make sure you are registered on Beebase as this is the database the NBU work from. It is easy to sign up, either online or over the telephone. Without this database, inspectors will not know about you and your bees may be at risk of catching disease. Beebase can be found by visiting the NBU website at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm>? It is free to sign up.

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## And Finally!

Thank you to all of those who have contributed copy for this newsletter. In order for it to be both informative and relevant I need regular member articles and information. Please send anything that you would like to see included, along with suggestions and feedback to the newsletter editor via e-mail to [billmonteith@talktalk.net](mailto:billmonteith@talktalk.net)

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