



Southampton & District Bee Keepers Association

April 2009

Foragings

Newsletter

Contributors this month

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PESTS & DISEASE

In line with the CSL guidelines the Varroa count for November

| Level and Control Required | Average Mite Drop per Day | Percentage of Infested Drone Pupa |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Low No Action | 1 or less | Less than 2% (1 in 50) |
| Medium Plan Action | Between 1 and 7 | Between 2% and 50% |
| High Take Action | More than 7 | More than 50% (25 in 50) |

A New Weapon for the Arsenal Varroa watch out!

By Andy Willis

Whilst talking to Robin Dean after his talk to our association in January, he offered me some samples of 'Mite-Away II'. This is a new single application 'formic acid' pad, for the treatment of Varroa. It's not yet licensed for use in this country but Robin assures me that his contacts indicate that this is only a short time away.

My problem was that a late peak in varroa last autumn, was too late in the season to use Apigaurd, as a reliable control. I had therefore applied oxalic acid in the trickle 2 system, supplied by Thornes. On re-checking the average mite drops in January some of the hives still had far too many varroa. (Why this should be I'm not to sure, but may be due to brood being present).

The pads, 7½ inches square (19cm²) and about ½ inch (1cm) thick are placed on 2 x ½ inch (1cm) thick spacer sticks, (pieces

of broken hive frames can be used) directly over the top bars of the brood comb. The metal queen excluder must be removed as it would be corroded by the acid. An 'Eke' is used to contain the pad and the holes in the crown board are closed along with the open mesh floor (taping over the back or replacing with a solid floor).

The treatment period is 21 days, the hive remaining closed for this time. Each fume pad comes in a sealed bag already dosed with the correct amount of acid, so there is no measuring or pouring of acid.

The pads do fume once out of the sealed pouches through special perforations on one side which should be placed facing downwards towards the bees. The fumes are strong and did remind me of an A-Level chemistry lab at college or the strong smell of vinegar when boiling up chutney and making pickles. It has also been

likened to salt and vinegar crisps or hot chips with a good sprinkling of vinegar, though much stronger. These fumes are toxic (though self regulating) so don't go sniffing them, stand and handle them up wind using disposable rubber gloves. The bees tolerate these fumes much better than us as their own stings are based on Formic Acid just as ant stings are.

My treatment start date was the 11th January, even though the box indicated that the daily temperature during the treatment should reach between 10°C & 26°C, but Robin assured me a mid winter treatment should be successful so long as the colony is strong.

The box precautions also stated that all supers were to be removed during treatment and the entrance reducer removed as well. As the temperature was below the normal recommended level (10-26°C) during the 21 day treatment and my tape for closing the back of the hives on open mesh floors was not sticking well, to the wet boxes, I did leave the entrance reducers in, but on a solid floor or higher temp I would definitely remove them as the fumes are so strong. The actual daily temperatures were (5-11°C) during the treatment period and much cooler at night.

A week after the 21 days treatment, having removed the spent pads, the varroa counts were re-taken. The results were startling. The hive with only marginally high

counts now had a mite drop of 0 over 3 days. The second hive which had started with a daily mite drop of 25 was now down to 0.6 (2 over 3 days). The bees looked healthy and vigorous and show great promise for the coming season, though will require feeding in March like all of my colonies this year.

The cost of treatment is about £3 per hive with 10 pads per plastic box (5 year use by date). On reporting back to Robin the results of the trial, he informed me that there was a spring special offer by the manufacturers/importers at the moment of 10 boxes for the price of 9 giving enough treatments for 100 hives.

The metal runners do show some signs of corrosion and the mesh in the open mesh floor also shows some signs of corrosion. The runners can be protected with vasoline and in future I will swap to a solid wood floor for the treatment period.

The current cost of a box of 10 pads is £37.50 (incl VAT)

If you are interested then contact Robin Dean on the following details.

(01489) 894078 or

redbeehive@btopenworld.com

All members of S&DBKA who order this spring will be grouped together and hopefully will qualify for the bulk order discount.

My first convention

By Lisa Platts

On Saturday 21st March I walked into the Wickham Community Centre feeling slightly apprehensive. It was the first time I had been to a 'Bee convention' (The South Hampshire Spring Convention) and wasn't sure what I would find. As soon as I stepped into the hall where the first speaker, Mr. Terry Clare, had already taken the floor, (I was five minutes late!) finding a seat not far from the front, my butterflies soon disappeared! Terry is a bee farmer and the Convenor of a bee breeding group. I was in awe at Terry's knowledge on how to rear Queens, and how important the drones are.

I never knew there were so many different methods of Queen rearing and Terry went into detail about all of them, which gave me a chance to think about which method would be the preferred one for me. It was also interesting to learn how beekeeping practices varied across other European countries. Hoping to rear a new queen this year from my single hive, I was thrilled to hear this presentation.

The next speaker was a lady, Beulah Cullen, who was a regional bee inspector and is now a course tutor and assessor for the BBKA. Her talk was extensively on the amount of work our little bees achieve. The waggle dance in particular was exciting to discover, learning how the design of this

dance shows other bees where to forage. To think that a honey bee burns thousands of calories in only one trip to find nectar and pollen was amazing, I knew they were busy but for a creature so tiny it made me realise just how much energy it takes for these lovely bees to survive! I learnt the different parts of the bee's anatomy and to find that they can filter pathogens out of the nectar within their own bodies before storing it in the hive was remarkable.

Lunch was very good and I sat in the sunshine enjoying the company of Mark with a good glass of wine!

Next up was Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas, a lecturer at Reading University in the Department of Environmental Biology. The presentation given was astonishing. I discovered how flowers have adapted to their pollinators and the cunning ways they trick bees and other insects in to pollinate them. I now have a new respect for flowers and plants other than just enjoying their look and smell. Towards the end of the presentation we learnt that Darwin had discovered an orchid which had a one and a half foot tube to store its nectar, Darwin surmised that there must be a moth with a tongue this length to be able to pollinate it, the idea was not taken seriously at the time, however, recently this moth has

been discovered! The Doctor now fits in forensic work for the Police discovering where victims and criminals have been through pollen found on them, I cannot wait to discover this presentation!

Last up was Andy Willis, yes it is 'our Andy' and after listening to his presentation it made me realise just how fortunate we are to have him in the S&DBKA. I have known Andy for about a year and I call him my Bee Mentor! His talk was light-hearted and fun, whilst still being educational and informative with knowledge gained from his extensive background, in beekeeping and horticulture. It was astonishing to hear how Andy was inducted into beekeeping starting with 8 hives not just 1! Andy's talk was great visually as well, we saw pictures of some of the swarms he has come across and managed to successfully rehouse! Including one which had decided to take a rest on the back of a car at Southampton airport to which someone had attached a small notice

'Beware Bees!' this gave us all a giggle. But Andy explained and showed us how he managed to get the bees into a travelling box and then coax the bees to run into a hive the slides were great!

All of the speakers were so interesting and were happy to answer questions from anyone; they also stayed around and talked to others during tea breaks. Overall I learnt so much from this day that I was surprised more beekeepers didn't attend, it really was a great opportunity to be given this type of education and knowledge from such experts and for a relatively small amount. I would encourage anyone to sign up for the next one, I cannot wait!

[Ed. Note the next Bee convention is at Stoneliagh Park in Warwickshire at the National Agricultural Show Ground, hosted by the BBKA on 17th - 19th April 2009. Advance tickets can be obtained from the following website http://www.britishbee.org.uk/spring_convention_tickets.php]

Definition: Spring Dwindling

This is the term used when a colony that has come through the winter fails to expand in the spring and dies. This can be caused by several factors, but usually is the result of the old winter bees dying off as they reach the end of their lives and not being replaced fast enough by new spring bees. This can be caused by the Queen's failing / not laying enough eggs or by the colony being too small to generate sufficient heat to rear and feed the new replacement bees or by disease.

The only real solution to this problem is to amalgamate a small failing colony, if it's otherwise healthy with another one that is queen right and healthy but also a little on the small side.

Preparing Honey by David Sandwell

Part 1

By Tony Mabey

[Ed. Note, with the vast amount of information provided in this article, I have split it into 2 parts]

11 members attended the second winter meeting of 2009 presented by David Sandwell. David judged the honey classes at the 2008 S&DBKA Honey Show and is a well respected beekeeper and honey judge within Hampshire. With a career background in quality and British standards there is no questioning the fact that he is qualified to judge. The talk full of useful tips for showing honey but also how to prepare and present honey to the best possible quality.

David opened the meeting with an insight as to how he started beekeeping in 1981 before joining Meon Valley Beekeepers Association in 1982. His first introduction to showing honey came in 1985 with a honey crop of just 6lb! He was already winning awards at County level during 1988 and 1989 and has continued thereafter and has been successful at the National Honey Show.

The art of showing honey is actually the foundation for preparing quality honey products for sale. No one wants to purchase honey which is not glistening clear or free from hive debris or some cut comb which is crystallised or dare I say it, supplied with a free wax moth!

Some classes offer a better chance of collecting an award. These are the classes which may require a little more consideration and can attract fewer entries. Examples given were the darker honey classes or cut comb. The main message was that now is the time to start thinking about which classes you may want to enter. If you are successful in the local association show, consider moving up to the County or even the National level.

The preparation starts at the extracting stage for runny honey as it is at this point that the beekeeper introduces the particles of wax, debris and air bubbles and not the bees.

David uses a 12 frame radial extractor for his extracting as this allows him to easily keep the frames together, balanced and extract by super to promote disease control and hygiene. Normal practice is to then warm the honey to around 40°C prior to straining through up to four layers of straining cloth (available from Thornes or homebrew suppliers). The honey is then seeded to provide a set honey for storage. The seed is created using 1lb of honey and a spoonful of very fine set honey which can then be added to the bucket prior to jarring. This provides a fine set honey for storage

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which can be sold as is or warmed by the jar to produce runny honey as required. A bucket of set honey can be warmed in a warming cabinet overnight at around 57°C and this will prevent crystallising for anywhere between 6 weeks and 6 months.

Some honey will naturally crystallise (oilseed rape for example) and to reduce frosting a tip is to add the honey to hot jars. Frosting is caused by air being pushed to the edge of the jar as the honey sets. Frosting will mark a jar down if being judged but will not necessar-

ily exclude it from a place. Jars can be stored on a sunny windowsill as this can also reduce frosting. For any set honey make sure the honey is stored on a level surface.

Chunk honey is always popular for sale and equally attractive within a honey show. Most beekeepers normally have one piece of comb combined 50/50 with runny honey. The key point for showing is to keep the comb vertical where possible. Previously it was the norm to use three pieces of comb within a 1lb jar and this will still catch the judge's eye.

2009 Credit Crunch - Not in Beekeeping!

By Andy Willis

Will 2009 be an expensive year for buying bees, I think so!

I have heard quotes that the prices for nucleus hives (nucs) this year are between £135.00 and £175.00 and that Queen bees are going for £40.00 each.

Thornes closed thier order books for Nucs at the end of February (£175 each) Though the Meon Valley Bee Auction is on the 2nd May, but you can expect to pay a high price here as there is normally a lot of competition. I am expecting prices for hives of bees/Nucs to be higher than last year as demand is still very high.

If you have items for sale or you require further details contact James Laybourne on (01489) 892853 or jamesdeb12@tiscali.co.uk by the 10th april (to be listed in the catalogue) or 12th April for the list of lots.

Regional / Seasonal Bee Inspector

Despite the announcement late last year about Ian Homer retiring, he hasn't done it yet, The National Bee Unit has not found a replacement so he is still our regional Bee Inspector. Our seasonal Bee Inspector is still to be appointed but we are hopeful we will have someone soon.

Dates for the Diary

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## **Monday 6th April 2009, 19.30hrs**

Waterloo Arms, Waterloo Road, Shirley

### **Rules and Regs around selling Hive Products**

**By Lucas Marshall**

Lucas has kindly agreed to reschedule his talk for tonight. I wouldn't miss out on the latest information about the do's and don'ts around selling your honey.

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Friday 10th 2009 Deadlines

Deadline for registering your entries for the Meon Valley Bee Auction and purchasing your BBKA Spring Convention tickets

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## **Friday 17th to Sunday 19th April 2009**

BBKA, National Agricultural Showground, Warwickshire

### **BBKA Spring Convention**

Get your advance tickets from the BBKA [website](#) or phoning Christine on Tel: 01728 832487

Tickets must be purchased by the 10th April!

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Sunday 26th April 2009, 14.00hrs

Broadlands Apiary, Broadlands Estate, Romsey

Apiary Meeting

If you wish to attend the meeting then please contact Andy Willis, the apiary manager on (023) 8032 7686 or by email on broadlands@southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk