



Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk

Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - May 2008

- This is the month bees normally swarm, so weekly checks inside the brood box are necessary.
- Make sure the hive doesn't run out of room – put the next super on when the box below is almost full of bees. If there is new wax on the crown board then the super should have already been put on a few days before.
- Do artificial swarms to colonies starting to produce queen cells, but before the queen cells are sealed.
- Make up nukes from strong stocks or divide up into 3 or 4 hives giving each a queen cell or original queen/ new bought queen.
- The spring honey flow has been stop start so far this year (this is quite normal) and the strongest hives have made a super of honey. If there is a chance of your bees visiting oil seed rape (bees fly up to 3 miles for it!) this honey should be extracted as soon as it's capped before it starts to set.
- Ivy honey in the brood box not used by the bees during winter can often be moved by the bees upwards and mixed with the spring honey in the first super. This has the same effect as oil seed rape and will 'seed' this spring honey and cause it to set quite quickly. This should also be extracted as soon as it's capped.
- Monitor varroa at least once a month as its numbers can increase rapidly now drones are being produced. – continue drone brood culling as a form of varroa control.
- Varroa infestation level using daily mite drops for May:

Level	Average Count per day	Action
Low	1 or less	None required
Medium	Between 2 and 5	Plan action
High	5 or more	Take immediate action

- Varroa infestation level using drone brood monitoring (number of cells infected with varroa, not the number of mites themselves).

Level	No. of Cells infected	Action
Low	Less than 1 in 50	None required
Medium	Between 1 in 25 and 1 in 50	Plan action
High	More than 1 in 25	Take immediate action

- Comb trapping, put a frame of open brood (free of bees) into a newly housed swarm or artificial swarm and remove and destroy as soon as capped.
- The spring honey flow (weather permitting) continues this month, but the June gap can also start towards the middle/end of the month in our area.

- Plants in flower this month include:
 - Late Apples
 - Sycamore
 - Hawthorne
 - Horse Chestnut – brick red pollen
 - Holly
 - Oil seed rape
 - Field beans / broad beans – Grey Pollen
 - Raspberries
 - Spanish Bluebells – Green or powder blue pollen
 - Cotoneaster
 - Wall Flowers

- New queens that start to lay this month should be marked with Red (this years colour).
- Use the solar wax extractor on sunny days. Comb removed for varroa control can be melted and the wax reclaimed quite easily. The wax being new is pale and of high quality.
- If you are thinking of going to the heather this year apply for a heather permit this month by contacting Jim Stuart on (01264) 323 185 or email pearty@lemonia.org
- If you have removed/harvested the spring honey be prepared to feed strong stocks to stop them starving in the June gap or if the weather should turn poor like it did last year.

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