Yorkshire Beekeepers Association

Y.B.K.A. eNews

AFFILIATED TO THE BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Welcome

Isn't it nice now that the snows of Christmas and the New Year have blown away. We're not out of winter yet but, like all beekeepers, I can't help thinking of the year ahead in a positive light in the knowledge that the bees are stirring and the Queen is ready to build up the numbers towards a bumper season.

February 2010

So much about beekeeping is weather dependent. In a 'normal' February, though the bees will still be clustered, colonies should be showing signs of activity. Queens should be laying patches of eggs in the warmth of the cluster and workers will be taking cleansing flights and bringing in pollen on mild days from snowdrops, crocuses and early willows. The hives will still be drone free and mouse guards can remain in place though clearing the entrance is good practice.

Weekly checks of apiaries should be carried out to see that surrounding fences are stock-proof, no vandalism has taken place and there is no woodpecker damage to the hives.

Each hive should be hefted to check on the quantity of food stores remaining. More colonies are probably lost during this time of year than during all of the other winter months. A colony that is rearing brood will consume about 10 pounds of food per week, and if the weather turns bad, a colony with small food reserves can quickly starve to death. Never allow the food stores to drop below 15 pounds. If they have less than 15 pounds of honey, start feeding them fondant. Remember, once you start feeding, you need to continue feeding until they are bringing their own food supplies in.

If the weather is good and if bees are flying freely and bringing in large pollen loads and, by placing the back of your hand against the crown board, you can detect heat then all should be well. If very small pollen loads are being taken into a particular hive there is either a shortage of plants yielding pollen or the queen may not be laying for some reason. If there are fewer bees flying from this hive compared to others in the apiary or no flying bees at all, a quick check can be made by raising the crown board. If the colony is dead, try to establish the cause and close-up the hive in order to prevent robber bees gaining access to any remaining stores which may be harbouring some infection.

Check the signs at the hive entrance. There should be a considerable amount of fine particles of wax from the uncapping of stores. If large pieces of wax are on the alighting board, you have a lodger in the form of Mr and/or Mrs Mouse.

Spots of faeces may be evident on the front of the brood chamber, caused by the bees' over long confinement due to severe weather; or dysentery caused by fermenting stores or Nosema disease. Bees crawling, with fluttering partially spread wings (K-wing), clinging to plant stems and unable to fly suggests Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus which is common in bees suffering from Acarine disease or one of the viral diseases which are associated with varroa and are becoming more common.

continued....

If you use matches to ventilate the hive then around the middle of the month, in order to assist brood rearing by reducing heat loss, the matches should be removed from the rear of the crown board thus cutting off top ventilation. If you over-winter on open mesh floors then varroa trays should be inserted under open-mesh floors to cut off the cold air.

February is a good time to apply preservative to the hive. Every three or four years, during a spell of cold weather, if the outside of the hives are dry, they can be given a coat of liquid insecticide-free preservative. Choose a cold, windy day when few, if any, bees are flying. Paint, unless it is microporous, should not be used on wooden, single-walled hives as it prevents the wood from 'breathing' thus causing the hive walls to become saturated during winter, leading to a hive which has the comfort of a refrigerator. When the hive walls start to dry out, the paint will blister and flake off.

By the end of the month, new hives which were purchased in January should have been assembled and given a heavy coat of preservative if needed. Repairs should have been carried out on any spare equipment damaged during the previous season. New frames should be assembled and nailed. I have encountered a surprising number of beginners who have never been told to nail their brood and super frames, leading to disastrous consequences. I would advise beginners to purchase Hoffman self-spacing brood frames having 27mm (1 1/16") wide top bars and 35mm (1 3/8") wide side bars with internal grooves. With top bars 27mm wide, very little brace comb will be built between the frames. The grooves in the side bars act as a location for the wax foundation, leading to nice straight combs. Eleven fames will be required for a National brood chamber. Never use castellated spacers in the brood chamber as they make it impossible to slide frames along the
runners.

For shallow honey-super frames, I consider Hoffman spacing to be a waste of money and a nuisance when uncapping. The Hoffman side bars get in the way of the uncapping knife. It is far better to purchase the cheaper 22mm (7/8") top and side bar frame. When using this frame with foundation in the super, it must be spaced using narrow plastic ends (35mm) during the first year until the foundation is drawn out, filled with honey, sealed and then extracted. The comb is then stored for
use during the following year, when the narrow plastic ends can be replaced by wide plastic ends (47mm) or nine-slot castellated spacers. If wide spacing is used with foundation, the bees will probably draw extra combs in the space between the adjacent sheets of foundation. Eleven frames are required using narrow spacing, these will reduce to nine on wide or castellated spacing. In a good honey year, if you have two hundred supers to extract, a great deal of time is saved by using 22mm flat frames on castellated spacing giving nine frames per super. Only nine frames have to be uncapped and extracted instead of eleven and you get a heavier, more easily uncapped frame. Also, you get a heavier super because the nine-frame super has only ten air-spaces between the combs whereas the eleven-frame super has twelve air-spaces.

Jobs for February

In the Apiary
Monitor hive entrance for build up of dead bees and blockage.
Watch for pollen intake as an indication of egg laying
Preserve equipment
Plant some flowers that will provide food for your bees later in the year
At the hive entrance check for disease

At Home
Attend the February district meeting

Bill Cadmore
Editor

THE HEALTHY HIVE

The BBKA Pictorial Guide to a Healthy Hive - £12.85

Book Revue reply from B.B.K.A.

Thanks for taking the time to study the Guide and I fully appreciate your comments .

The H/H Guide concept was based on the idea of a 'pocket' sized book (admittedly you now need a fairly large pocket!) that could be used as an educational resource for new and improving beekeepers - particularly in an Apiary environment and as such I think it works extremely well. This is surely true as to date you are our only customer who has been disappointed!

The team consulted widely - both amongst fellow beekeepers, Defra, Fera, the NBU and various members of the BBKA Executive and committees before finalising the concept and sourcing the images. A rough draft was available for comment at the Spring Convention, some five months before publication, where it was to say the least enthusiastically received - not least by our sponsors.

Final proof copies - these were exactly as the printed copy you have with the exception of the bio laminate - were sent to Montpellier for entry into the 2009 Apimondia multi-media competition where it was awarded one of only two Gold Medals for a UK product - the other was for a website. This would suggest that it wasn't all that bad!

You probably know that BBKA sell a fully illustrated teaching aid in the Virtual Hive, which contains a full set of picture frames based on the same images of a hive, but none of the disease pictures. Many of these Virtual Hives have been supplied to BK Associations, the National Trust and a few agricultural or horticultural colleges as an educational aid.

I'm pleased to have received your feedback - although a little sad that you are not delighted with the product as so many of our customers clearly are. When we reprint we may be able to incorporate some extra pages - maybe for larger images, together with who knows what other nasties may lurk around the corner for the poor old honey bee.

Best wishes for the New Year

Roger Cullum-Kenyon

MD - BBKA Enterprises Ltd

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Slugs

100 Beekeepers Wanted

If you are a beekeeper who has problems with slugs getting into hives please read on....

Until three years ago I had never seen a slug inside a hive but during these damp years when some colonies have been weak I started to regularly find slugs in colonies. Over winter they are becoming worse pests than mice - at least the mouse guard stops mice - it doesn't stop slugs. And while the slugs don't seem to do a great deal of damage or harm to the colony they do make a mess of combs and the corners of boxes so I would like to prevent slug entry.

So what I'd like from 100 beekeepers is...

1. Suggested ways to stop slugs entering hives. Better still if there is some tale or data to go with the ideas.
2. Volunteers to take part in a research project that I am working on with an M.Sc. postgraduate student.

The Research Project
The theory says, and is backed up by experiments with raised beds and copper rings (for plant growing), that slugs will not cross a metal band made from copper. The copper interacts with the chemicals in the mucus trail so that when slugs make contact with copper a toxic reaction occurs between the copper and the slime creating an electric current. The slugs get an electric shock which repels them. The benefits are that it works wet or dry, is very effective, and doesn't kill the slug. The copper must be at least 2" wide, preferably 3" to be a real deterrent.

We would like some beekeepers to volunteer to test this in a controlled trial. We need beekeepers who have colonies kept in pairs (or that can be identified as matched pairs) to apply copper tape (supplied by us) to the legs of one hive in the pair and then to monitor any slug activity within each hive throughout the year during the normal inspection routine.

A protocol sheet and record sheet will be provided so that all participants are applying the copper banding in the same manner and record the same information. If participants could also take photographs to support the research that would be very useful. Assuming useful results are gathered and a paper published then each participant will receive a copy of the paper. Individual participation will not be aknowledged but Y.B.K.A. will.

Want to take part ? If you would like to take part then please email me, Bill Cadmore, using the email address idlebeekeepers@ntlworld.com

BISHOP BURTON 2010

A GREAT DAYS BEEKEEPING CONFERENCE AND A GREAT LUNCH - £25

A GREAT DAYS BEEKEEPING CONFERENCE AND NO LUNCH - £15

Members come from all over Yorkshire and most have empty seats in their cars so why don't we all try to bring along one or two of the many new members we have ?

Your Secretary has application forms
Or contact me direct - bill.cadmore@ntlworld.com

Report on 2010 BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM)

The main problem regarding the 50th BBKA ADM was in fact, is the meeting to take place of not on Saturday 16th January? It was not until 5pm on the Wednesday prior to the meeting that a decision was made to run the meeting. The poor weather conditions affecting the whole of the country were causing the BBKA quite a few concerns.

As this is my first report and my first experience attending an ADM, I would be only too pleased to get feedback as to the detail you would like reported back on the ADM. It is evident from the ADM delegates pack that there certainly was a lot of business to navigate through on the day. The voting protocol did occasionally not run smoothly and required voting sheets to be destroyed and started again due to a breakdown in procedure. However it does demonstrate that the process is carried out fairly. The day is a certainly a long one, the meeting at BBKA headquarters commenced at 10-30am prompt and finished (eventually) at 6-30pm, with only a short break for lunch and minimal socialising.

The reports from the various committees were presented with only the key points raised to save time in the busy schedule.

Main points are the focus on education and information available to enable training to progress, there is a lot more to come on this subject. More to do with the rapid increase in membership, this is causing some major problems to some of the smaller associations. I don't think in Yorkshire we have the same problems as long as we maintain our education program of events such as our Spring meeting/Bishop Burton/AGM presentations and the vast number of local association lecture and apiary events. The problem is beginning to shift to the newly established beekeepers (i.e. previous beginners) we need to focus on this aspect. A lot of debate was centred on the competence of those doing training - obviously a difficult area to address. The plastic OMLET long hive is bringing in a clutch of new beekeepers and the process is raising its own difficulties, instructions do however come with the hive, but as we all know keeping bees is not a simple as following a set of instructions.

The Technical Committee announced an increase in the funds for research (£28k in budget + £63k donation) and a number of research projects are now commencing to put the cash to use.

I suppose the subject that interest us all the most are the proposals put forward to the ADM. The particularly contentious ones being the "Pesticide Endorsement" and the "Instruction to rejoin the FERA Project Board" Both of these proposals are hugely complex and carry a burden of an enormous amount of politics. The various emails I received on both these subjects and the information from our YBKA AGM formed the basis of what I was to be instructed to vote. I must comment however that the information presented to the Delegates and on the website is only a snippet of the work that the BBKA is involved with, it is also easy to slant your understanding to support your own views. When the fuller picture is explained then the picture clears.

Regarding the pesticide proposal this was defeated by a close margin in the card vote (25f/ 30a/3abs) it then went to a membership vote (4588f/9829a/1025abs) which became clearer. Had the vote gone in favour then it would have served to stifle any future dialogue on this very complex issue. [Imagine a farmer wanting to spray his crops and none of the products indicated the effect on bees - which one would he choose? (Cheapest), how does he know the

effect? Is it not a good situation to have a note on a product or endorsement?]. A suggestion is that the BBKA logo is not the indication of endorsement was taken on board. The subject of taking monies from pesticide companies is another issue and is part of previous ADM proposals. I personally think the discussion on this subject must continue via the BBKA technical committees.

The rejoining of the FERA project board was also rejected (7f/39a/10abs) the reason this was rejected is to do with the immense amount of time and effort the BBKA Exec have invested in getting close to Government representatives and the Opposition Parties. The ADM thought that this approach actually puts BBKA in a favourable position (due to confidentiality issues further information cannot yet be reported) BBKA have not ruled out rejoining the project board but it is felt to "instruct" rejoining compromises the political effort and position BBKA currently have generated.

YBKA have altered the timing of the next AGM to enable the ADM proposals to be available to members. Comments at the YBKA AGM will be sought to provide further guidance to myself as the Yorkshire Delegate as to how the members of Yorkshire would like me to represent your wishes, hence the timing change to allow more time to collect comments.

In case anyone is confused there a basically 3 options for the ADM Delegate:-

1. "Mandated" by the members as to how to vote, and cannot change.
2. "Instructed" by the members as to the preferred vote but can listen to the comments at the ADM and make a final decision based on what is reported at the meeting.
3. Make up own mind at the meeting.

These options can differ for each ADM proposal.

Tony Jefferson
Yorkshire Delegate

Auction Dates

Lincoln Auction is on Sat 3rd of April
held on the Lincoln show ground starting at 10-am

Nottingham BKA Auction is on 10th of April
at the Newark showground Winthorpe NG24 2NY starting at 10am.

Beverley Auction is on .....tba
at Woodmansey Village Hall, Long Lane (South of Woodmansey on A1174) HU17 0RN.

York Auction is on.....tba

THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES AND OMMISSIONS IN BEEKEEPING
(Trans. by Oliver Mihajlovic)

We will take two kinds of mistakes into consideration - one in the approach and organization of beekeeping and other in beekeeping technology. By its intensity they both vary from small to very serious mistakes which can make small or serious damage to a bee colony. Every beekeeper approaches beekeeping according to his personality, his capabilities and expectations, while he chooses the technology according to his financial and other means, his knowledge and natural environment.
There are no strict rules in beekeeping and the approach to it. Still, some natural laws of a bee colony development must be respected.

Therefore, this time we will not examine beekeeping technologies, but what mistakes and omissions should be avoided.

Mistakes in approach to beekeeping
It is much easier to learn how to approach a hive than how to approach beekeeping and its organization. Lack of love towards bees, negligence and greed are probably the biggest mistakes in the approach to beekeeping. All others come from these.
- An insufficient knowledge about bees and beekeeping technology is frequent with our beekeepers. Also, many of them stick to some errors, proclaiming their method the best, and all others wrong. Beekeepers often do not even try to understand the laws of a bee colony's development. They often wrongly acquire other people's methods without any criteria. One must always have some minimum knowledge.
- Instead of first learning about basics of beekeeping and maintaining bee colonies, some beginners try to achieve great income with some complicated methods, unclear even to themselves.
- Carelessness and negligence are definitely not the characteristics of a good beekeeper.
- Paying attention to details and aesthetics while overlooking the essence is also a mistake.
- Lacking money or time or for other reasons beekeepers often do not do some important things. It is much more important that all jobs be done properly and on time, even not perfectly, than to do some jobs best possible and miss some others.
- The absence of any planning or too much planning with complicated methods does not generate good results.
- Beekeepers do not work hard enough on increasing production and selling honey and other bee products, swarms and queens. That makes production less economical and results in high and uncompetitive price.

Although love should be the basic reason for beekeeping, it is recommended that every beekeeper, even those with few hives, should strive for economical beekeeping by increasing production and producing different products.
- Beekeepers are often not interested in serious work and investments in beekeeping. A strong bee colony consumes much food, but produces much more. Equally, one should invest more in his apiary to get more.

Mistakes in beekeeping technology
- Making colonies have minimum of food or not enough food for a normal activity is one of the most serious mistakes. Bees will never consume more food than necessary. The importance of the amount of pollen in a hive is often underestimated. The absence of pollen is very bad for development of a colony especially in autumn or early spring.
- Weak and old queens make a colony weak and unproductive, and can result in its disappearing, esp. in autumn, winter or early spring. A beekeeper will not make a big mistake if he makes a colony with new comb and in good honey flow conditions bring up its own queen, although better methods for rearing queens are known. However, a much greater mistake should be if one does it with weak colonies, with no food, and with old and dark comb. It is wrong to expect that queens brought up in such conditions would ever have good brood.

▪ Choosing some complicated method of rearing queens, like implanting larvae, does not always guarantee that queens will be good quality, since an omission in one phase only can completely ruin the whole procedure.
▪ Keeping a weak colony is uneconomical and the expenses of maintaining it are bigger than profit. However, swarms with young queens are not considered weak colonies.
▪ Beekeepers often make mistakes by feeding bees late in autumn and exhausting them.
▪ Bad comb is a common mistake in beekeeping. That is old, dark damaged or curved comb with many drone cells. Such comb will never make brood expand like on proper new comb. Besides, there is a constant risk of diseases, lice or wax moth.
▪ Mistakes with adding frames are also frequent. One extremity would be not to expand brood space, or not to do it on time, while the other would be to expand the brood excessively and slow down progress of a colony. This is especially the case with comb foundations. Beekeepers sometimes add foundations to weak colonies when there is no honey flow and when weather is cold. Some beekeepers even put them among
frames with honey. When a colony is strong and during honey flow it is wrong to put foundation at the end of brood, since the queen will not have time to lay eggs there. New foundation should not be added to weak colonies if the previously added one is still not drawn.
▪ Insufficient number of supers is also a frequent mistake. Strong colonies are kept from producing more honey which is directly decreasing possible income.
▪ Colonies are not treated against diseases (especially Varroa) on time, so serious damage is made. On the other hand, colonies can be excessively and improperly treated, which contaminates wax and honey, weakens bees' immunity and make Varroa resistant to medication. It is a mistake not to monitor the performance and efficacy of a particular cure.
▪ Bad location for an apiary is a significant obstacle for successful beekeeping. Sometimes a beekeeper cannot choose, but it is a mistake to keep bees on locations with humid air, harsh wind, not enough sunlight, or where the bees would be disturbed. Besides, locations for an apiary should have rich honey flows.
▪ Mistakes with hive inspection are the most frequent since bees are disturbed when hives are opened too often and there is a danger of robbing when there is no honey flow. Handling frames carelessly is also frequent, especially with young beekeepers.
▪ It can be considered a mistake if a beekeeper does not have a certain number of accessory colonies and swarms which could be useful in many ways.
▪ Having old, damaged or nonstandard hives unsuitable for moving is considered to be a mistake.

We cannot go on analysing mistakes and omissions in beekeeping technology, since we would have to examine all existing methods. Mistakes can be made with every step - when hives are moved, when queens are brought up, when colonies are divided, etc. Mistakes appear when it is not understood that beekeeping is a complex process with many causes and consequences that must be taken care of, and when the basic rules of life of a bee colony are not well-known.

Thanks to Nottingham Beemaster for this article.

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YORKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

EVENTS CALENDAR 2009/10

EVENT	VENUE	DATE
BBKA Module tutorial	Normanby Pavilion GYS	19 December 2009
BBKA Module tutorial	Normanby Pavilion GYS	9 January 2010
BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting	Stoneleigh Warks	16 January 2010
YBKA GPC meeting	Normanby Pavilion GYS	5 February 2010
BBKA Module tutorial	Normanby Pavilion GYS	20 February 2010
YBKA Spring Conference	Normanby Pavilion GYS	6 March 2010
BBKA Module Examinations	Normanby Pavilion GYS	20 March 2010
YBKA Honey Judges workshop	Normanby Pavilion GYS	27 March 2010
BBKA Stoneleigh Conference	Stoneleigh Warks	16,17,18 April 2010
YBKA Bishop Burton Conference	Bishop Burton College Beverley	24 April 2010
YBKA GPC meeting	Normanby Pavilion GYS	7 May 2010
YBKA Queen Rearing course	Normanby Pavilion GYS	12 & 13 June 2010
YAS Countryside Days	Great Yorkshire Showground	15 & 16 June 2010
YBKA GPC meeting	Normanby Pavilion GYS	18 June 2010
Great Yorkshire Show	Normanby Pavilion GYS	13, 14, 15 July
YBKA GPC meeting	Normanby Pavilion GYS	24 September 2010
YAS Countryside Live	Great Yorkshire Showground	23 & 24 October 2010
YBKA GPC meeting	Normanby Pavilion GYS	3 December 2010
YBKA AGM	Normanby Pavilion GYS	4 December 2010