

Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

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FORAGINGS

Jan 2007

Dates for your Diary –

Date & time	Venue	Topic/details	Speaker/Apiary Manager
Sat 17 Feb – 14.00	Waterloo Arms	“Queen Rearing”	Norman Hughes
Sat 17 Mar – 14.00	Waterloo Arms	”Beekeeping & the Future”	Alan Johnson
Sun 25 Mar – 14.00	Chilworth Out Apiary	“Spring Inspection”	Richard Kimish
Sat 31 Mar– 10.30	Sir Harold Hillier’s	Expedition, lunch & afternoon tea.	Andy Willis
Sun 01 Apr – 14.00	Broadlands Out Apiary	“Spring Inspection”	Andy Willis

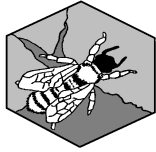
As everything is running early this year & if you attended Andy’s talk on “Bees Eye-view of Beekeeping” which was very informative, one of the topics mentioned was be aware of the possibility of early swarming. With this in mind here is some sound advice!

• **SWARM CONTROL – by Andy Willis**

Swarming is the natural process by which bees increase their number of colonies. It is also the process by which the majority of beekeepers loose out in both honey yields & management time. All colonies that are strong will try to swarm – it’s what they are naturally programmed to do. To try & prevent swarming completely is difficult & tends to frustrate both bees & beekeeper, resulting in lower honey yields together with lost swarms to annoy neighbours. The method I use is **artificial swarming** & to work with the bee’s natural cycle resulting in increased productivity of the bees, increased number of hives, (from which I select the best & cull the worst queens, re-uniting on the heather) & reduced loss of swarms together with happy neighbours. It does however require some planning & extra spare hives, with increased initial cost. The increase in honey, wax & being able to select the best bees each year brings it’s own rewards.

Artificial swarming/raising a new queen

1. You require a clean, empty spare hive, (No 2), fitted with new frames of foundation & a strong healthy colony, (No 1), making queen cells – these must not be sealed.
2. Move hive, no 1 to one side, more than 3 feet, (1m), away & put the empty hive, no 2 on the original site of hive no 1, ensuring that the entrance is aligned with hive no 1’s original position.
3. Go through hive no 1 & find the queen, (hopefully she is marked) this is the most difficult bit.
4. Carefully place the queen in to hive no 2, (I like to trap her in the brood box between a queen excluder on the floor & one in the usual position – that way the artificial swarm can’t abscond which I have found to happen occasionally, as I don’t clip the queens wings). One drawn frame is helpful but not essential in the new box.
5. Next put all the supers on top of hive no 2 & close up – the flying bees return to the new hive, no 2 finding the queen with no brood thus thinking they have swarmed & set too drawing foundation & make honey as they have no baby mouths to feed.
6. Go through the old brood box of hive no 1 & look for the best queen cell, ie: large plump grub on a thick bed of royal jelly – this cell ideally is not on a bottom bar where it’s easily knocked or damaged. Mark the frame with a drawing pin or an X with Queen marking paint of that year & remove all other cells & cups with eggs. (This concentrates the whole hives energies into this one chosen queen cell resulting in a bigger, better queen. Re-assemble the hive & if stores are low in the old brood box feed with some dilute syrup.



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7. One week later go through the old brood box again & check the chosen queen cell is still the only one in the hive – the bees will quite often – but not always draw more queen cells from eggs or young larvae. These should be removed unless disaster has befallen the chosen one. If you leave more than one queen cell in the hive, caste swarms are quite likely to happen. A further check, often a few days later ensures no grub queens are produced. This must be done before the chosen one hatches.
8. Check the queen in hive no 2 has started to lay again & the foundation is being drawn. If the old queen was trapped in the brood box by an extra queen excluder, remove it. Add more supers as needed. After about three weeks some colonies that are very strong try for a second round of swarming, if so repeat the process as before or cull the queen & re-queen/amalgamate with new queens colony once she is laying.

Now you have to hope for some good weather for the virgin queen to have her mating flight & start laying. If you don't see her for a few weeks don't panic, virgin queens are very difficult to find. Once she is laying & well plumped up it will be easier to find her. Get her marked as soon as you can before the population increases in the hive, but not before she is laying. To check if the virgin queen is in the hive but not yet mated/laying & you can't find her, place a frame of eggs from another colony after 3 weeks from queen hatching into the hive. If the young queen was lost on her mating flight then the bees will draw emergency queen cells from the eggs. If the queen is present but not laying yet then the brood will reinforce the colony before the new queen's own eggs have developed. It can take some time for a new queen to get mated & start laying after hatching, give her 3 weeks from hatching before you start to worry. In ideal weather I have found new eggs 7 days after queen hatching, but quite often it takes much longer. The queen is most receptive for mating for about 15 days after hatching & normally takes 3-7 days from mating before she starts to lay eggs. If this time coincides with a gap in the honey flow, feed the colony to encourage the queen to lay/get plumped up making finding her & getting her marked easier.

• **SWARMS.....If you can't stop them, then catch them!!! – by Norman Battrick**

For some time now, during the summer months I have maintained a swarm box on my garage roof. Most years I have been rewarded with a nice colony of bees. Why not have a go, no more shaking bees out of shrubs or climbing ladders, the bees come to you, for free.

Recently the Americans have researched into the best way to attract swarms & suggest the following:-

- A Langstroth or National brood box is about the right volume.
- The box should be dry, well used & smell of propolis & wax.
- Fix a light tight roof & floor, not too secure as you will need to get the swarm out later
- Drill an entrance hole halfway up one side, about 1½" diameter.
- **Most important** – install the hive as high as possible, the higher the better, then wait.

Having caught your swarm, what next? Well the aim of a swarm is to establish a new home & the bees are all geared up to produce wax. So, hive them on frames of foundation & give them a good feed of sugar syrup & you will be rewarded by the most beautiful drawn comb in record time. As there is no brood, treat them for Varroa, you will get nearly 100% clearance.

A prime swarm will probably contain the old queen from the parent colony, if possible re-queen or later the bees may supersede the original queen, this will give the growing colony a bit of a setback.

A cast will have a virgin queen & however small, a cast hived on foundation in a nucleus box & carefully fed will give you a young mated queen, (cat price £20), or a five frame nucleus, (cat price £110).

What are you waiting for?