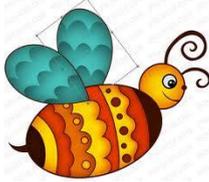


The Tivvy Buzzette

Newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers – April 2013

OUR NEXT BRANCH MEETINGS



Saturday 13th April

Nosema Day: Uplowman (instructions below)

Saturday 20th April

Branch Spring Inspection: Jon Gubb, Voddens Apiary, Uffculme (directions below)

Saturday 25th May

Branch apiary meeting

16th – 18th May

Devon County Show (please come and support our stand and the Bee Marque)

Saturday 15th June

Branch Spring Inspection

Saturday 27th July

Mid Devon Show

Saturday 1st August

Honiton Show

Please come out and support your branch at the summer meetings. It is a great opportunity for some practical experience and advice.

Final Improvers Course Date

Tuesday 9th April at 7.30pm

Please all note this information:

March 2013 Starvation Risk. Important Information about Colony Food Levels.

With the continued poor weather looking to persist through to the end of March, colonies may be starting to run out of food (if they haven't already). It would be advisable to check the food levels by opening the hive and making a very quick observation on their store levels. Key points to remember are:

- The colony may still have stores available which are at the other end of the brood chamber to the cluster of bees. If there are 'empty' frames between the two then the bees could still starve, despite food being in the chamber. Move the frames of food directly next to the outer frame where the cluster resides, ensuring that you score each frame of food (not excessively, but enough to stimulate feeding). Be sure not to knock or roll the bees when doing this and to be as quick as possible.
- If the colony has little or no frames of food then give them a block of candy or fondant. You want to aim for about 2.5 kg per hive and although this may seem to be a great expense, it is far less than the money you will have wasted should the bees die.
- Mini plastic bags that are used to store loose fruit in from the supermarket are perfectly acceptable for holding the fondant and cost nothing. Pack the candy in the bag and then pierce holes in the appropriate place once you get to the hive. If the bag seems fragile then you can double bag it (just be sure to pierce both bags).
- At this time of the year we would usually start feeding sugar syrup but with these temperatures it is still too cold. Place the fondant directly above the bees, turning the crownboard if necessary so that one of the porter bee escape holes is above the cluster.

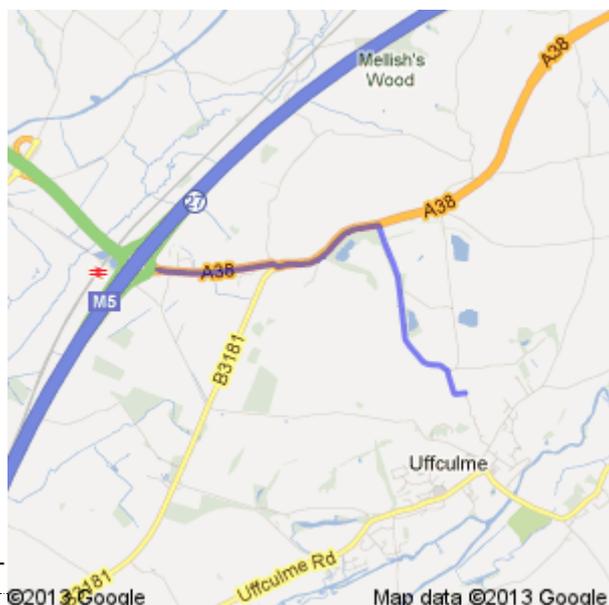
Please be aware that this should be done as quickly and carefully as possible and although it may seem too cold to open the hive now, it is far better to do so knowing the bees are ok than not to and find later that they have died.

For more information please refer to Best Practice Guideline Number 7 – '[Emergency Feeding](#)'.

Kind regards, National Bee Unit.

Branch Spring Inspection on Saturday 20th April directions to Voddens Apiary

1. Head east on A38 Go through 1 roundabout 0.9 mi
2. Turn right onto Clay Ln 0.7 mi
3. Slight right to stay on Clay Ln Destination will be on the left 0.1 mi



Meetings for Beginners

Beginners hands on:

Saturday 13th April

Beginners apiary:

Saturday 4th May
1st June
6th July
3rd or 17th August (tbc)
14th September

Nosema Testing

Saturday 13th April, 10 am- 2 pm at Rolliphant Farm, Crazelowman, EX16 7DF, by kind permission of Alan Hopkins.

Nosema apis and Nosema ceranae are microsporidia (closely related to fungi), single cell parasites, which invade the cells of the gut wall. Since they take energy from these cells they affect the bees' energy levels and also cause dysentery. Infection is spread, particularly in the winter, when the bees may defecate on the frames and then other bees clean up and so ingest the parasite. The colony can usually survive low infection rates but heavy infection will lead to a slow build up in the spring and possible collapse of the colony. There is more known about N.apis than N.ceranae. Scientists are still working on the life cycle and effect the latter has on a bee colony.

If a heavy infection is found one solution is to provide new foundation in a clean brood box.

Older bees are required for the sample of 30 bees to be tested, so flying bees collected from the entrance. If you have to take them from inside the hive, take bees from the outer frames away from the brood area (make sure you do not take the queen !)

How to collect the sample, 2 suggestions ;

- 1) You can block the entrance and scoop up the foragers that accumulate after a few minutes.
- 2) Cut the top and bottom from a rectangular drink carton to make a tube. Put a plastic bag over one end, secured with a rubber band, and place the other end against the hive entrance. Rattle it around and the bees will come out to see what is happening and fly up the dark tube towards the light- straight into the plastic bag! Not always easy to count 30 bees, may be easier to collect 2 samples of 15 and then unite. Label the sample with colony identification and your name, extract as much air as possible from the bag and then place in the freezer overnight.

Bring your samples to be tested as early as possible on the morning of April 13th.

If you can come and help with the preparation for testing during the morning that would be much appreciated. Contact Barbara Brannam.

My life with bees, and how it all started –

From my earliest recollections, I seem to have always been fascinated by natural history, and how species developed and lived. I discovered the stickleback during my pre-school days, but received a very strong warning from my parents that venturing into such watery areas could be fatal, and was banned from going to such areas alone – but during a walk with my maternal grandfather, I learned about frogspawn, tadpoles and was introduced to a species that has remained a constant interest throughout my life, the newt.

During my grammar school days, my biology classes and developing ability to undertake research encouraged me to investigate the life of the goldfish and write a paper on my studies, for which I was awarded a prize. My interests were diverted to the humble bumble bee, but very quickly the honey bee emerged as the focus of my attention as more literature appeared to be published and was available to satisfy my appetite. But before I could start to learn about the practical side of beekeeping, the dreaded National Service took over my life, and my bee books were put away.

My service life blossomed and I became a regular army officer, married and started a family. I rediscovered by collection of beekeeping material and added to it, but as my career developed, I had to relocate from time to time, and when I moved abroad the bee books went into storage, only to re-appear on our return to the UK. When I ended my military life and settled in England, the books once more returned – and I was able to begin practical beekeeping.

My first bees were a swarm provided by Charles Read who, sadly, is no longer with us, and that one swarm became three by the end of my first year. After taking advice, I re-queened those colonies with Buckfast queens bred in Ireland, and my beekeeping settled down and my honey crop was very satisfying. My second winter was a bit of a disaster as the weather was extremely wet and dampness got into most of my hives, killing over half my colonies.

DBKA excursions into Europe provided an excellent learning experience as over the years we visited France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, meeting local beekeepers and discovering how different beekeeping techniques are carried out in those areas. During one visit to the Black Forest I found an answer to my dampness problem when we visited a bee house, made from forest trees – and therein lay my solution and change of direction in beekeeping. For several years I ran colonies in out apiaries, but also a bee house at home. With increasing age I have been obliged to downsize my beekeeping operations and now simply keep a few bees at home.

In recent times, my interests have concentrated in putting knowledge and experience into courses for the benefit of other people interested in taking up the craft that has given me such great pleasure over many years.

Bob Ogden

Editors note: Many thanks to Bob for starting new series of articles in which committee members will write about their beekeeping experience.

Committee News

Committee meetings:

Tuesday 7th May

9th July

Preparing for a new season

A packed room listened to an informative talk by David Packham on what we should be doing now in preparation for the new season. Most of us know David as he is our local bee inspector and has good contacts with the Branch. He has been keeping bees since 1983 and has over-wintered about 30 colonies.

He suggested that we should be doing very little in the apiary, at present, except check that each colony has enough feed. However, he commented that the spring feed should be carried out in the autumn as a feed now would encourage early swarming, and whereas most of us agreed with the theory there was a general feeling that the adding of candy where necessary was better than colony starvation! (*ed: note above from NBU*)

It was suggested that – weather apart! – a successful season could be achieved by having clear objectives and a detailed plan. Objectives such as making up winter loss, increasing colonies and maximising honey production were covered. The plan included sterilising equipment and ensuring that we have enough spare equipment, preparing frames for changing in the brood chamber in March/April, checking for and marking the queen and preparing for swarm control.

Threats to a plan include swarming, disease, especially varroa, starvation, a failing queen, lack of equipment, lack of knowledge and experience, and the weather!

Details were given about the spring inspection. Are there sufficient stores and if there is, has the queen enough room to lay? What condition is the queen in, for example, is there a clear laying pattern including both eggs and sealed brood? Is there any evidence of preparation for swarming, such as the presence of drones and queen cells? How good is the comb and how much needs replacing? Is there any indication of disease?

This was followed by a detailed account of the varroa lifecycle and an explanation of IPM, or Integrated Pest Management. This provoked some discussion as several members do not use oxalic acid and some suggest that the use of icing sugar and resulting grooming is excellent at removing varroa mites from bees.

Several methods for swarm control were covered, with the Pagden Method illustrated through a series of impressive PowerPoint slides. The regular changing of comb was stressed and comment was made about how bees in the wild, or kept in skeps, allow wax moth to eat their way through old comb with the bees moving laterally, if there is room.

Thanks are due to David for his talk and his offer of another “apiary safari” – this is when he visits a number of apiaries and the respective beekeepers follow him around, thus getting experience of how other Branch members keep their bees.

Colin Wellard.

Note from your Buzzette Editor

Many thanks for your contributions. Please keep sending them in to:

Post Galleons Lap,
Plymtree,
Cullompton,
EX15 2LQ

Or pass on a note at the meetings.
Sarah Lines

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/tiverton/>