



Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk

Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - August 2008

- August is the time to reap the rewards if you and your bees have done everything they should. The honey in the supers is being capped off and fully capped honey can be harvested.
- Some beekeepers prefer to leave the honey crop on until September. There will be fewer bees then and they tend to be better tempered. The unripe honey is normally used up by the bees by then.
- By all accounts 2008 has been another bad year for bees and beekeepers. In the Southampton area we have been more fortunate than most. All of my hives have made honey and Varroa remains at very low levels. Other members of our association have also reported good honey crops. In the New Forest, Dorset and rural Hampshire it's a very different story. Instead of harvesting honey, beekeepers are already feeding their hives sugar syrup, just to keep them alive.
- If you harvest all the honey now you must also be prepared to feed the bees as there is not a great deal of nectar being collected at the moment, the only exception being on the heather.
- If you have not been using integrated pest management or you have had a sudden increase in the Varroa level recently then you do need to remove your honey crop as soon as you can and apply Apigaurd (making sure the feed hole in the crown board is closed and replace the open mesh floor with a solid floor if you can).
- This is important as we have resistant Varroa mites in our area and the efficiency of Apigaurd is much reduced if the daytime temperature is below 15°C during the four week treatment period.
- If your daily mite drop is low then you have done well or been very lucky and you don't need to worry about chemical treatments.
- The drones are the first to suffer when the main honey flow ends (usually in early August) and many are thrown out of the hive. Drone larva are also often abandoned and removed from their cells.

Level and Control Required	Average Mite Drop per Day	Proportion of Infested Drone Pupae
Low No Action	4 or less	< 1 in 20
Medium Plan Action	Between 4 and 8	Between 1 in 10 and 1 in 20
High Take Action	More than 8	More than 1 in 10

Varroa counts as advised by the CSL, DEFRA

- If your hive is still producing drone larvae continue to cull them to prevent Varroa from breeding. This is usually the last month that drone culling can be done.
- Within the city the main honey flow often continues, albeit at a reduced rate throughout August.

- The plants that contribute to this late summer honey flow include:
 - Purple loosestrife
 - Mint
 - Golden Rod
 - Helonium (sneezeweed)
 - White clover (continues particularly if it's been cut down on lawns)
 - Sedum (ice plant) end of month
 - Sunflowers (requires high temperature for nectar to flow)
 - Russian vine / mile a minute
 - Polygonium / knotweeds
 - Himalayan Balsam (bees dusted with white pollen down their backs)
 - Single dahlias – mostly pollen only
 - Early Michaelmas daisies
 - Flea bane – mostly pollen only
 - Bell heather
 - Ling heather – thixotropic honey (jelly like)
 - Honey dew (from aphids on various plants) – dark honey

- The ling heather has already started to flower; the rain earlier in the summer has helped it grow and indicates the possibility of a good honey flow in August/September. The bees do need reasonable weather to fly though, so extended periods of rain and wind now will mean bees on the Heaths in the New Forest will require feeding.
- If you have your heather permits, and intend to move your hives to the New Forest heather then I recommend you move your bees as soon as possible and certainly before the middle of August, as the Heather is a little early this year.
- If you find one or two queen cells in a colony now the chances are that a supercedure is taking place. If you wish to make up some late nuc's for increasing your stock these supercedure queen cells can be harvested once they are capped off (the whole frame being removed) and placed in a Nuc box with frames of hatching brood and bees from different colonies. (Take one frame of bees from each of your strong colonies) That way the bees don't fight and the parent colonies aren't weakened too much.
- These supercedure queens will be the best queens you can get and once mated will often lay all winter and head really strong colonies next year, giving you lots of honey. These late nuc's are best feed with a frame feeder.
- Keep an eye open for disease as it often shows up now when the honey flow ends and the colonies are stressed. If you suspect Nosema, you can send a sample of 30 bees to the national bee unit for testing, costing £10 per sample (see august newsletter, taking a sample) If this proves positive then you can feed Fumidil B with your autumn feed next month.

Copyright 2008 S&DBKA