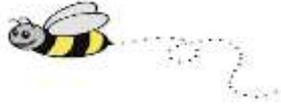


The Tivvy Buzzette

Newsletter of the Tiverton Beekeepers – March 2014

OUR NEXT BRANCH MEETINGS



Wednesday 19th March, 7.30pm

Better Beekeeping – Dave Packham

Saturday 12th April

Spring Inspection for members

Saturday 17th May

Branch Apiary Meeting

22nd – 24th May

Devon County Show – Branch Stand

Saturday 21st June

Branch Apiary Meeting

July – Bulk Buying Apiguard Orders

Saturday 26th July

Mid Devon Show

Thursday 7th August

Honiton Show

See 2014 Year Planner in this Buzzette.

Please come out and support your branch at our meetings at Uplowman Village Hall.

What can the weather tell us?

Managing our bees means we have to take an interest in the weather, what has been going on in the last three months? From last December, the weather has as we all know been exceptionally wet but it has also been very mild. With the mild weather it is most likely that the queen will have been laying and we will have more brood in the hive than normal. The bees need to keep the brood nest at a constant 35c, to do this they generate heat by agitating their wing muscles, this means consuming stores. Do your bees have enough? I have to say I do not know either. If all is well in the hive the bees will control how fast they build up dependent on the weather. Should March turn out to be cold and frosty the build up will slow, as the bees can only maintain the temperature with the number of adults in the colony. For the last three months I have been happy for my hives to be cold, (crown board lifted, wide entrance with mouse guard), now the entrance block is in and the crown board lowered. By keeping the hives closed up it will help the bees to maintain the brood temperature. As new bees emerge to join the winter bees so brood rearing will increase. Providing temperatures are reasonable bees will forage for fresh pollen and as long as the honey store is sufficient then the bees will prosper before too many winter bees start dying off.

What can we do to help our bees at this time of year?

- Keep hefting the hives to assess the stores.
- If in doubt put some candy or Ambrosia Bee Candy over the feed hole in the crown board.

- Syrup can be used by the end of the month but small feeds only as you can overfeed at this time of year, especially when you are not looking in to the hive.
- Bees in Devon do not usually need pollen substitutes as we have a milder climate and more forage for our bees, but a pollen patty will do no harm.
- Resist the urge to look in the hive unless the weather is calm and the temperature above 15c. Brood can easily be chilled if the hive is open too long. You could use cover cloths providing they are clean.

I am assuming that you have cleaned your empty frames and placed your order for new foundation, and planed how you are going to deal with swarming this year. If the weather remains mild, swarming could be early.

Keith

Bee Behaviour

Our guest speakers, Ken and Dan Basterfield gave us some very interesting facts about bee behaviour that enables the colony to remain cohesive.

A few jottings:-

Trophallaxis (sharing food), happening all the time, tongue and antennae (feel, smell, taste) come into contact giving sensory details. Food gives various indications of nature of the hive—odour of Queen substance, quality of the food, if too much sugar some bees will get water, not enough sugar then better source sort or some honey uncapped.

Scent Lack of brood pheromone and Queen substance causes worker layers. Nasonov glands produce shared scent of colony. Footprint scent on landing board and at water source.

Vibration especially queen to queen, felt through the comb. Virgin emerges, vibrates/pipes to say she is there, other virgins in queen cells quark in response to piping. Virgins can be kept in cells by workers until needed. So bees can decide if another caste is possible if they know another virgin in Q-cell.

Jostling Workers jostle the queen by buzzing around the comb and DVAV (Dorsal ventral abdominal vibration) to make her leave with a swarm.

Bees take up to 8 hours out time! To wake one up if flow changes or something needs to be done another bee holds 'sleeping bee' and DVAV's her abdomen.

Foraging Scout bees find new food source. Navigate by the sun, but if no sun then by land marks such as hedge, have flight lanes, can triangulate.

Pollination Flower fidelity therefore effective. Pollen is protein source, one cell of pollen feeds 2 larvae. Nectar for energy, sucrose is converted to fructose and glucose, easier to store and reduce water content.

Ripening of nectar, remove water to prevent yeast growing causing fermentation. Worker takes droplet of nectar onto extended tongue, beats wings to create draft to evaporate water. Repeated many times. 40lbs of nectar, after ripening, 10lbs of honey and 30lbs of water removed! Ripe honey is capped to prevent water being absorbed using pure wax. (Larvae are capped with a mix of wax and pollen which is porous).

Barbara Brannam

Note from your Buzzette Editor

Many thanks for your contributions. If anyone would like to send me an article on 'My life with bees, and how it all started' or anything else you would like to share please send it 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/>