

NORTHERN LIGHTS

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

SEPTEMBER 2012 www.northdevonbees.org



**BRANCH
HONEY SHOW**
**15TH & 16TH
September,
2012**

HONEY SHOW

"Our Honey Show is on 15th and 16th September,
St Johns Garden Centre..

A reminder that our Honey Show is only a few weeks away so its time to get going on preparing your entries. Remember that we have a new trophy to award in the new wax class - any mould or candle. We also have two new cookery classes.

Have a look through the schedule and get cracking!

Good luck *Jeff Orr Show Secretary*
jefforr@aol.com"

CHAIR CHAT

Thanks very much to Chris Utting for organising the Nosema Day. It all ran very smoothly and the results were good. Thanks to those who came to help; it was not only a work day but a very enjoyable social day with lots of time for coffee and chat.

Despite the bad weather our bees are showing only low signs of Nosema, which is very pleasing to hear. Horestone had 4 colonies with low levels and 1 with medium. The rest were clear. Now we can treat the hives, and get the Apiguard treatments done and the bees set up for the winter - let's hope the weather stays warm for us.

This week we will be extracting a few more supers and put the frames back on the hives for the bees to clean up. It's such a sticky, messy job; but well worth all the effort when we see all those full jars of honey.

We are getting ready for the show on 15th & 16th September at St John's Garden Centre - **your show**.

It is a chance to make an effort and show the public what we can do. Whether it's honey, wax or photos, with 26 different entry categories, there should be something for everyone. Jeff will be pleased with your help, and St John's is a great place to spend the day.

Part of my job as chairperson is to go to the Executive Council Meetings. Both the Chair and the Secretary have one vote each and as Martin is otherwise committed on a Saturday, Kay Thomas comes with me.

Kay and I go to Oakhampton, every other month, and meet with representatives from the other 11 Devon branches. The Executive Council is the administrating arm of Devon Beekeeping. The committee's job is to put forward the views of the Devon members, to the BBKA via the delegates meetings. It is through these meetings that we help control what the BBKA does, how it spends our money and makes sure that the constitution of the charity is upheld.

It is a surprise to me how little our members know about how our club is run, and who does what. To this end Northern Lights will have a feature from selected members giving us all an insight to the work they do for our club. Kay Thomas will start this off next month by telling us how she handles her role as Master Beekeeper, teacher and member of the Queen Rearing Team.

Barbara

Julie's Jottings

August into September after the summer that never arrived.

The beekeeping year draws to a close, I always regard the taking off of supers the end of the season, and the start of the new year with autumn/ winter preparations, although this year continues to be a confusing one with everything involving bees and plants being about 3 weeks later than usual. Honey crops do seem much better than expected but the bees seem slow in capping over full supers, is the high humidity making it difficult for them to get the moisture levels down?

It is the most important time to get colonies ready, healthy, well fed and well housed to survive the winter and build up strongly in the spring. After a year of such unrelenting gloom and rain, well here it has been, some of you have enjoyed slightly better in some parts. Many of the colonies have swarmed and swarmed, right into mid August, rendered themselves apparently queenless for long periods. It is now time to take stock, assess colonies and unite small or queen less ones ready for varroa treatments if necessary. Nosema infections are higher than usual as shown by the results at the Nosema clinic not surprising with bees being confined to the hive for long periods of bad weather. If you haven't tested yours it is still a good idea to do so, so send those samples in.

There seems to be plenty of local honey in the shops but it worries me when a neighbour asks "How much sugar have beekeepers fed this year to keep colonies going?" All the warnings in the papers about starving bees and the need to feed does nothing to enhance the natural, wholesome image of our honey.

I am still hoping for a glorious Indian summer in September and October to redeem this year and send the bees to their winter beds with memories of happy foraging days. Beginners don't give up, it has been a year to try us all but things can only get better.

Julie

UNITING COLONIES

This is an unnatural process, it does not occur in nature.

Colonies to be united must be **disease free**. Use uniting to ensure the best queens are kept heading strong colonies & get rid of the rubbish.

Reasons for Uniting

- To reduce the number of colonies eg going into the winter.
- Unite 2 (or more) small colonies to create a full sized one for honey production.
- To re-queen a queenless colony by using a nucleus or an apidea
- To add a swarm to a full colony when no spare equipment is available
- To combine several swarms.

Precautions

Colonies to be united must be moved to within 3ft of one another.

Do NOT attempt to unite a colony with laying workers.

Prepare colonies for uniting during the day but unite at dusk when bees have finished flying to minimise aggravation in the apiary.

Remove the unwanted queen but put her in a cage with a few workers and a bit of fondant in case something goes wrong and she is needed.

Reduce entrances to discourage robbing by other colonies

After uniting leave the colony undisturbed for 7 days, chewed paper outside will indicate that the bees are becoming happily acquainted

If there is no income feed both colonies with a light syrup for 2 days before uniting.

TO UNITE WITHOUT FIGHTING it is necessary to temporarily mask colony odours (queen pheromone) by:-

- Disguise scents & use of scented/syrup water
- Disruption - water spray or dust with flour or icing sugar
- Delay - Newspaper

METHODS

DIRECT UNITING

Mainly used for uniting 2 nucs

- Remove unwanted queen from 1 box
- Take a frame alternately from each nuc box and either mist with scented/syrup water or dust with flour/icing sugar.
- Place into new brood box alternately so there is complete mixing but ensure all brood combs are together and stores are on the outsides.
- Ensure there are no bees left in the Nuc boxes, they may need to be brushed or tipped out on top of the united combs.
- Smoke well and close up the hive leaving an entrance of 2in.
- Some beekeepers prefer to cage the queen, plugging the cage with fondant and after uniting placing her between 2 combs of her own bees.

INDIRECT UNITING Newspaper method

It does not matter whether the queen right or the queen less colony is put on the top or the bottom!

- Open up colony that will be on the bottom and clean any brace comb off the top of the brood combs
- Remove feeder if one has been used.
- Place sheet of newspaper over the brood box (secure with drawing pins). If this is the queen right colony the queen excluder can be replaced over the brood box and paper.
- Close this colony up and reduce entrance.
- Prepare other colony by cleaning any brace comb from the bottom of the brood combs. Free the brood box from the floor to ensure it can be lifted easily later to unite.
- Put hive back together covering crown board holes.
- At dusk remove roof and crown board from bottom colony and either make 3 or 4 pin holes in paper or mist over with sugar water.
- Remove roof from 2nd colony and place brood box over the paper
- With varroa mesh floors now there are rarely any bees on the floor to worry about.
- Replace feeder if this is necessary.
- Replace roof and remove all spare hive parts.
- After 7 days sort out and rearrange brood combs leaving any surplus combs with brood in them above the brood next and excluder to hatch out.

/Continue

UNITING AN APIDEA TO A QUEENLESS COLONY.

Place newspaper over the brood box of the colony and mist with sugar water.
Holding the apidea over the paper open the slide in the base and place directly onto the paper.
Close up the hive and reduce entrance.

Taking samples for the Nosema Clinic.

Photographed by Martin Hadrill.



DEVON BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION - NORTH DEVON BRANCH
registered charity no. 270675

SO YOUR BEES HAVE NOSEMA – WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

HIGH INFECTION After treatment a complete comb change is essential when weather conditions are right in May, June or July using the Shook Swarm method. Scorch Hive parts. Colony destruction is another option.

MEDIUM INFECTION Remove as many older combs as you can and feed an additive such as *Vita Gold* or *Nozevit* which have been useful for some people. (see *BBKA NEWS August 2012*) Remove any stained hive components and scorch. The antibiotic *Fumidil B* may be used if you can still get it. (Note: The marketing authorization for Fumidil B expired on the 31st December 2011. Any existing stocks of the product can be sold up until July 2012 (probably with a 'use by' date of January 2013), beyond which the product will no longer be available in the UK. As with all medicines ensure that the label instructions are followed)

LOW INFECTION Be aware. Remove a routine number of old combs and consider requeening and feed an additive. Examine Apiary layout to avoid overcrowding of hives.

NIL INFECTION (Mostly around 70% of samples) Do not be complacent and make sure that all your colonies are monitored every year - not just the ones that look sick or fail to build up!

GOOD HUSBANDRY Instead of using medicines for treatment of Nosema, beekeepers should maintain their colonies in good health and apply good husbandry practices. Such as maintaining strong well fed colonies headed by productive and disease tolerant young, prolific queens. Bee keepers should also consider re-queening susceptible colonies with queens from more tolerant stocks of bees better able to cope with Nosema infection (quoted from *BeeBase – the National Bee Unit website*)

New website to help Beekeepers Buy and Sell locally www.Beekeepingonline.co.uk

VACANCY

We have been very fortunate to have had Denise Oldaker as our Membership Secretary. She has worked hard for our Branch and has been Membership Secretary for the best part of 12 years. Denise has decided that at the next AGM it will be time to step down and we wish her a well deserved rest. Thank you Denise from us all.

If you would like to help the Branch by taking on the vacant role, please contact Barbara or Denise.

Membership Secretary Job Description.

Often the membership secretary is the first point of contact for enquiries from potential members.

The busiest time of the year is usually the first 3 months of the year, when the subscriptions come in. Knowledge of the different types of membership is very useful. A full explanation can be found in the year book.

Full Membership provides bee insurance as well, 45 days after payment is received.

Country members have no insurance and no vote at the AGM. Associate and Partner Members are also explained in the front of the year book.

Whenever possible I try to pair new members up with someone in their area who is an experienced member and is able to give support in the initial stages of setting up an apiary.

Once the fees for the next year are set in November time a membership renewal form goes out in the newsletter.

The subscriptions come to the Membership Secretary who writes the receipt and pays the money into the bank. The receipts are left at the Apiary for collection unless a stamped addressed envelope has been enclosed with the subscription.

Each month those members who do not have email addresses are sent a printed copy of the newsletter, at present that is about 20 people.

The Membership Secretary holds the branch printer and from time to time, apart from printing the required newsletters, they will be required to print educational items as well.

We have one honorary member resident in New Zealand and at present the magazine is posted to her.

Denise

DIARY DATES

Our Branch Honey Show: 15th and 16th September at St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple.

Beekeeping Taster Day - Sunday 23rd September 2pm - 4.30 pm.

National Honey Show - Weybridge 25th— 27th October.

North Devon Branch AGM - Sunday 18th November - More details next month.

DBKA Executive Council Yearly Planner - the month of September 2012

Item/Notes

Autumn levy: BBKA capitation and DBKA levy (2nd instalment),

BBKA research fund contributions

Branch payment for 'Beekeeping' magazine

BDI return (2)

Devon County Show Committee meeting

DBKA Executive Council meeting (4)

End of DBKA & Branch financial year.

Honey shortage ahead as bees starve in rain

(Richard Gray and Nigel Burnham August "The Garden")

British Honey shortages have been predicted this year after the wet summer weather put bees at risk of starving to death.

Beekeepers are being urged to feed their colonies with emergency supplies of sugar and syrup. Prolonged periods of rain since April have left honeybees across the country unable to forage during the peak flowering season when they normally gather plentiful supplies of nectar to feed their broods of larvae and produce honey.

The National Bee Unit at the Government's Food and Environmental Research Agency has issued a starvation alert that bees are at risk of dying of hunger as a result.

Officials at the BBKA have also warned that honey crops this year are expected to be particularly poor.

Tim Lovett, its director of public affairs, said that many key crops had flowered during the wettest periods, when bees were unable to gather the nectar.

He said: "Bees can tolerate the cold quite well as they can cluster together to keep warm and the queen stops laying eggs so there are not so many mouths to feed.

"In wet weather, however, they do not forage and flowers tend not to produce much nectar when it is cold."

He said that many colonies were swarming on the few days when conditions were dry, leaving hives abandoned.

"We are seeing hives being left with no queens, which is potentially a greater problem in the long term."

Beekeepers in Britain had already lost 16% of their bees over the winter – worse than the previous years 13% loss. In the UK honey bee numbers have halved over the past 25 years while numbers of bumblebees have fallen by around 60% since 1970, with three species becoming extinct.



Bitz4Bees
Tuesdays 10.30 – 12.30
Derek-hunter@lineone.net

Beetroot, pear, gorgonzola and Honey Bruschetta



This is a very tasty quick snack that goes down a treat at any social occasion.

Ingredients - makes 10

5 mini ciabatta, olive oil, 200g diced, cooked beetroot, 200g gorgonzola, 3 pears peeled and thinly sliced, Runny honey. 1 packet rocket.

Method: Cut each mini ciabatta in half, moisten with olive oil and place on a griddle pan to toast. Place the beetroot in a bowl and pour on a little olive oil.

Crumble the gorgonzola on to the toasted ciabatta halves (bruschetta) and layer with beetroot and pear. Add more cheese and lightly drizzle with honey.

Garnish with rocket.

RHS Chelsea Plant of the Year.

Digitalis 'Illumination Pink' from Thompson & Morgan. This foxglove doesn't produce pollen but lots of nectar.



"This fantastic foxglove was a convincing winner. It flowers throughout the summer, grows well in both borders and containers and is loved by bees." Jim Gardiner, RHS Director of Horticulture

[Foxglove 'Illumination Pink'](#) is the result of breeding that was considered to be impossible. The UK native foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, has an exotic-looking relative named *Isoplexis*, normally found in the Canary Islands. This latter genus was classified by botanists as separate from *Digitalis*, and as such traditional wisdom stated that the two would not make a successful cross.

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All contributions welcome, copy by 23rd of month for publication in following month's newsletter.