



YORKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Yorkshire Beekeeping Association Newsletter April 2020

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Chairman's Notes

This April brings little to celebrate, even in the world of beekeeping. Many friends and colleagues endured late winter floods where homes and businesses lost everything and are still recovering. Our farmers, devastated in many areas, with crops left under multiple feet of water and ruined. Some of us were fortunate with the location of our hives on higher ground, others were not so fortunate resulting in total loss. Our hearts go out to all those affected.

Now we have the rapid spreading of coronavirus, a pandemic, sweeping the globe, that has also had an impact on beekeeping and beekeepers. Restrictive measures have been implemented, for our own safety, by both government and the World Health Organisation, to try to contain the spread of this virus

It is with these guidelines in place that we, the YBKA, had to announce, with great regret, the cancellation of our forthcoming 2020 Spring Conference and those BBKA exams scheduled for the 21st of March. These cancellations were not taken lightly but we had to prioritise the safety of our members.

I apologise sincerely to everyone that had taken the time and made considerable effort to study hard with a view to passing exams. Please bear with us and we will work with BBKA to reschedule, at a time when it's considered safe to do so.

There will, no doubt, be further compulsory closures and cancellations of other events and assessments in the foreseeable future. We will try to keep you up to date, by emails and our website and newsletter. Please avoid any unwarranted travel and all face to face meetings at this time.

Our one consolation is that beekeeping can be done in isolation and our bees are now becoming active due to slightly warming temperatures as we head into spring. It's not quite warm enough yet to start going into your brood boxes but hopefully it won't be too long now before daily temperatures reach the 14/15°C to allow this to happen. Whilst checking your colonies please observe the social distancing advice for containment of the virus and try not to involve others. **No** apiary meetings or training of others until this pandemic has passed. If you must use other's equipment, please remember to wash/wipe your hands and all items used. The virus can live on wood and metal objects, such as hive tools, for days.

The committee and I are still working hard to ensure you get all up-to-date information. At this time, we must all try to keep personal contacts to a minimum, preferably none, and act sensibly. Finally, bear a thought for the elderly and infirm. Keep in touch, safely, to check they are OK and have everything they need in the way of food, drinks and medications etc. to get through this pandemic.

Dave Shannon
YBKA Chairman

Obituary: Mr. Terry Head – Doncaster BKA

Terry, who was a member of Doncaster BKA, died last week in Doncaster Hospital, after being ill

for some time with a recurring illness. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Terry was a very close friend of mine and we are pictured together below, me awarding a prize to my pal at Countryside Live a few years ago. Terry was an excellent beekeeper, following in the footsteps of his father, and a great showman. He won many awards at honey shows up and down the county over the years and became a regular winner at Doncaster's Honey Show, our Yorkshire Beekeepers Honey Show (below), and at the Great Yorkshire Show.

Terry and his wife Marion loved to take their caravan up to the Egton Show each year, which Terry often entered, winning prizes. He became a good friend to Tony Jefferson who is Chief Steward of the Egton Show's honey section. He will be very sadly missed by many, especially by me, for we worked together with our bees. Breeding and selecting jointly and sharing our best queens, plus transporting hives to borage, balsam and heather. We attended all the beekeepers' auctions together for well over 20 years. He was a true friend and a gentleman and all those who knew him would agree.

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions caused by this Covid-19 outbreak, members were unable to attend his funeral today, Friday 27th of March 2020. Attendance was for close family only.

I know Terry had very many friends, not only in beekeeping circles, who would have wished to be there. However, I am assured by Marion his wife that there will be a memorial service for all when this pandemic is finally defeated to allow all his friends to attend and pay their respects. I will keep everyone informed of the time and place in a future edition.

Dave Shannon

YBKA Chairman.



Covid-19 and Beekeeping

[Find all your latest Bee keeping related COVID-19 Information here at Yorkshire BKA web page](#)

Bee Quiz From Selby BKA

Select a quiz to try and the quiz will display on-screen. Each quiz has just 10 simple questions with multiple choice answers. But be aware ... there may be more than one correct answer in the list! If there is more than one, you only need to choose one of the correct answers.

For the quizzes, click [here](#)

<https://www.selbybeekeepers.org.uk/beginners-quiz>

Message from the YBKA Chair Regarding Safe Working

Dear Members,

In these worrying times, we are still advised that beekeeping is considered a permissible activity. I understand that BBKA Chair, Ann Rowberry, is currently negotiating with the government and leading authorities to agree a document of authentication to be issued to all bona fide beekeepers, who are travelling for bee-related duties (apiary visits, swarms etc.), as suggested by a member of YBKA. Please await the outcome of her efforts.

In the meantime, attend to your bees sensibly and in isolation if possible, avoiding any large gatherings. Most apiary work at this time can be done by one person, so don't panic. In the case of association apiaries, the apiary manager should attend the bees alone, unless assistance is required for certain tasks. The recommended safe distance of 2 metres should be observed between persons involved, as far as possible.

Do remember to sanitise all equipment/clothing before and after a visit and don't forget hand hygiene. If you are receiving equipment/foundation via home delivery, open and remove the items, dispose of packaging and wash your hands thoroughly.

Further advice and guidance from BBKA will be circulated as soon as received.

Do take care of yourselves, your bees and all members of your district associations.

Stay safe,

Dave Shannon (Chair, YBKA)

Examinations and Assessments

At this time of year, the BBKA County Examinations Officer (In YBKA case, me) would usually be busy liaising with candidates, assessors, and apiary managers who would host practical assessments, in order to make the necessary arrangements. However, given the current situation with regards COVID-19 and the statement issued centrally from BBKA, all such activity is on hold, until we receive the all-clear.

I have emailed all candidates that are due to take the Honeybee Health Assessment this year.

Kirit Gordhandas,

YBKA Examinations & Assessment Secretary

examination@ybka.org.uk

Even though all modules and assessments have been cancelled, you might still wish to read up on the module syllabuses and the study notes. These are provided for you below.

- Module 1 – Honeybee Management
 - [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)
- Module 2 – Honeybee Products and Forage
 - [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)
- Module 3 – Honeybee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning
 - [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)
- Module 5 – Honeybee Biology
 - [<Syllabus>](#), [<Study notes>](#), & [<Background reading>](#)
- Module 6 – Honeybee Behaviour
 - [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)
- Module 7 – Selection and Bee Breeding of Honeybees
 - [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)
- Module 8 – Honeybee Management, Health and History.

- [<Syllabus>](#) & [<Study notes>](#)

Module 8 must be the last module to be taken, otherwise they can be tackled in any order.

Also remember that the YBKA runs a number of Module study days each year; more details from the YBKA [<website>](#) or email Claire McGettigan, YBKA Education & Training Officer. (education@ybka.org.uk)

My Grandfather's Old Bee Equipment

This lovely piece of nostalgia came into the YBKA Secretary's mailbox, completely out of the blue! With many thanks to Stuart, for sharing

Clearing out the garage I came across my grandfather's queen bee marking kit sold by the Yorkshire Apiary Company, Willerby, in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

My late grandfather was Alexander Gibb Birrell, who kept about twenty hives at Innerwick, near Dunbar in Scotland. He died in 1962.

The marking kit comprises a small tinplate box approximately 2 x 1 1/2 x 1 inch with a hinged lid. Operating instructions were fixed to the inside of the lid.

The spiked square cage was designed to capture the queen against a honeycomb in her hive whilst allowing worker bees, being smaller, to escape through the pins.



Two small, corked vials contained silver paint with which the queen was marked on the upper thorax to readily identify her.

Note the brass ring assembly also shown. This is a ferret muzzle used to prevent ferrets killing and feeding upon rabbits when they were sent into the warren to chase the rabbits to the surface and into previously set purse nets at the burrow holes. If ferrets ate a rabbit in the warren, they would lie up underground for days, and needed to be laboriously dig out - hence the muzzle to prevent this.

The muzzle is about 1 inch in diameter and is made of brass and spring steel.

Pressing the top arc would withdraw the two prongs. The muzzle was then placed over the ferret's mouth and the top trigger released. This allowed the prongs to enter the ferret's mouth behind its teeth. Since the ferret could not now open its mouth, the muzzle was held in place and rabbits could not be killed underground.



Stuart Gray,
Clydebank,
Scotland.

Queen Rearing / Bee Breeding What's the difference?

It always puzzles me why people have the opinion that rearing their own queens is a difficult task. Perhaps this is due to the hundreds of books and techniques that are written about raising queens? We all spend 90% of our time from May to end June actively stopping colonies raising queens – we call it swarm prevention and control. This demonstrates that our bees can produce plenty of queen cells without much effort from the beekeeper. How to get the queens mated and into colonies is the trick.

I define bee breeding as a means of selecting which queen cells to use to develop into a colony. But more important to the queen selection is the breeding of good drones.

I have just re-read John Whitaker's excellent article in the last BBKA news. John always writes some good articles based on his observations and always leaves you thinking about what the bees are doing. His article reinforces what I do each year, following on from my dad's advice. His article puts it across much better than I can – so go dig out the BBKA news and read it again!

Drones are usually raised on the periphery of the brood nest. Providing full frames of drone cells is often a waste as bees don't seem to want to put pollen in drone cells (don't know why they don't). The good practice of adding new foundation as full comb replacement eliminates the ability of the colony to raise drones, so this must be considered carefully.

I reckon 5% drones per colony gives a good colony balance.

What I do:

It's no secret that I don't like queen excluders – so I don't use them. I also operate brood and half set up. Yes, I agree there are all sorts of positive and negative views on this – but between the 3 Jefferson's there is over 130 years of experience – so I don't see why I should change that now.

The good thing about beekeeping is we can all do things differently and have lots of arguments about the best way – no wonder we can confuse beginners so easily!

My honey super frames from the previous year are often damaged by the nylon needles of my heather honey loosener. When damaged combs are used, the bees convert the cells to drone cells, this gives me drone cells that I can position at the top corners of the brood nest to get plenty of selected drones. In each apiary of 20 colonies I like to have 3 good selected colonies set up to produce drones. Colonies that I don't want to produce drones are given the new foundation to draw out.

So, my main focus is to select good colonies for drone rearing as an early spring inspection priority. I also select the best colonies for producing good queens, during the first selection process. As the year progresses, I reduce my selection for queens, but have my primary (early) selected queens, mated with selected drones (hopefully) My "secondary" queens are just honey

colonies.

I do further selection later in the year when I reduce colony numbers down for winter.

Tony Jefferson

Queen marking cages

The 'crown of thorns' type, the ones with all the sharp nails, I have often wondered why the nails have to be so sharp? (musings of Tony Jefferson – and a solution!)

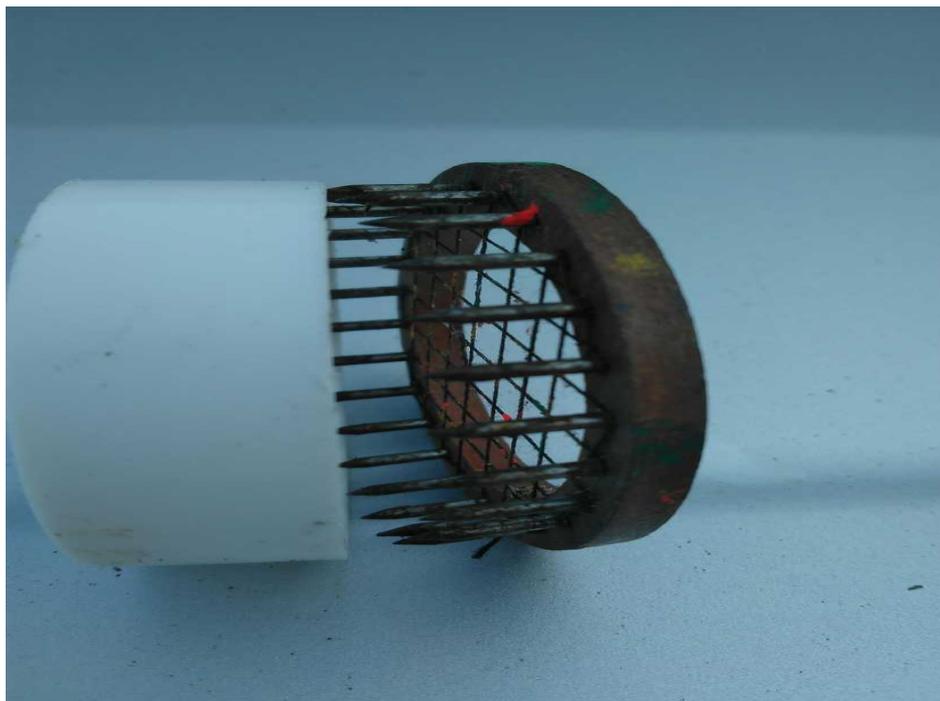
How many people have got them stuck in their bee suit pocket?

I once had one in my pocket and closed the van door. Multiple needles in my thigh certainly turned my bee suit a nice shade of red. Pulling it out hurt more!

I was looking for a means of protecting them and eventually found that a normal tube of mastic/calk/silicon is just the right size to put the prongs into.

Cut off a 20mm section of a used tube and it serves as a perfect guard for the prongs.

Try it – so simple!



A look back in time!

Whilst finally getting around to sorting out old information from my dad's box of papers, I came across a selection of some old YBKA newsletters covering the period leading up to the Millennium and just after. It was certainly an interesting time. Many of the issues are still topical. What **was** surprising is the amount of effort Bill Cadmore needed to take to get the newsletter out, manually, each quarter!

The period covered the last portion of my dad's (Allan) period in office as Chairman and the times that Michael Badger and Ivor Flatman took over the reins.

In 1997 the main subject was 'getting the newsletter off the ground' – this was a plea to all beekeepers to produce articles for inclusion in the newsletter – so not much has changed there then? - We still need more people to contribute.

This was also the time when varroa was occupying just about all the newsletter pages. The Chair was attempting to get the message out for beekeepers not to "throw in the towel" but stick together and help each other out. For me, this was a time when I was "away from beekeeping" due to my various trips to Japan and working way much harder than was healthy. There was lots of news about the development of the Normanby Pavilion and the fund-raising progress. We owe a good deal to the main, Three Musketeers, who were instrumental in getting the building done (M Badger / G Moxam / AC Jefferson)! Without their vision and drive, supported by the rest of the YBKA Committee, it may not have happened.

The first stage of the pavilion cost £28,998.19, funding came from YAS (£4000) BBKA donation (£1000), loans from YBKA members/associations (£ 1900), Normanby Trust Fund (£12,000) the rest came from the YBKA fundraising group. At that time the capitation was £10 per person!

The last period of Allan Jefferson's Chairmanship, ended with a Summer Field Day on the 8th June at Mulgrave Castle in Lythe, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Normanby. (I was not present at this event as I was in Japan that summer). To date this is still the largest recorded single day events 411 people turned up – now there is a gauntlet to be thrown down for any organising group! Why did we stop having these events?

The pages show that YBKA then was trying to get more support for local, county and national honey shows, to increase the number of exhibitors and quality exhibits. Again, some things don't change. Other 'interesting' similarities were, support to schools, bad weather, heather beetle problems, poor queen mating and the role of the General Purposes Committee. All interspersed with general good advice.

A few, interesting, editions were from the time when I came back to beekeeping, but my job did not allow me time to handle bees. One article was re-printed from the local newspaper, during a time when I was Chair of the North East Chamber of Commerce and I was interviewed for their quarterly newsletter. To make up for lack of hands-on bee time, my company ended up sponsoring the YBKA Newsletter. That meant getting my firm's admin staff to print and assemble the paper copy on the office photocopier. To me, that seemed a fair compromise, as my job took me away from home for far too many hours each week. I can still hear the sighs

when Bill Cadmore sent over the paper copies for the office staff to sort! However, my decent boss retired, and the new one was not as understanding – so I left to become self-employed. I know, it sounds drastic, but in fairness it was due to more than the YBKA Newsletter.

Throughout this period, a topic that seemed to predominate was the imbalance in male and female- membership of the GPC. Fortunately, 20 years later, the balance is finally addressed!

It is often said it's best not to look back – but I have found the process interesting. It has surprised me how many of the same topics continue to engage us. I have also learned that I have been on the GPC now for 16 years, perhaps I might be “let out” soon on Day Release!

Tony Jefferson

Whitby Sec and YBKA ADM rep

Mission: Impossible

Timeline 15.54 hours: Thursday 19 March 2020

YBKA Chair, Dave Shannon is relaxing in the conservatory, when the insistent ring tone of his mobile phone spurs him into action. Activating the call, he hears the following message: “Honeybee related incident alert, in the Doncaster area! A large oak tree, felled yesterday, appears to contain a bee’s nest. The tree is delaying work on a construction site. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to make your way to the Junction 5 services on the M18, assess and deal with situation. As usual, this message will disintegrate in one minute’s time!”

Dave watched in horror as the casing of his mobile crumpled and contorted.

Muttering suitable epithets, he gathered just the bare essentials: a bee suit; a pair of wellies; a smoker; a toolbox; a nucleus box; a chain saw; safety goggles; grappling irons; a saw; a length of rope and a spare mobile phone. Throwing the gear into the back of his vehicle he leapt aboard for the 18-mile journey to the stated destination.

On arrival, suitably attired, Dave quickly assessed the situation. An ancient oak tree, rotten and hollow at the centre, lay prone and splintered on the ground. Multiple combs, over 6 feet in length, were crushed and broken from the impact of the fall and the collapse of the upper side of the trunk into the cavity space below. On closer inspection, Dave found the queen, unmarked, but similarly crushed, surrounded by a loyal entourage in death as in life. There was a small patch of brood, but untended and exposed to the sharp overnight frosts, this was dis-coloured and destined never to emerge.

Sadly, he gathered up the few surviving bees, in his nucleus box, just to ensure the safety of the contractors, who needed to move the tree and continue work. Too few bees left to attempt the introduction of a frame with eggs and unwilling

to unite them with another colony, due to the risk of disease, Dave knew they would simply dwindle and die. He sighed at the passing of this once proud colony.

Thanks for stepping up to the plate Dave. Don't take it to heart, Tom Cruise couldn't have done any better!

(Some dramatic licence has been employed in the telling of this incident: Dave made two trips to the site to complete the task, as the original call came too late in the day to begin the work of dismantling the tree trunk to get to the nest. A thank you, also must go to site employee Rebwar, who reported the incident to YBKA, out of concern for the welfare of the bees. The photos were taken by Dave Shannon on site)

Linda Schofield

In the Apiary April 2020

March has come and gone, and we have seen the weather improving and bees flying from the hives on the occasional days. For most beekeepers, April prompts the start of a new season of beekeeping. However, March has seen a great deal of change in our daily lives making this article difficult to write

The pandemic of (COVID 19) Coronavirus has seen daily advice from government and restrictions on social gatherings, made in order to protect ourselves, others and to prevent overloading the NHS with patients who have contracted the virus. We have all seen how the virus is escalating in Italy and it is important that we follow these guidelines.

It is a fair statement to make that many of our members will fall into the high risk category and many of us may live with people in our households who may be vulnerable and therefore be in self isolation for at least the next 12 weeks. If your bees are in your garden, then tending them over the coming months may not be such a big issue. If your bees are in out apiaries, then there could be potential problems especially for those in self isolation.

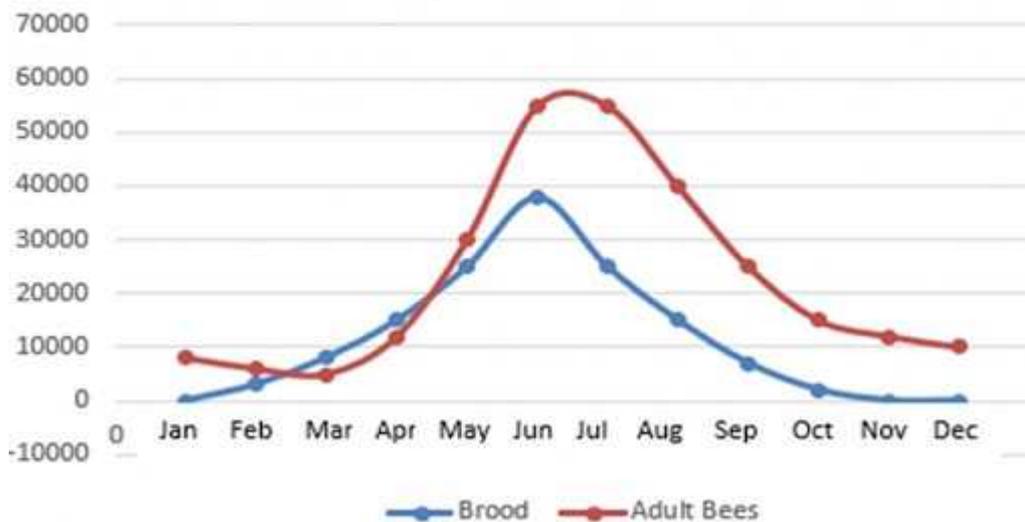
As a beekeeping community we need to think of ways in which we can help those who are unable to tend bees in out apiaries. The BBKA has put some advice on their website. I share their view that out apiaries contain bees that are livestock and so will need to be looked after. The National Bee Unit has also issued guidelines regarding tending bees throughout this period. Those who are registered on 'beebase' will have received an automatic notification of the advice. Specifically, movement to and from apiaries should not be restricted. Additionally, the craft does not usually attract large gatherings so tending bees generally avoids social contact. If there are 2 people needing to work together however, remember to stick to the 2 metre rule on social distancing.

If you not done so already, it may be best practice for district associations to list members needing some assistance in the coming months and a list of volunteers who may be able to help them.

Weather permitting, April usually sees the first Spring Inspections taking place. I would wait for a period of warmer weather ideally with temperatures around 14 – 15C and not go in on the first warm day. Impatience can be catastrophic for your colony. Young eggs and larvae can quickly become chilled and die when exposed to cold winds and low temperatures. The bees will usually tell you as you will see them flying collecting pollen and stores to maintain the expanding colony.

The demands on the colony are great at this time of year as expanding brood with ageing, overwintered adults can place great stress on them. We can experience warmer days, but the nights remain cold.

Average Colony Population



Above graph shows the imbalance between brood and workers at this time of year

In April there can still be very little nectar available for your bees in most areas. It may be advisable to supplement their feed with a light syrup 1:1 (1-part sugar to 1-part water). As stated in last month's article, protein for the colony is vital and without protein, in the form of pollen or pollen substitutes, queens will cease to lay eggs. You may consider applying pollen patties directly above the frames to help the colony at this time. Of course, once the first inspection takes place you can evaluate the available stores and take a more informed decision whether they need additional help. I am a firm believer in the mantra 'better safe than sorry'.

When a few nice warm days arrive, then we do our first inspection. We check that queens are laying well and that we have healthy looking brood at all stages, with light-brown cappings and no perforations. We keep an eye out for any signs of disease, checking that larvae are glistening white with clear segmentation and not twisted and distorted within their cells. If you find anything to cause you concern, try to take a photo and first consult with a local, experienced, beekeeper. If you are still unsure, forward your photo to the Regional/Seasonal Bee Inspector, to back up a phone discussion, and identify whether your colony should be visited.

You may find that there are raised cappings indicating that there is either a drone laying queen or laying workers (see last month's article for advice).

If you see your queen on the first inspection, and this is not always the case, then make sure she is still well-marked. If not, take the opportunity now to re-mark her before the population increases dramatically. Marking the queen will be of great value in the months to come.

As part of my spring inspections, when the temperature reaches 15C or above, I ensure that the floors are clean. I have spare floors already cleaned (the wood scorched, and the mesh floors scrubbed with a washing soda solution, ready to go below the brood box). Alternatively, you can quickly clean off any debris from the floors and any build up between your frames and on the frame lugs.

For the winter I tend to under super (put any super with stores below the brood box) with the queen excluder removed. I will make sure the queen is in the brood box and any empty combs I wish to replace are moved to the outer edges of the box. This makes the replacement easier when the time comes, as the frames should be empty of brood and stores. The super will be replaced above a clean queen excluder where removed for the winter. If queen excluders were not removed, clean them, to make sure your bees can gain easy access through them.

Open your entrances a little, to about two inches, as the bees start to get more active. It is time to remove mouse guards now as they can strip off those vital pollen loads as the returning foragers squeeze through them.

Don't forget to insert your varroa boards to complete a mite check. For those who didn't use an oxalic acid treatment in mid-winter, this is another vital thing to check before the nectar flows begin. There is lots of useful advice on Beebase about when to treat and which products are more appropriate at this time of year.

If not already started you may need to build your new frames for the season ahead, both brood and supers. Don't put in your wax foundation yet, but with all the woodwork completed, you can insert the fresh foundation when you're ready to use it. I find that fresh foundation, with a good aroma, stimulates the bees to draw it out. There will be insufficient wax builders within the colony at this moment in time to draw out foundation and the temperatures are not sufficiently high enough yet but come early May you will be needing it.

New beekeepers check you have enough boxes for the coming season! For every hive you should have at least 3 supers, an extra brood box and/or a nuc box. This will ensure you're not caught out when queen cells are found, and you need to split your colonies.

Now is a good time to brush up on swarm control techniques and think about which methods you wish to adopt and prepare equipment. YBKA provided each District Association with several BBKA publications, one of which was a DVD on swarm control and prevention techniques. This is a useful resource and can be loaned from your Association so contact your librarian or secretary. In the current circumstances there is still the possibility of posting them out to those in self isolation.

In conclusion for this month, ending on the note I started, we need to be mindful of swarm control. Avoid unnecessary swarms that can damage the reputation of beekeeping with the general public. These may be more of an issue this year with the restrictions in place. This will mean considering carefully your swarm collection service and applying appropriate safeguards. If you are not in the vulnerable category (as defined by Government advice), not in self-isolation and would be willing to collect swarms within your local area please consider putting your name on the swarm collectors list. If you are interested, please contact your association secretary who can update your details on the eR2 system.

Please stay safe whether self-isolating or practicing social distancing and enjoy your beekeeping.

YBKA CALENDAR 2020

Events Postponed

Committee Details

Dave Shannon is Chair of YBKA

Mark Millard is Vice Chair

Norbert Cooper continues as Treasurer

Kirit Gorhandas is Examination and Assessments Officer

Clare McGettigan is Education Training Officer
Linda Schofield is Secretary
Tony Jefferson is the YBKA Delegate to BBKA.
Chris Barlow continues as Newsletter Editor
David Lamont continues as YBKA Webmaster

Classified Adverts

Do you have anything bee related for sale or are you wanting something bee related? If so, please email newsletter@ybka.org.uk the editor for a free sale or wanted listing:

5 frame over wintered nuc for sale. On National frames ,ready end of April, calm bees. From Wakefield area. Payment by bank transfer and will drop off if not to far from Wakefield making it no contact sale. Contact Chris tel: 07849 150 837 or email chrisbarlow02@yahoo.co.uk

BBKA Forum

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