

Y.B.K.A. eNews

AFFILIATED TO THE BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



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Our Chairmans message

A Late Edition for September

Sorry !

I've been away enjoying myself so this edition is late.

As it happens this is a good thing because I've just read BBKA News and discovered that not only have the dates of the BBKA Spring Convention changed but so has the venue. The reason for the change is mainly the need for extra and better quality lecture space. The talks at the convention have been so popular that many members have had to be turned away - not a good thing to happen when you've paid a lot of cash to get into the event.

So things should be better than ever. All of the beekeeping equipment manufacturers will be there and lots of bargains can be had - and this year you'll stand a chance of actually hearing a talk or two.

This however has a knock-on effect on Yorkshire BKA. Our own conference is timed as a week before or after the BBKA conference so that the internationally known speaker can give talks at both events - but now that BBKA have changed their dates we have to change ours - fingers crossed that we can get a venue on a suitable date to host the international speaker.

In addition to the international speaker we have talks by two well established British beekeepers. This year we have a special treat with a husband and wife team from Wales.

Wally Shaw is a regular contributor to BeeCraft. Last year he wrote the 'New Beekeepers' section each month and this year he has written a series of articles on honey production, extraction and distribution. He is a real beekeepers beekeeper and speaks from experience in a cheerful and friendly manner.

Jenny Shaw has many stories about beekeeping with Wally and is a joy to listen to.

Both illustrate their talks with useful and informative graphics and photographs.

We should all enjoy the YBKA Spring Conference this year.

All dates for these events are on the back page.

In the meantime I hope everybody has lots of honey and lots of healthy bees to go into winter with. What is better than lots of very happy beekeepers ?

Bill

SEPTEMBER

JOBS FOR THE MONTH

Prepare for Winter

Collect from Heather

Do Health Check



In most areas and on most moors virtually the last commercial crop of the season - the Heather crop, has either come or is rapidly coming to an end.

The final act regarding this year's crop is to process it into liquid heather honey by pressing it out, or the more laborious task of centrifuge extraction. This is a very labour intensive process as Heather is what is known as thixotropic, this means it's a thick gel like substance and not at all runny like other nectars making it extremely difficult to extract by this method. It has to be jiggled by a spiked roller or a special instrument called a perforator. This is a series of very sharp spikes about 2inch long in a piece of wood set out so they match up with the cells pattern on a super frame. You have to place the spikes deep into each on the cells and jiggle the thick honey nectar to make it runny before extraction both sides. This process has to be repeated several times making it very hard work indeed as the spinning action in the extractor has to be set very slowly to start with or the frames burst with the weight until they slowly get lighter when the speed can be increased. The wet residue remaining can then be fed back to the bees for winter.

An alternative preparation for Heather honey is cut comb honey. Heather generally generates higher prices per pound than other honeys due to its unique taste and time consuming preparations.

The only one remaining crop for some of you will be the Ivy. This crop is for most beekeepers a top up to the winter food stores of the bees. It has only one draw back to it and that is it sets like concrete in the cells. Although in some areas they do process some of the Ivy for bottling it is though I believe practiced few and far between. If the bees can't get out for water due to very cold weather like last year to dilute raw Ivy stored then they can starve, being unable to process it into food due to this hard compaction.

In the same vein it is not recommended to save OSR for winter feed as the same thing happens to this nectar. In some areas the bees mix it with other autumnal nectars to soften it slightly allowing them to process it easier. Another aid to help in this process is to feed your bees a liquid sugar concentrate feed at this time as its coming in to top them up to the recommended surplus food they will require to see them through the winter months, this action dilutes the Ivy.

The recommended amount of stores each colony requires going into winter is approx. 20kg. per colony (40lbs), this should ensure they have sufficient food to see them through to March/ April next year when nectar sources are available to the bees once again.

It is very difficult for beginners to assess the stores within a colony so here's a little help. A full brood frame of honey end to end, top to top, should hold about 5lbs of honey counting both sides, therefore half a frame has 2-1/2 lbs. Go through your full brood box and write down what stores are on each frame based on this figure then whatever you have, make it up to 40lbs with liquid feed. If you are leaving a super of honey on also then roughly half this amount for each frame within the super to 3lbs per full frame.

Using this configuration should help you assess your hives requirements. When making up winter feed use a mix of 1 pint of water to 2lbs or 1kg of sugar, this is a good mix for the bees to store and process quickly. I do know a lot of people now go for the 50/50 sugar to water ratio and I personally don't think this is a bad method at all to persevere. I will leave that decision up to you. Also use a large contact container bucket of feeder so the bees can take the liquid down into the hive quickly. The feed should be warm and not cold and preferably given at evening time when all the foraging bees are in house and able to move the liquid down quickly into the brood box.

After this process the next thing to do on your agenda should be the treatment for Varroa. Get those strips or whatever method you use in whilst the weather is still quite warm allowing the chemicals within the pads, strips or mixtures to work destroying the mite within your colonies before the onset of winter. Always remember, read the instructions and never leave the treatment in longer than recommended as this is highly detrimental to your bees and only assists in getting the mites resistant to the medications. Ensure all floors are clean of debris, and take out your queen excluders if you wish now allowing the queen access to the full hive and stores. This will eliminate the possibility of her being trapped below the excluder and isolated, if stores get short in the brood box and the bees move en-block into the super whilst in cluster resulting in her death.

I place my supers beneath the brood box when feeding is complete for winter as I am totally on open mesh floors and they can be draughty and sometimes damp. This ensures they eat the food in the super first in the main because its near the entrance, and in the spring the brood box being higher up is warmer and this encourages the queen to start laying with momentum in the brood boxes in spring and not in the supers where they are cooler nearer the open mesh floor.

If you are on conventional floors you should have also put in your entrance blocks by now. This cuts down on robbing and wasp attack, and allows the bees to defend its entrance with greater ease.

If you're in an area where woodpeckers live then this is also the time to make cages to be place around the hives to stop them pecking through the woodwork after grubs, and ruining your expensive boxes. Chicken wire is used for this but ensure you leave a gap between the mesh and the hive

of at least 5 inch all around as the beak of the woodpecker is quite long and anything less they can still cause damage.

You must also keep a close eye on your stores situation right up to the end of Oct now for autumns are getting stretched out longer as the world slowly heats up.

In Summary

1. Take off all surplus honey for extraction.
2. Feed all colonies where required
3. Treat every Hive with a Varroa treatment.
4. Put in all entrance blocks
5. Clean off all floors.
6. Remove queen excluder if you wish.
7. Prepare for woodpecker attack.
8. Keep checking all through this month and next

Happy Beekeeping and Full supers

Dave Shannon

The Bee Meeting

Who are these people at the bridge to meet me? They are the villagers----

The rector, the midwife, the sexton, the agent for bees.
In my sleeveless summery dress I have no protection,
And they are all gloved and covered, why did nobody tell me?

They are smiling and taking out veils tacked to ancient hats.

I am nude as a chicken neck, does nobody love me?
Yes, here is the secretary of bees with her white shop smock,

Buttoning the cuffs at my wrists and the slit from my neck to my knees.

Now I am milkweed silk, the bees will not notice.
They will not smell my fear, my fear, my fear.

Which is the rector now, is it that man in black?
Which is the midwife, is that her blue coat?

Everybody is nodding a square black head, they are knights in visors,

Breastplates of cheesecloth knotted under the armpits.
Their smiles and their voices are changing. I am led through a beanfield.

Strips of tinfoil winking like people,
Feather dusters fanning their hands in a sea of bean flowers,

Creamy bean flowers with black eyes and leaves like bored hearts.

Is it blood clots the tendrils are dragging up that string?
No, no, it is scarlet flowers that will one day be edible.

Now they are giving me a fashionable white straw Italian hat

And a black veil that molds to my face, they are making me one of them.

They are leading me to the shorn grove, the circle of hives.

Is it the hawthorn that smells so sick?
The barren body of hawthorn, etherizing its children.

Is it some operation that is taking place?

It is the surgeon my neighbors are waiting for,

This apparition in a green helmet,
Shining gloves and white suit.

Is it the butcher, the grocer, the postman, someone I know?
I cannot run, I am rooted, and the gorse hurts me
With its yellow purses, its spiky armory.

I could not run without having to run forever.

The white hive is snug as a virgin,
Sealing off her brood cells, her honey, and quietly humming.

Smoke rolls and scarves in the grove.

The mind of the hive thinks this is the end of everything.
Here they come, the outriders, on their hysterical elastics.

If I stand very still, they will think I am cow-parsley,
A gullible head untouched by their animosity,

Not even nodding, a personage in a hedgerow.

The villagers open the chambers, they are hunting the queen.

Is she hiding, is she eating honey? She is very clever.

She is old, old, old, she must live another year, and she knows it.

While in their fingerjoint cells the new virgins

Dream of a duel they will win inevitably,

A curtain of wax dividing them from the bride flight,

The uplift of the murderess into a heaven that loves her.

The villagers are moving the virgins, there will be no killing.

The old queen does not show herself, is she so ungrateful?

I am exhausted, I am exhausted -

Pillar of white in a blackout of knives.

I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.

The villagers are untying their disguises, they are shaking hands.

Whose is that long white box in the grove, what have they accomplished, why am I cold.

3 October 1962

Sylvia Plath

Y.B.K.A. JUDGE MERIT AWARDS

As announced in a previous issue of the eNews YBKA have introduced a special award for our honey shows.

This is to be awarded, at the judges discretion, to those members who have deserve praise and encouragement for their entries but who might not have received other awards



The first award was made at Bridlington Old Town Festival Show in July

It was awarded to Andrew Armstrong of Beverley BKA for a well presented pair of jars of Light Honey. The presentation and quality of the honey was excellent.

Whitby Beekeepers had a fantastic show at Egton on Wed 24th August, the weather on the day turned out to be wonderfully warm and sunny. The days either side of the show were wet, cold and generally miserable. Record entries in all sections of the show were reported and a record number of people attended.

The Whitby & District BKA honey show had 155 entries, which included some from Wakefield/Pontefract, Scarborough and Beverley, the quality of exhibits were to a very high standard.

As there were 155 entries the Judge David Mead of Pickering, decided to award 2 Judge Merit rosettes.

Dave Young of Sleights was awarded a rosette for a pair jars of extremely well presented soft set honey, Dave also was awarded the BBKA Blue Ribbon (best exhibit in show) for this entry.

Peter Chapman from Scarborough was also awarded a rosette for a pair of traditional sections.

We hope all of them take up the offer of free entry to this years Countryside Live Show (the YBKA annual honey show)



This is the entry from Catherine Cooper at the Emley Show

Not bad for a 15 year old.

Well done Catherine - your wax flowers are superb - and well deserving of the awards.

Keep up the good work!

We hope to see some entries from you winning in the wax section of the Great Yorkshire Show next year.

FOR SALE

Large stainless steel settling tank, excellent condition (see p.27 of Thornes catalogue for size & full description) Costs £322 new. Will accept £200.

Tel: 01709 548700

Super Solution

Suffer from Beekeepers Back ?

A few years ago I slipped a disc in my back..... Its made me VERY cautious in the lifting department! Following on from that, I took steps to reduce the lifting requirements of many things I do, including bee keeping. To put it simply, I stopped using brood boxes! Now, some years later, I think there are a number of advantages to running 'Super Only' colonies.

Firstly, Simplicity: There is only one foundation size to order. One box size. One frame size. There is only one pile of spare kit required. Everything fits everything else!

Secondly, Efficiency: When a brood comb passes its 'best before' date, move it upstairs and let the brood hatch out. (This does not have to be done box at a time.) I try to organise it such that all of the worst comb is in the honey supers to collect heather, since heather combs get destroyed in the extraction process.

Ease of Inspection: You might think that having twice as many combs makes routine inspections twice as long. It doesn't! The gap between two super boxes is an ideal place to draw queen cells. If the bottom bars of the top box have no queen cells you need go no further. For this reason a colony is actually less disturbed by most inspections.

Easy Uniting: Two colonies can be united with newspaper. The following week, nominated brood combs can go down and honey combs can go up. No fear of having to lift, and extract, a National Brood box full of honey!

Easy Splitting: If you split a colony into nuclei, the brood and stores can be evenly divvied up.

Ease of Moving: Both of the sites I use for beekeeping require long/awkward 'carries' from the nearest road. I'm happy with it that way for security reasons!

Improved Wintering: In a National brood box the winter cluster can find it difficult to move from comb to comb, because the bees have to go round an external comb edge. With two supers there is a horizontal corridor right through the centre of the brood area.

Potential Problems:

Brood Space: I'm told that a National brood box is designed to be big enough for a standard colony. Therefore using the space in two supers for brood is generous.

National Floors: National floors are, in my opinion, wrong! They are top bee spaced, where as all the other components of a National hive are bottom bee spaced. If you use a standard National floor you will encounter problems trying to move brood combs from the bottom super to anywhere else.

Rogue Queen Cells. If you move young brood to above the Queen excluder it is possible for the colony to raise Queen cells on it. Always check brood moved above the following week.

Travelling Screens. Moving a four super hive (two brood two honey) as individual supers requires seven travelling screens!

I hope that's helpful.

Tim DH Aug 2011

Commercial Anybody ?

I do like the current format and content, Bill. Keep up the good work.

1. Castellations

I was enquiring about brood castellations from a fellow member the other week and he told me that it was certain failure of the Basic exam. I was amazed. So I was interested to read your readers' comments about this practice. I think I shall nag him to get some for me.

2. Swarms

During the season I have had to pass on to neighbouring associations news of swarms to be collected. On one occasion I was told that there was a charge of £10 for a visit and £30 for collection (if my memory serves) and I was horrified. I have

been educated by Halifax BKA to see this as a PR service by beekeepers, who will benefit some of the time. As you wrote, we caused it.....

3. We used to have a member, Albert Taylor, who died and now his widow is trying to sell his hives and equipment. The problem is that Albert insisted on being different and using Commercials. There are 5 hives on offer, plus bee suits, smoker, etc. Can you insert a small something in the next edition to find out if there anyone out there using Commercials? Use my email address for any replies.

Thanks
Martin

martin@halifaxbeekeepers.co.uk

Examination Preparation Update

Examination Preparation Update

Tutorials for Module 1 and Module 5 will be held in the Yorkshire Beekeepers' Pavillion this winter. These will start at 10.00 am and run for about 2 hours.

Module 1 Honey Bee Management

8th October, 12th November, 10th December, 14th January, 11th February.

Module 5 Honey Bee Biology

15th October, 19th November, 18th February and a third date sometime in January or early February to be arranged.

Module 1 can be taken on either the 24th March or 10th November 2012, Module 5 on 24th March 2012.

In addition I will arrange a session on exam technique open to anyone who may be interested.

I would again endorse the correspondence courses which are an excellent way of assisting your study for the modules. The course covers the whole syllabus, with the benefit of feedback from a tutor and is a disciplined way of getting into the habit of answering examination questions.

It would be helpful to have some idea of the level of interest so please let me know if you intend to come along to the sessions in Harrogate.

All examination information can be found on the BBKA website at www.bbka.org.uk

MODULE 1 TUTORIALS

These will take place in Harrogate at the Normanby Pavillion. The dates are all Saturdays and they will be between 10.00am and 12 noon.

8th October, 12th November, 10th December, 14th January, 11th February

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT ANYONE WISHING TO ATTEND CONTACTS ME
wendy@maslin.karoo.co.uk or telephone 01482 656018

Examination Preparation Update

CLOSING DATES

Closing dates for applications
10th February
and
September 30th.

Beekeeping Husbandry Certificates

Dates for your Diary

June 2nd Study day in preparation for the General Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry

June 3rd Study day in preparation for the Advanced Certificate in Beekeeping Husbandry

These will also be held in Harrogate – please register your interest with me if you have not already done so.

wendy@maslin.karoo.co.uk or by telephone on 01482 656018

Winter preparation Read the NBU Leaflet !!!!!

The importance of preparing colonies to enter the winter in a healthy state, with an adequate supply of young healthy bees and stores, cannot be stressed enough.



The beekeeping year starts here, so a colony overwintered in good condition ensures that it is fit for purpose in the following spring. Recent winter colony loss investigations in the UK have clearly shown links between dead colonies and the viruses, particularly deformed wing virus, which are associated with varroa infestations. This highlights the importance of effective and timely varroa control.

Colonies must have Sufficient stores. The amount of stores required by a colony varies with the strain of bee. It is generally thought that a honey bee colony requires about 18 – 22 kg of honey to safely feed it through the winter. Larger hives headed by prolific queens may require more. When full a BS brood frame contains about 2.2 kg of honey, so assess the existing colony stores and feed the required balance using winter strength sugar syrup, i.e. 1 kg. of white granulated sugar to 500 ml of water. Sugar syrup can be fed to supplement honey stores or as a substitute for them. Watch out for robbing bees and wasps, this can be a problem in late summer. Colonies also require ample pollen to overwinter successfully, especially to rear brood. Ensure that your overwintering bees have access to good quality pollen crops both at the end of the season and early in the following season.

Check that the hive is in sound condition, is waterproof and is well ventilated. Apiary sites need choosing carefully to ensure that they have good access in all weather, firm but well drained ground, sunny, not in a frost pocket, good air circulation, etc. Damp rather than cold kills bees so check hives, especially roofs, to ensure rain is shed away. It is best to ensure that your hives are off the ground on suitable stands. If your apiary site is not vulnerable to windy conditions, and you are using open mesh floors, they can be left with the floor inserts out. If not, or your hives are on solid floors, then you can lift the crown board on two-millimetre laths. Used matchsticks are excellent for this purpose.

Protected your hives from winter pests. Fit mouse guards to prevent access by small rodents, which often nest in hives during the winter. In some areas green woodpeckers can damage hives, so if this is a known problem in, or near, your apiary, place a simple cage of chicken wire around and over the hive, at least 300 mm from the hive walls to prevent damage whilst permitting bees to fly. This will also work if rats start to be interested in your hives. In damp weather slugs have also moved into hives in large numbers - prevent this by treating the stand with a wood preservative or use copper bands.

The NBU have an good leaflet on preparing your hives for winter which you can download from their excellent website.

Varroa control is most important but is becoming much more complicated. In August we used to be able to treat with apiguard or a similar thymol treatment when the weather was warm enough and we had removed all of the honey from the hives. Now we are collecting honey into September and October with good weather and lots of balsam - so when can we treat ? Not in the cold. So we have to use biomechanical controls and icing sugar leaving the main treatment to winter with oxalic acid dribbling. This is not a good solution - varroa numbers build up in summer and without treatment the bees go into winter with very large virus populations - this is what kills colonies.

Clearly you also want your bees to go into winter disease free and queen right - have you checked ?

Swarms

Replies from members

YBKA newsletter. Should we be paid to collect swarms?

Definitely not, especially in the light of the public liability and the public relations considerations. However, even though it would be nice if all beekeepers would be prepared to collect on behalf of their association, that is not a reasonable or fair expectation for everybody. Not everyone will have the equipment and spare hives, ready transport, etc.

But if it is left to just a few people within an association then it is a lot of work for them. So not really sure what the solution is but definitely in support of "no payment from the public".

Alan Williams

Swarms

During the season I have had to pass on to neighbouring associations news of swarms to be collected. On one occasion I was told that there was a charge of £10 for a visit and £30 for collection (if my memory serves) and I was horrified. I have been educated by Halifax BKA to see this as a PR service by beekeepers, who will benefit some of the time. As you wrote, we caused it.....

Martin Robinson

Dear Editor

Having just read the article on whether the public should pay for swarms I have the following comments

This year I collected several swarms for the local association. Not all of them were "payers" because quite often the swarms were in neutral territory such as down a back alley or on a public footpath. I was more than happy to collect these for free because I am trying to build up my bee colonies and these swarms allowed me to build up my hives.

Collecting swarms also gave me a lot of useful experience in the techniques of collection and then integrating the swarm into my apiary either as a breeding colony or by uniting them with an existing colony.

Some of the public were only too happy to pay but I wouldn't be surprised if some people would rather not pay and therefore not bother reporting the swarm or may even go out and spray it. I had one occasion where the house owner sprayed a lovely prime swarm and all I found was a heap of dead bees. I would have gladly collected the swarm for free.

There was another case where the householder refused to pay and the bees were left "hanging" over a cold wet weekend during which time they were attacked by kids

resulting in the queen and lots of workers being killed. If collected straight away for free it would have been a good sized laying swarm.

I do realize that a professional pest control firm would charge lots more than £30 and the money is useful for the local association. However I think there are a lot of new beekeepers with only one or two hives who would be happy to collect swarms for free in order to increase their stock and gain bee handling experience.

Perhaps a voluntary payment system would be better.

Swarmy Seeker

Re the article on swarm collection; I agree whole heartedly on all 4 points you make at the end -especially with point nr 4.

Yours sincerely,
Jackie Town, Airedale Beekeepers Ass'n

I have just read your article on swarms and charging for collection. I always refuse the offer of payment and never ask for any.

What really irritates me is the number of calls I have received from the public who have been given my name by the Council whose attitude seems to have been that if it buzzes we'll call a beekeeper who will work out what type of insect it is for us without charge. I have been to countless bumble bee and solitary bee colonies which could have been identified over the telephone if the council had asked a few simple questions. I had one such call this spring from a council contractor about bees at a school in Goole, in April. I think the contractor thought I worked for a pest control company. The contractor was based in Nottingham! I went along and found about six solitary bee holes in dry earth around a tree in the playground. Given the location I did a bit of research because it had never crossed my mind whether solitary bees could sting. It turns out that they can, but the sting is not particularly painful and they are less likely to use it than honey bees. I had to advise the school that they should, if they wanted no risk at all, use wasp killer on the nest. I rather hope they followed my advice and just left them alone, but in this era I doubt it.

I've been to bumble bee nests in roofs, in compost heaps, gardens, walls and so on. The public just seem to want to be reassured that they are not going to be a victim of Killer Bees! It often surprises them to learn that the nests have usually been there for many weeks if not months and that they have only just noticed them.

Andrew Brade

Swarm in a Box ?

A telephone call ... "I've been happy to have honeybees living in my bird box this summer but I think that they have outgrown it a little bit. What should I do ?

I assumed that in a bird box these would be bumblebees - but asked for pictures to confirm this.



As you can see - the caller was perfectly correct, the honeybees had outgrown the birdbox. In fact these combs were around 18 inches long. No bees were found inside the birdbox.

Concerned that the bees would not survive the winter the caller agreed to have a beekeeper hive the bees - a nice job to do with very well behaved bees.

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Y.B.K.A. DATES

BBKA Forum
1st October 2011

Countryside Live

The show is on Sat/Sun 22/23rd
October 2011

Yorkshire Beekeeper's Annual
Honey Show

The entries close on Friday 16th
Sept - so anyone holding a Judge
merit award needs to submit
entries and pay - then YBKA will
refund the entry fee later

YBKA AGM

December 3rd 2011
Yorkshire Showground

YBKA GPC Meetings
23rd September 2011
3rd December 2011

BBKA ADM

January 14th 2012

BBKA Spring Convention
April 20 -22nd 2012

YBKA Bishop Burton
April 28th 2012

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