



WINCHESTER AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2012

BOB's BIT

We have a fridge magnet with the message "Sometimes I wake up Grumpy, and sometimes I let him sleep". Well, today my "best" hive, the one I monitor most often, displayed over-enthusiastic defence behaviour. That is a nice way of saying that one tried to sting my ear, knowing how I dislike this, and another went for the throat. The day was warm, though sunless, and all I wanted to do was to clean their droppings board. What to deduce from this? Have they got some guilty secret they would rather hide, or are they being just a bit grumpy?. I once had a stock that superseded while I was on holiday, and the new queen was vile, but that's impossible at this time of year. I had another that was so awful that queen-hunting was impossible, and I tried unsuccessfully to kill them all. But the survivors were quite reasonable, so I never found out exactly how and why. Did the petrol vapour selectively kill the wicked queen?

Though Spring doesn't officially begin until March 21st, it will soon be time for the great Spring Inspection. There isn't really much you can do, apart from getting that warm feeling if everything is in order. Advancing from one side of the brood box, the quantity of remaining stores is the first point. If a bit light, then a quick feed will fix it. But if far too much, then the queen will be short of laying space, so get some empty frames ready for the next inspection. The full frames you take out will be very useful to feed a nuc.

If there is no brood at all then you are up the creek, unless you kept a nuc for emergencies,

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday March 21st
7.30 pm at Itchen Abbas Village Hall

An Introduction to Microscopy for the beekeeper, including pollen identification, and demonstration of Association Microscopy Equipment

Members of the WDBKA Microscopy Group

which will provide the necessary paddle. In these circumstances, you are permitted a measure of self-congratulation.

**BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT
AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS.**
Robin Dean 14th February 2012

"The harsh reality is that we are the biggest problem", was the conclusion of Robin's informed and enlightening talk. Robin is a bee farmer running more than 100 hundred colonies and a freelance consultant within the agricultural and horticultural industries.

As is well known bees are declining generally across Europe and at a particularly high rate in England and often this is glibly attributed to agricultural chemicals, particularly pesticides. However, there is a great deal of distortion of the results of trials and the dissemination of half-truths and disinformation to serve the purposes of lobbyists and the vested interests they represent. He gave examples of several much publicised

'facts' and showed them to be either untrue or at best misleading. These included the assertion that the Co-Op has banned all products which have been subject to the use of neonicotinoids: no they haven't, they have just moved them to a least favoured list. French bees are dying because their sunflowers have been treated with imidacloprids: Not true. The imidacloprids have been banned but the bees are still dying. Etc. Etc.



Robin Dean exploding a myth!

Robin's view is that there is no specific cause for CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder). It is mainly due to poor Varroa control. He believes that the general decline in the bee population is most probably caused by poor nutrition, resulting from the loss of the native flora which bees and other insect pollinators rely on for forage. Many of these are deemed to be weeds by farmers and others, such as local authorities, who destroy them with so called 'bee friendly' herbicides.

We (humans) are the problem because of modern agricultural practices and beekeeper applied chemicals. Natural immunity in bees must be encouraged by ensuring that they are enabled to feed on a varied diet. This to be achieved by, among other things, the creation of 'bee friendly' field margins, roadside verges and the use of garden plants that are favoured by insect pollinators. This view was echoed by Avril Burt, who recommended the use of easily grown annuals – marigolds, love-in-a-mist, clovers and wild roses for example, and interplant your rose beds with lavenders and wild garlic, as advocated in her column in the Hampshire Chronicle.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Remember, subscriptions must be paid by 15th March, otherwise your WDBKA, and BBKA membership will lapse - and your BDI cover.

BASIC ASSESSMENT

Anyone wishing to do the Basic Assessment this year needs to get their application and cheque (made payable to BBKA for £15) to Amanda Trigg **a.s.a.p!** Contact Amanda at atrigg@waitrose.com

HEADS UP!

Be ready for the first Apiary meeting of the year on Saturday 28th April at Hilliers Arboretum. Nigel Semmence (RBI) will be talking about bee diseases (in the morning) and swarm control (in the afternoon). Be sure it's in your diary.

SOUTH HANTS SPRING CONVENTION

Wickham Community Centre, Saturday March 17th, 09.45 a.m. – 04.30 p.m. Speakers include:

Roger Patterson on 'A New approach,'
Margaret Couvillon from the University of Sussex on 'Guarding and Nestmate Recognition'
Mike Oxley from Hives save Lives on 'Charity but not as you know it',
Nigel Semmence, RBI on the Results of the Random Survey and Experiences as a Bee Inspector.

This is usually a very good day. For further details and tickets (£15 in advance, £17 on the day) contact Jean Frost, 01420 561136 or jeanterry@uwclub.net

MVBKA AUCTION

The Meon Valley Beekeepers Association annual Auction is to be held this year on Saturday May 5th at Greatham Village Hall. Lots for sale are now welcome. For further information: Telephone Bruce Taylor on 01489 895428 or e-mail at: bruce.taylor@tiscali.co.uk