**July Newsletter**

Dear member,

Can it really be July already? By now your colony of bees should have built up strongly and be gathering nectar and pollen in earnest. With the hedgerow brambles in flower the weather seems to be at least four weeks ahead of the usual pattern which makes me wonder if the bee year will finish early. Will honey flow and pollen possibly have peaked by early August and will our preparations for winter take place early as well? Who can say in our changing climate?

**Varroa Mites.**

 

Treating your bees against varroa mites is important. Varroa can be seen with the naked eye on adult bees but they do most damage when the bees are at the larval stage. For bees it results in deformities and colonies which can be weakened to such an extent they can’t survive, especially over the winter. Some beekeepers choose not to treat their bees but this can affect nearby colonies who suffer from re-infestation. The June BBKA magazine featured a useful breakdown of Varroa treatments and its worth studying closely, if you didn’t get a copy ask another member to let you have a look. Try alternating to a different product each year so we don’t contribute towards a resistance of one product. There are many ways of controlling Varroa. Apiguard is super easy to use along with MAQs strips which can be used when you have honey supers on. Whatever you choose order products early. You’ll find some products come in multiple boxes, i.e. treats 5 hives and these cannot legally be sold separately so pair up with someone if you only have one or two hives to avoid hanging onto something that might go out of date. MAQ’s strips are a different strength for USA hives so make certain you are buying from a UK website. The definitive list of “Authorised Veterinary Medicines” is on the Veterinary medicines Directorate, (VMD), go on the website and search “Bees”, or look on Beebase, as approved products do change over the years.

Ensuring your bees are in the best of health as they go into winter will be your priority in the coming months.



**Have you joined BeeBase?** All members of EBKA are required to enrol with Bee Base and register where their bees are kept. BeeBase is the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) National Bee Unit website. It is designed for beekeepers and supports DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs) and the [Healthy Bees Plan](https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?sectionid=41), which set out to protect and sustain national bee stocks. You will find up to date information on their website covering a wide range of beekeeping subjects, including the activities of the NBU, honey bee related legislation, information on pests and diseases and their recognition and control with key contacts. They are a trusted resource for information, [***signing up to BeeBase here***](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/register.cfm)***.* Once you’ve registered you can see how many colonies there are close to you, and it’s surprising how many beekeepers there are in our area but unknown to EBKA.**

**If you think your bees have one of the notifiable diseases take a photograph and forward to the regional bee inspector. If they suspect a problem they will come out and inspect your bees for free. If the bees are found infected and have to be destroyed BDI insurance will cover some of the financial cost- but do make certain you are insured for the correct amount of hives or your insurance could be invalidated. Full membership includes insurance for three hives. We all have a joint responsibility towards our own bees and other colonies to come forward with concerns. Apparently, it’s against the law to publicise if your bees have a notifiable disease- but to my mind being open will lead to closer inspections once beekeepers are more aware of problems on their doorstep. This year EFB - European Foul Brood Disease is increasingly common in the south east and rife in London boroughs. A visit from the bee inspector is educational, not judgmental and it’s interesting to watch someone else handle your bees.**

**Someone told me that at the end of the first year of beekeeping your pocket will be around £500 lighter and you might have a jar of honey. My mentor referred to honey “as that damn sticky stuff”. I do hope your bees will yield a jar of honey for you however small in reward for your hard work caring for them – be patient and enjoy your bees. The association has a honey extractor which members can be hire for £10. Contact Ian if interested.**

 Jean



**BDI Insurance**

Maybe you are one of our new beginner members who recently joined the association as a 'friend' and have acquired bees for the first time this year. If so, we recommend you upgrade your membership to full membership which includes Bee Diseases Insurance (BDI).

All our 'full' members who have bees, receive, through the British Beekeepers Association, Public and Products Liability Insurance and Bee Diseases Insurance for your first three colonies.

BDI is important as it provides insurance for the replacement of bee keeping equipment should it have to be destroyed due to an incidence of a notifiable disease, such as European or American Foul Brood.

If you have any queries please contact either Jacky or Ian

Contact details:

Jacky Eustace 07510 387516 - email: jackyeustace@gmail.com

OR

Ian Smith 07411 402 422 - email: treasurereastbournebka@gmail.com

Full details on the British Beekeepers Association website or BDI website

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/bee-diseases-insurance>

<https://www.beediseasesinsurance.co.uk/>

Jacky

**The joys and worries of having a single colony**



After losing a colony over the Winter, I was down to just one hive of bees for the first time since I started back in 2011. I immediately started to worry.

What would happen if the queen failed and I didn’t have any back up? Supposing they swarmed and the new queen got eaten on her mating flight? What if....? Well, there was no use worrying once Coronavirus lockdown started as getting a frame of eggs from a beekeeping colleague was out of the question.

Instead, I had to make the best of it. To begin with, I decided I needed to be extra careful in all my inspections. The last thing I needed was to squash the queen or drop her from a frame (Not that I set out to do these things!). I made sure that any boxes containing brood, were put on crown board with the holes blocked up, rather than on a spare stand. I assumed that every brood frame might contain the queen and handled them very carefully. When removing and replacing frames and closing up gaps between frames, I acted slowly and used smoke to gently move the bees away. Basically, everything I normally did, but a bit more!

Gradually, the colony built up after quite a slow start. I began to appreciate the time I could dedicate to one colony. I really got to know how the bees were expanding, see how drone brood was placed and help them make the best use of space by swapping the brood boxes around when the lower one was empty. I was quicker to see that more space was needed for nectar storage and processing, and added another super. Of course, I was not short of spare boxes!

It may be quite be chance but I now have one of the quietest and gentle colonies I’ve had for a long time. Although slow to build up, they have been filling the supers very nicely. I may be speaking too soon but THEY HAVEN’T SHOWN ANY SIGNS OF SWARMING! I have been enjoying my bees a lot more than before.

So, don’t be too frightened of having only one colony. It has worked for me and my bees.

Becky



Apiary thoughts and musings

All the colonies are doing well although there is not much honey yet.

One of the four colonies has been requeened successfully as part of swarm control.

Another has shown no signs of swarming, I suppose it is so late in the season it will hopefully not try to swarm, if anything superceed.

The other two colonies both have had swarm control measures taken, but although the nucs had a good queen cell which hatched and the colony showed all the signs of preparing the brood area for a new queen to lay, no eggs larvae were seen at the appropriate time.

So I then put test frames of eggs into both hives to confirm a queen was present and the bees formed queen cells from the eggs, indicating there was not a queen present, so at present I am waiting for the queen cells to hatch and start laying.

I have thought about this and my reasoning is have I lost the queen when taking the brood frames away from the hive which is the shade to an area with better light on a windy day?

In one of my hives I had split the colony to produce a new queen, the new queen had started laying, so I united the two colonies using newspaper method. (The old queen was removed prior to uniting).

When I went back a week later expecting the new queen to be laying well and lots of eggs and larvae, queen cells had been made, so for some reason the new queen had been killed when the colonies had been united.

Had I united the colonies too soon ie a very young queen, or should I have left the old queen colony a few days before reuniting?

I have left one good protected queen cell to requeen the colony, it would also be a good idea to change the colony from double brood to single brood. This has now been done.

About seven days ago I rehived a colony which was covering 11 to 12 brood frames from a poly nuc into a national hive, I placed an empty super on the hive. In a week the colony had stored in the super about two circles about the size of a 50p piece !!!

One thing I have noted in a few other colonies is that some have started to superceed, in these I have left one good cell in a protected and marked place. Preferably near the top of the frame.

On swarms, one change I have also noted talking to people around Eastbourne it is that Facebook is now the go to place for people to find swarm collectors. I am not on Facebook and I have collected only 2 swarms and one of those I was alerted to by a member who is on Facebook, but a lot have been collected by other people through Facebook contacts.

The other colony collected will have to be requeened as they are not pleasant bees.

Now is the time to prepare for winter, thinking about taking off the honey, re-arranging brood frames, feeding for winter, winter treatment and which small colonies to join together to provide viable sized colonies for next year.

A note on safety. I was inspecting the bottom brood box from a split colony, so I had the bottom colony bees flying and the old queen colony above it had been moved away and the flying bees from there were getting agitated as they could not find their home.

I noticed a buzzing noise in my bee hood, the zip was not fastened properly!!! I closed the gap and quickly retreated to a safe place and removed the bees, luckily I was not stung.

Please ensure your bee suit is secure at all times when working with the bees.

Ian

The winter programme when finalised, will be posted on the website along with further updates. Whilst we hope to meet in St John’s Hall over the winter it will depend on the Covid.19. guidelines in place. Do keep in touch via email with any of the committee or on Facebook until that time comes.