

NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DEVON BRANCH
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

April 2014

www.northdevonbees.org



Chair Chat

We start at the beginning of April, poised for the next beekeeping season.

At Horestone the club house has been painted and tidied, all the old wax cleaned, rendered and ready to swap for foundation and our beekeeping equipment sorted and repaired. The garden is looking beautiful – bees already foraging on the flowers. All we need now is some warmer weather to be able to open our hives and check all is well.

The Beginners Course is well underway and they had their first visit to Horestone last Sunday.

The Committee, Education Team, Apiary Support Team and Team Leaders have been working hard planning for both the bees and our members, providing first class training and educational opportunities for beginners and improvers alike. I hope they have all managed to find the time to get ready for the season at their own home apiaries as well!

Please make sure that you have a note of our **Nosema Clinic** at the Castle Centre on 26th April between 10 am and 3 pm. Bring your samples of 30 bees so that you know the health status of your bees right at the beginning of the season. Chris Utting has organised a Team of microscopists and technicians for the day so for the sake of your bees take advantage of this opportunity.

Let's hope for a great spring and happy bees.

Sylvie

Events 2014

26 Apr	10:00 - 15:00	Nosema Clinic, Castle Centre, Barnstaple
7&8 Jun	All day	Bees Honey and Plants Weekend, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple
15 Jun	All day	Dowland Fair
26 Jul	All day	Mid Devon Show, Tiverton
6 Aug	All day	North Devon Show, Umberleigh
13&14 Sep	All Day	Branch Honey Show, St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple
16 Nov	14:00-16:00	Branch AGM, Castle Centre, Barnstaple

NORTH DEVON BRANCH NOSEMA CLINIC

SATURDAY 26th APRIL 2014 10.00am to 3.00pm
at the CASTLE CENTRE, CASTLE STREET, BARNSTAPLE

Bring along a sample of at least 30 dead bees from your colonies. They will be examined by the branch microscopists for Nosema. A donation will be appreciated - £1.00 PER SAMPLE IS SUGGESTED. The invitation is open to all DBKA members. Sampling instructions will be found in the application form in this Newsletter. Light refreshments will be available during the day.

Reception Team - Sylvia Barber Barbara Carlyle

Slide Technicians - Peter Auger Andy Tizard-Varcoe Cliff Davis David Easton Angus Basil

Microscopy Team - Julie Elkin Chris Utting Cathy Backway Graham Kingham Jack Mummery

Refreshments Team - Mave Dowling Kay Thomas

Further information from Julie Elkin 01598 710 986 or Chris Utting 01237 474 500

Member's Apiary: *Derek Hunter at Umberleigh*



It's said that beekeeping is never a certainty and never dull which was very much the case last season. Some colonies did well from the start and produced a good crop of honey, others merely marked time producing just enough for their own requirements and not a drop more. Guess which ones I'll be creating new colonies from and which will be requeened as soon as possible.

Moving house presented challenges as not only did we have to move I also had to find a new location for my home Hives as the new house has a small garden. Fortunately I set up an out apiary a couple of years ago to provide extra forage and as precaution against diseases so I only had to find some where for 6 hives. In this respect I was lucky to find a kind local land owner who has several acres of natural land and was happy to have my hives on his land. I moved them late September without having time to organise properly so will

have to spread them out this spring. The land is mainly planted with trees and has an abundance of wild flowers and bushes as you will see in the photo.

I admit it's not as convenient as having the hives in the garden and I have to be careful to put every thing I might need plus some extras in the car but an excellent site with both sites are fairly close a not too far from home.

Derek

Topical Tips for April

- There is still a risk of starvation so be aware of the local forage availability
- If the apiary is high above sea level then the flowering season will be later
- Wait until the air temperature is 16°C+ and there is no chilling wind before carrying out a Spring inspection
- When the risk of starvation is past remove brood frames that are choked with stores and provide frames that enable to queen to lay and expand the brood
- Put frames of minimal brood between more developed frames to aid colony development
- Plan to remove old black brood frames and replace them with new foundation
- Re-arrange the brood frames so that the centre of the brood is in the centre of the brood box
- Prepare a swarm control method and be ready to collect a swarm
- Take a sample of 30 bees for the branch Nosema Clinic on 26 April
- If you have not paid your subs then you will have been struck off and should not be reading this !

Chris Utting

March Winter Talk

March's Winter Talk at the Castle Centre was entitled "Predator Mites" and was given by Richard Ball, a retired National Bee Inspector.

There is ongoing research into the use of predator mites as a biological control for *Varroa destructor* but Richard started his talk with a general overview of the diseases which threaten bee colonies and the strategies used to control them.

Varroa does not kill bees on its own but bee diseases act in concert. Colonies will often collapse as a result of a combination of *Varroa*, *Nosema* and *Acarine*; plus various viruses. Therefore the most important advice is still:

Feed – good quality sugar/pollen

Examine – and control *Nosema*

Assess – and control *Varroa*

Raise standard of husbandry

It has been found that simply injecting a bee will trigger viruses that are already present. *Varroa* can therefore trigger existing viruses as well as spreading new ones.

A graph of the rise and fall of bee brood throughout the year in comparison with disease organisms showed that numbers of both *Acarine* and *Nosema* follow the same curve as the brood. However the number of varroa mites rises exponentially all year. This is important as it makes very clear the need for continuous varroa control. Since no treatment is 100% effective the number of mites will begin to rise again exponentially after each treatment and may soon return to dangerous levels. A few varroa mites in a hive will have little or no affect, over 1000 and there is potential for damage, over 3000 there is severe risk.

The various methods of control, both chemical and biotechnical were outlined by Richard; they are also listed and described in the FERA booklet "Managing Varroa". It is important to be aware of the efficiency of these – a method with 99% efficiency such as Apistan will safeguard a colony for the rest of the year, a method with 80% efficiency will only safeguard for two and a half months. Some of the most effective varroacides cannot be used however because the varroa have developed resistance. It is therefore important to use a variety of methods; this is known as Integrated Pest Control.

A "laudable aim" would be to reduce the varroa population by 5% per day, exponential growth would then cease and the population would remain below dangerous levels. Biological control experiments have taken place with *Chelifers* a pseudo-scorpion, these predate on varroa but they are not native to this country and they eat each other! The predator mites now being trialled are *Stratiolaelaps*, these are natural to the UK and Europe and are not known to have a detrimental effect on insects. They are already in use against red spider mite on reptiles and poultry. To use on bee colonies the predators are scattered on the top bars or applied in "tea bags", they have to be replenished every 6 – 9 weeks as they reproduce in soil, not inside the hive. They are also quite expensive. Richard was able to show graphs of the varroa population after treatment in two years of trials and the initial results seem extremely promising. He did point out that if the varroa problem is already out of control in a colony biological control would be ineffective.

Richard was also able to answer several questions from the audience – but not the one about how the predator mites are cultivated that, unfortunately, is a secret of the suppliers!

Christine

A Snippet of Apiary History

We took over the site on 1980 and it has had many gardeners over the years. About 1985 the then gardener was Jack Trew [his wife became the only female county chairman] he asked permission to plant some new trees. So Major Chichester was approached, he was our landlord at the time and knowing our good stewardship he readily agreed. I still have the torn off Christmas card with the list of trees which Jack chose, they are as follows:

Horse chestnut, *Asculus carnea brotii*; Tree of Heaven, *Acanthus Altissima*; Indian Bean Tree, *Bignoniodes*; Cotoneaster, *Frijidus*; Southern Beech, *Northofagus Antarctica*; Oak, *Quercus rubur*; False Acacia, *Robinia psuedocacia*; Lime, *Tilia*.

Of the eight only five survive, the cotoneaster is all over the place now, the Oak is in the middle and beginning to shed to much shade, the chestnut up at the back gives the bee that beautiful brick red pollen. Last year I noticed lots of its flowers buds littered around on the ground, I can only assume that they contained insects which the birds were aware of and they had pulled them off, I have never noticed it previously. The Indian Bean Tree is the poor specimen in the centre in front of the shed, it has struggled to reach my height, but last year grew more than in any previous one, so perhaps after all this rain it will really start to put on some weight. The most successful is the southern Beech, just on the left as you come into the apiary, which is now about 18ft high and is growing beards of lichen, giving the bees a taste of early nectar. When its in flower you can hear them humming, but as the lower branches are old all the flowers are high and its difficult to watch them working. Yes, there is a Lime tree right behind the shed but, it belongs to another story.

This Lime tree was planted in memory of the first gardener, a plaque dedicating it to him is at its base. He planted shrubs in rows down from the main shed, the remnants of which now form the left hand hedge, he also put up several shelter hedges of *Lonicera nitida*, these grew very quickly and we spent many hours getting rid of them.!

The tree was actually planted by another member who became notorious for other reasons. After a few years learning how to look after bees, he became a bee farmer, with his wife selling their products in the pannier market, they couldn't make a living out of it so he started a taxi service, running from the airports to North Devon. All went well at the start but as competition increased he got into debt, fled the country and lives in some foreign place still.

Kay

National Honey Show News

As you already know, an enthusiastic team works hard all year round to plan and bring you a bigger and better National Honey Show each year. You'll be pleased to know that the postponement of proposed building work at St Georges means the venue is available for both our 2014 and 2015 Shows.

As usual, for 2014 we will have lectures by world class scientific researchers in the bee world. The provisional programme includes Dr Jamie Ellis University of Florida on the subjects of Research there, Honey Bee Biology, and their diseases and pathogens; Ann Harman, Vermont, US will talk on the topics of sugars and reducing stress on bees, and Pollination; Giles Budge on the work of the NBU; Prof Nikolaus Koeniger on honeybee diversity, and preventing re-infestation of varroa and Gudrun Koeniger on mating strategies to avoid inbreeding. Professor Stephen Martin will talk about life cycles of wasps and hornets, and Michael Badger MBE on maximising honey production in the urban environment.

The Friday BeeCraft Lectures provisional programme includes whether bees like the taste of honey by Nicola Simcock from the Institute of Neuroscience, University of Newcastle and Africanised bees by Ann Harman, Vermont, US.

Saturday lectures for those new to beekeeping, and/or just interested in the subjects will include Yearly Beekeeping Activities, and Products of the Hive for Showing.

On the subject of showing, we have two new classes this year: Class 6 for 2 jars of set honey; and Class 41 one bottle of sweet and one bottle of dry mead .

As last year, there will be lectures at 9.30am and 11am on the Thursday morning. The trade hall will open earlier, at 12 noon on Thursday. The main show opening ceremony is at 2pm, followed by exhibition of classes which opens after the judging has finished.

We want to encourage more competitive entries, and give our old hands a run for the prizes. Many of our experts are happy to both talk to newcomers at the show, and share their 'secrets' in the 'how to' workshops. We appreciate that many people are interested in how the judges arrive at their decisions. Judges have followed a long path of showing themselves, stewarding, and study to become judges and many are happy to share their knowledge and expertise. Time constraints prevent detailed comments for every entry, but two of the Gift Classes: Class 5: Two jars of liquid honey and Class 6: Two jars of set honey will have

judges' feedback for every entry. Many of the judges stay at the show during Thursday afternoon, some for Friday and/or Saturday, and would be happy to answer interested enquiries about the classes they have judged. Any exhibitor is free to approach any judges who are around after judging is complete.

As ever, the National Honey Show relies on a large team of volunteers, and all offers of help are welcome. Do contact us, - you can e-mail the Show Secretary at showsec@zbee.com and he will pass your offer to the right person - if you can spare some time at the Show to help.

In 2013 we were successful in winning National Lottery funding towards the video project, and for the first time, were able to video some of the lectures, the first of which are available for all to view on YouTube. These have been expertly produced, and have been very well received, with large numbers of people viewing them. If you haven't seen them yet and would like to, the simplest way is to put 'National Honey Show YouTube Channel' into Google and you'll get there straightaway. If you don't have a computer, your local (UK) library almost certainly offers free internet access and will help you find the videos. Check out whether they provide headphones and if not, take some along as the lectures are well worth listening to.

We would like to be able to offer this expensive, luxury, but very popular service again in the future and hope to attract National Lottery funding again. However this is not a reliable or complete source of funding, so we would welcome sponsorship. In addition, we would also like to expand the National Honey Show raffle to facilitate the funding of future videos. To this end we plan to increase the ticket circulation and also (for 2015) the prizes. We hope you will support this venture and - of course continue to support the National Honey Show itself.

Our spring leaflets, and raffle tickets will be available at the Thornes and Northern Bee Books stands at the Spring Convention, or you can e-mail us (nationalhoneyshownews@gmail.com) with orders. If you or a member of your association is coming to Harper Adams, do come along and collect some for distribution to your local associations and at your local and county shows. This will be much appreciated, not just by us, but by the thousands who are enjoying the lecture videos.

We have a unique collection of displays, lectures and networking opportunities at the National Honey Show, and look forward to seeing you at the Show this autumn: Thursday 30th October to Saturday 1st November 2014 once more at St Georges College, Weybridge.

Edited by Jeff Orr, e-mail jeffjorr@aol.com. The views expressed in the articles are the author's and not necessarily those of the North Devon Branch of the Devon Beekeepers' Association.

Member's contributions are extremely welcome: by 23rd of the month prior to publication please.

North Devon Branch of Devon Beekeepers Association

Registered Charity Number 270675

Nosema Clinic – Saturday 26th April 2014

Name..... Telephone.....

Address.....

..... Post code.....

Email

Apiary Names / Locations.....

SAMPLE 1 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 2 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 3 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 4 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 5 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 6 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 7 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 8 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 9 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

SAMPLE 10 Beekeepers reference.....RESULT: NIL /LOW /MEDIUM / HIGH

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SAMPLING:

1. Thirty (30) mature bees will be needed for the test. Choose a day and time when the bees are flying actively.
2. Close the entrance for a while until returning bees are crowding the entrance. Use a polythene bag and brush 30+ bees into it. Seal the bag and label with hive reference and place in a freezer immediately.
3. Remove the bees only a few hours before the test to minimise decomposition.
4. Bees and details can be sent with a fellow member on the day (on a separate form).
5. Please complete the details requested on this form clearly. Continue on a new sheet if required.
6. Please deliver the samples between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm to

THE CASTLE CENTRE, CASTLE STREET, BARNSTAPLE ON SATURDAY 26TH APRIL 2014

You will be notified of the results either by ‘phone or email

££ DONATIONS TOWARDS BRANCH EXPENSES WILL BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED — AT LEAST £1.00 PER SAMPLE ££