



Quantock Quest

The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers Association (QBKA)

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Seasonal Greetings From The Chairman



We are often asked when the beginning of the beekeeping year is, and the answer, quite rightly, could be 'now'! Even now, when we are coming to the time when the bees become less and less active and retreat into their torpor, this could be seen as a good time to prepare ourselves for the year to come. There is always a lot of tidying up and repairs to carry out and, of course, mouse guards should be on. I have recently heard of hive roofs being blown off, so bricks and ropes will be also be in order.

The year has been difficult for the division. First, we had to deal with the covid epidemic and the restrictions this has placed on our meetings. The beginners' course was curtailed due to this, as were our regular Wednesday and Saturday sessions. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the discovery of European Foulbrood in the area adjacent to the Divisional Apiary and subsequently in the Apiary itself. Fortunately we have now been given the all clear and activities at the Apiary resumed towards the end of the summer.

This brings me to thank all those who have been involved in our year's program. Sue Anderson kept on top of the beginners and Rentahive sessions once these became possible again, and those new members who had had their hives isolated at Spaxton Road were able to take them home.

Don Macbeth has continued his sterling work in the capacity of groundsman and overall garden maintenance man. The Apiary is looking very impressive and is gaining an air of real maturity when you look back on some of the old photos. Our apiary management team, consisting of Mick Stenhouse, Bob Muckett and Ken Edwards have been impressive in maintaining and renovating our equipment, as well as in building up a healthy stock of bees for demonstration purposes. Thanks also to those of you who turned up to help them in their stocktaking and maintenance session in the autumn. Bill Monteith has made a very good job of the newsletter, though he asks me yet again for more articles and photos so as to keep it going.

Congratulations to Grahame Gould who gained a distinction in the BBKA modular exam in Bee Diseases. He will be running sessions on pests and diseases and anatomy for the current beginners' course. He will also co-ordinate the program for others who may wish to take any of the BBKA exams, and anyone who has kept bees for a couple of years is encouraged to enter the Beginners Exam.

Thanks are also due to the rest of our committee, most of whom have stated that they are happy to continue in post. I would particularly like to mention Alison Monteith who, despite not being a beekeeper herself, has been diligent in keeping our finances in order.

Gordon Frazer, our previous President, resigned through ill health at the last AGM and we had not filled that post. Ken Edwards has now been elected as our new President and we know that for Ken this will remain an active rather than an honorary role. (By the way, Ken has also been proposed to become a Life Member of Somerset Beekeepers for his long service in the County). I would also like to welcome Alvar Excell and Ian Pickering as new members of the Committee and to thank those who have recently resigned.

I wish you all well in preparing for the coming season and hope you manage to get your bees through to the spring in good order. A Merry Xmas and a happy New Year to you all.

Honey Production—The Rules!

*Lets be under no illusions. Although there are therapeutic benefits of keeping Bees the main reasons that we keep them are for that delicious, health giving and wonderful substance that they kindly create for us. **HONEY!** But in order to enjoy it (and its by-products) safely and legally there are a few basic rules that we must follow. Here, our Chairman, Barry Hulatt explains the basics:-*

I would like to remind members that we (or rather our bees) are food producers, and as such we are subject to the rules of the Food Standards Agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Of course, there is the need to observe stringent hygiene routines and to maintain cleanliness. This means having facilities for hand and equipment washing. Extractors, honey tanks and bulk containers are to be of stainless steel or food grade plastic, and, where honey is to be sold, all surfaces must be capable of being wiped clean. On a small scale, production



in a domestic kitchen is permissible, providing precautions are taken to exclude pests, pets etc. (Cat and dog hairs are no more an essential ingredient than are mouse excreta). On a larger scale a dedicated honey room or shed would be in order, with tiled or otherwise washable surfaces and bee tight windows and doors. Personal protective equipment could include rubber gloves, a hairnet, an apron and / or a CSI or decorator's disposable white suit. Footwear needs thinking about.

Probably not compliant!

We are required to maintain a record of all medicines administered. This should show the manufacturer, the product name and batch number, as well as the date of administration and any withdrawal period. (Withdrawal period is the time between administration of the product and when it can be safely consumed by humans. Some varroa treatments have such withdrawal periods and, in any case, should not be administered when supers for honey production are in place.) Sample medicine records can be downloaded.



Probably Compliant!

To comply, it will normally be straightforward to copy the product information from the manufacturer's packaging. In the event of any issues of honey contamination it will then be possible to prove the source and date of such products. This brings me to a serious point which I want you all to consider. Many beekeepers, including ourselves, have formulated



Will do!

our own varroa treatments, using formic or oxalic acids. These are much cheaper than those produced commercially. However, whereas these may appear to be identical in composition to the commercial products, they have not been given the approval of the VMA and beekeepers may be open to prosecution for using them. It would not be possible to accurately complete the medicines record where these so-called 'generic' medicines are used, and remember, that the inspectorate has the right to take samples of honey as well as examining hives for disease. For these reasons I have asked the new committee to consider our policy on

administering and distributing varroa treatments in the division. If you have any thoughts on this, please contact myself or Ruth Walker before the committee meets in January.

Fondant Feeding

Winter is a critical time for our Bees. Winter feeds are vitally important and we all have different methods of ensuring that it is carried out. Here, due to the usual dearth of other contributors, is our intrepid (and very successful) contributor Nic Wills giving a useful insight into how its done. (Well, at least in HIS apiary, anyway!)

On the subject of fondant feeding one little thing that I do is break down a 12.5kg of white fondant into some used margarine tubs as these help keep it clean and fresh when taking to the bees and the sealed lids stop any enquiries from other bees when in the apiary. As these are my early start bees I leave the Miller feeders on overwinter ready for early liquid feed mid March. That way, I have full hives of bees for end of April ready to go out on the oil seed rape. I put the marg tubs of fondant up side down over crown board holes then I invert the feeder and this then acts as an eke



The Fondant in bulk.



Into the Tubs.



On to the Crown Board

Feeder doubling as an Eke!

The Miller Feeder



Santa, filling in some white space!



Frame Boiling For Beginners!

Nic Wills writes:

At the end of the season, when I turn my attention to apiary maintenance and upkeep I have lots of old frames that need my attention. Comb changes are a must for good Bee husbandry. Old brood comb yields little in the way of useable wax and is difficult to extract in an extractor. I need to end up with useful and clean frames for next season. Below, I will walk you through my solution to this problem



I use part of an old oil drum placed on thermal bricks with a burner underneath. It is filled with water and soda crystals, and then brought to the boil.



The first thing I do is cut any old brood frame comb out with a serrated bread knife as this will cut through the stainless foundation support wires top and bottom. Drop the comb into a bucket for disposal or burning as not much wax can be recovered in a wax extractor.



Put your Super frames in first as these only have a little comb left around the edges from being cut out, Hold them under water for a few minutes with bricks.



Scoop off the wax scum so frames can come back up through a cleaner area. Repeat with the brood frames as these will have more propolis and produce more scum,



After the frames are cleaned I then sterilize my Queen Excluders.



Finally, store all of your newly cleaned and sterilized frames in a safe place ready for next season.

BeeBase Update required

Please don't forget this year's Hive Count!

To update your BeeBase record, click on the link <https://nationalbeeunit.com/secure/beekeeper/hiveCensus.cfm> and submit your response by 31st December 2021. It is important that you update your record, even if this is to confirm that you currently have no colonies.

If you have any further questions, please visit the Hive Count page on BeeBase or contact the national Bee Unit at Hive.count@apha.gov.uk

5 reasons why you don't feed bees syrup during the winter

The change in temperatures between night and day can cause syrup containers to drip cold syrup onto the bees.

Syrup has more water in it than honey and bees will burn excess energy trying to remove the additional water.

Why Fondant and not Syrup?

Here are 5 reasons why you don't feed bees syrup during the winter

- The change in temperatures between night and day can cause syrup containers to drip cold syrup onto the bees.
- Syrup has more water in it than honey and bees will burn excess energy trying to remove the additional water.
- Sugar syrup will be very cold during the winter, and if the syrup is too cold, the bees will be unable to drink it.
- Syrup can mould easily if the bees do not consume it quickly, rendering the syrup undrinkable for the bees.
- Cold weather may keep the bees from getting to the syrup, leaving an open window for other insects to eat the syrup.

2022 Membership Renewal

Members are reminded that their Membership is now due. Your membership covers BBKA, SBKA and QBKA components and also includes your Beekeeping Insurance. Membership falls due in January of each month. If it is not renewed your Insurance will lapse and your colonies and equipment will be uncovered in the event of loss.

Existing members will have already received an e-mail from the Treasurer / Membership Secretary to remind them. If you have not renewed by Mid January you will be sent a final reminder e-mail, however it would be much appreciated if you could follow the link on the email and complete your renewal.

A hard copy membership renewal form has been uploaded to the QBKA website and can be downloaded from there if required.



2022 Programme of Events

The provisional programme of events for next year are as follows:

January

Tuesdays 11th, 18th & 25th. 7.30pm– Beginners 6, 7 & 8 at Brymore School

February

Tuesdays 1st & 8th. 7.30pm- Beginners 9 & 10 at Brymore School

Saturday 12th Time TBC– SBKA Lecture Day, The Canalside Centre, Bridgwater

Saturday 26th 2pm– Mead making, judging and tasting- Apiary

March

Wednesday 9th 7pm- Drop In- Apiary

Saturday 19th 2pm- Hive building – Rent-A-Hive 1- Apiary

April

Saturday 2nd 2pm- Frames and preparing Nucs- Rent-A-Hive 2- Apiary

Saturday 9th 2pm- Swarm Prevention and Collection- Apiary

Wednesday 13th 7pm- Drop In- Apiary

Saturday 23rd 2pm- Queen rearing- Apiary

Saturday 30th 2pm – Comb Changing- Rent-A-Hive 3- Apiary

May

Saturday 7th 2pm- Queen rearing 2/Setting up the observation hive- Apiary

Wednesday 11th 7pm – Drop In- Apiary

Saturday 14th 2pm- Making Increase- Rent-A-Hive 4- Apiary

Saturday 28th 2pm- Rent-A-Hive 5

June

Wednesday 8th 7pm- Drop In- plan for Brymore Open day- Apiary

Saturday 11th 2pm- Using Apideas- Rent-A-Hive 6- Apiary

Saturday 18th 2pm- Feeding a Nucleus- Rent-A-Hive 7- Apiary

Saturday 25th – Brymore Open day (All help welcome please)

July

Saturday 2nd 2pm- Building Up- Rent-A-Hive 8- Apiary

Wednesday 13th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary

Saturday 16th 2pm- Reading the Comb- Rent-A-Hive 9- Apiary

August

Saturday 6th 2pm- Pests and Diseases/Moving Bees- Rent-A-Hive 10/11 Apiary

Wednesday 10th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary

Saturday 20th 2pm- Removing honey and varroa

September

Wednesday 14th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary

Saturday 17th 2pm- Preparing for winter/uniting/feeding- Apiary

October

Wednesday 12th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary

Saturday 22nd 2pm- Maintenance and Stocktaking- Apiary

November

Tuesday TBC 7.30pm- Beginner's course starts – Brymore School

Friday 18th 7.30pm- QBKA AGM- Spaxton Village Hall

December

Saturday 10th 2pm- Oxalic Acid Treatment- Apiary

