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The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers Association (QBKA)

Issue 24

August 2020

2020. A Challenging year so far! QBKA Apiary is now in Lockdown.

Just as the Country (and Beekeepers in general) started to emerge from Lockdown the fates dealt us another blow with an outbreak of European Foul Brood (EFB) in our area. You should have all received the notice sent to all members, and posted on the Website about this outbreak, and the symptoms and recognition signs. The outbreak was confirmed, and as a result our divisional apiary was also inspected for the disease. Unfortunately one of our nucleus hives was found to be positive for EFB and so I must notify you that a 'standstill order' now applies to the apiary – **with no colonies entering or leaving the premises, and anyone visiting to observe strict hygiene regulations.**



Ken Edwards giving a demonstration

If you have bees in the North Petherton, Goathurst or Spaxton area (within the quarantine zone) you should receive notification from the inspectorate. In the meantime all members should carry out your own careful inspections of the brood chambers of your hives, paying particular attention to unsealed brood. (EFB is a disease of unsealed larvae. What to look out for is made clear online and in the DEFRA publications which have been made available at the apiary and via the beginners' courses). Any suspicions should be reported as this is a notifiable disease. If you are aware of any 'unregistered' beekeepers near you, who are not members of the division or not on BeeBase, please inform them of the situation and ask them to contact the Inspectorate giving the location of their hives. As you might expect, wild colonies and unmanaged hives can be sources of infection. Even if you are not in the standstill area we would still urge caution about moving to the heather or acquiring new bees as there appears to be an upsurge in EFB throughout the county.



Eleanor conducts the sad, but necessary actions with the hive parts

As a result of the finding at our divisional apiary we had a very interesting and vital demonstration by Eleanor, our seasonal bee inspector, at the recent drop-in meeting. The decision was to destroy rather than 'shook swarm' the colony, so the bees, having previously been shut in and humanely killed by petrol fumigation, were burnt on their combs in a prepared pit. (See photograph). After ensuring that the frames, wax and honey had all been completely burnt the pit was filled in and the ashes buried. The nucleus box was thoroughly scorched with a blowlamp to kill any remaining spores. This, by the way, is a good precaution to use on any empty boxes even if foulbrood is not suspected as it kills other pathogens and waxmoth.

Please note that, in the event of your own equipment being destroyed because of foulbrood, compensation is payable to members via BDI (Bee Diseases Insurance), which we pay as part of our subscription. There is no blame attached to finding EFB in our bees, rather it is a sign of socially responsible vigilance if we report it. If disease is ignored or not spotted it will spread to our other colonies.

For the attention of the Committee

I think we should hold a socially distanced committee meeting before the summer is over. Please let me know whether you would feel safe to attend, and send me any items for the agenda.

Barry Hulatt (Chairman QBKA) hulatt.b@btinternet.com

'A swarm in July isn't worth a fly'?

Following on from the Editor's cautionary tale in the last issue, **Barry Hulatt** writes:

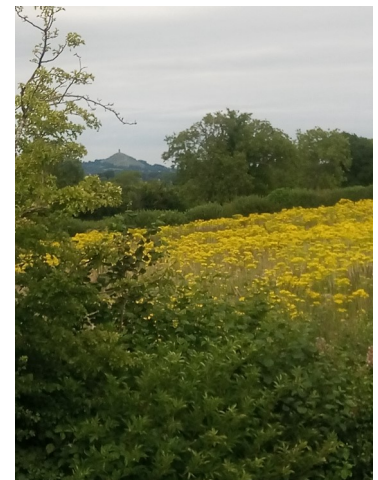
So, you think it's all over? Well I did – the swarming season, that was. My own bees were all pretty settled and working hard on the flow. There were no signs of queen cells and it looked like new supers were needed. I was sorting out my stack of supers when I noticed a lot of busy interest in them – robbers or scouts? Suddenly, out of the north, came a loud hum and a swirling, dancing cloud of bees descended around me and my supers. They moved into the stack and hived themselves.



If only it was always so easy! Having chosen my apiary for themselves they wanted to stay, and they were given a good home. They won't make a surplus for me this year but, as is the way with swarms, they are drawing out new comb very effectively. Whose bees these were I have no idea – they may have been a wild / feral swarm or absconders from a neighbour's overcrowded hive. Anyway, for me it was 'bees for free'..... And then it happened again this week! I wasn't there this time, but the swarm was even larger and needed a full brood chamber and a super. It seems that bees attract

bees. When you haven't got them they're hard to come by; when you have got them they come as volunteers.

Looking out of my window I see a field of yellow. It could be oilseed rape, but it isn't, it's ragwort, ten acres of it. The literature suggests that bees like it and that it produces an unpleasant tasting honey. I have no experience of this and would like to hear from anyone who has. The national policy of controlling this poisonous weed seems to have been abandoned. A couple of years ago one of our members brought in a sample of unpalatable honey and we wondered at the time if it was from ragwort or possibly from privet (which has a similar reputation). The other problematic plant for those of us who actually live in the Quantocks could be rhododendron. In its native Turkish and Himalayan mountains it is reputed to produce 'mad honey', supposedly medicinal but also intoxicating, and consumers become very ill. Perhaps we can't get as high in the Quantocks as we can in Nepal? Does anyone in the division notice their bees working the rhododendrons?



Keep safe and enjoy your beekeeping. I hope you have a successful honey harvest and your bees are fit for the autumn / winter. Remember, if you are treating for varroa, a good time is after removing the supers. This should be followed up by the oxalic acid treatment in midwinter when there is a broodless period. A recent article in the BBKA News describes a Darwinian approach to varroa, by which bees are not treated and only the fittest (most resistant bees showing 'hygienic' behaviour) are able to survive. If you are tempted by this approach I suggest you read the article and related research carefully, and proceed with extreme caution!

Editors Note:- Thanks to Barry there is always an interesting article for this Newsletter. However, copy and pictures from other members are welcomed. It's your Newsletter. Please send articles / copy to the Editor via email, and share your experiences with the group.

The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers

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President : Mr G Fraser
Chairman : Mr Barry Hulatt
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Rent-a-Hive Update

It was disappointing that the Rentahive scheme could not proceed as originally planned, due to the lockdown and the potential vulnerability of some of our members. However, we are now pleased to report that the sessions have been reinstated, thanks to Sue Anderson's organisation and the several volunteers who have been helping out, whilst making sure that social distancing is maintained at the apiary. The nucleus hives were prepared by Bob Muckett and Ken Edwards, with Mike Sealey providing queens raised in the Apidea mating hives. Further bees were provided by generous donations from members.

The bees in the nucleus hives were transferred into the Rentahive members' own equipment in the first couple of sessions, and many of them looked strong and in need of the extra room. Where the original nukes were made up partly from half-brood frames these are being replaced by deep national frames. (As you have probably noticed, when shallow frames are drawn down to full depth brood frame size by the bees they often do this with drone cells, and removing these with the brood can be used to help in varroa control).

As mentioned earlier in this Newsletter, EFB has been discovered at the apiary. This means that the rent a hivers are unable to take their bees home for the next six weeks or until we have been found to be clear of it. In order to compensate for this Sue Anderson has been able to fit in another two Saturday sessions so they can come and continue to care for their bees. These sessions will be on **15th and 29th of August between 1pm and 4pm**. Please be aware that rent a hivers are given timed appointments in order that we can keep well distanced and safe. If you think you could help at one or both of these sessions, please can you let Sue Anderson know to help with organisation. Many thanks,

A Message from BeeBase

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) have issued the following with regard to the use of Veterinary Medicines. A veterinary medicine must be administered in accordance with its marketing authorisation, which in practice means you must follow the instructions in the package leaflet unless directed otherwise by your vet.

Amitraz-based products: We have received a number of specific enquiries about the use of amitraz-based products for the treatment of varroosis in the UK. There are 2 authorised amitraz-based products in the UK - Apitraz and Apivar. **Neither of these should be used during a honey flow or when honey supers are on the hive.**

Use authorised medicines:- You should only use UK-authorised veterinary medicinal products to treat varroosis in honey bees, unless an appropriate authorised medicine is not available and a veterinary surgeon has prescribed a different product under the prescribing cascade.

You must follow the instructions in the product information unless otherwise advised by the vet who has clinical responsibility for your bees. Misuse of veterinary medicines can harm bees, make varroa mites resistant to the medicine, contaminate the environment and harm public health.

Keep records of when you have administered medicines:- You must keep a record of any medicines that have been administered to your bees for a minimum period of 5 years to comply with the legal requirements for food-producing animals.

Dispose of medicines correctly :- You must dispose of medicines and any associated waste such as packaging or unused product in the correct way. Always follow the instructions in the product information about disposal. If in doubt, contact your Regional Bee Inspector.