



May 2020 Newsletter

I had hoped to have this out a little earlier - in time for world bee day - but not to worry, every day is world bee day for us beekeepers!

First things first... which is your safety. While the bees are going about their business blissfully unaware of the current situation - we should be very careful and adhering strictly to social distancing advice.

BEEKEEPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Beebase have sent you all an email linking to their document about COVID-19 and beekeeping. If you haven't received it, there is a copy attached to this newsletter. Read it carefully, print it off and carry a copy when going to tend bees at your apiaries. By all means still collect swarms - but only if it is safe to do so; always take into account social distancing and safe access. Do not go into houses, roofs, etc, or go through houses to reach swarms.

Swarm list

You all received an invitation recently to be added to the swarm list. The current list is on our webpage. Please remember the advice regarding collecting swarms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to last month's newsletter for details.

While we are on the topic of swarms...

If you lose bees or have surplus swarms let's make sure that we match up beekeepers with bees! Use our Facebook site or contact me through the website.

<http://www.liverpoolbeekeepers.co.uk/contact/>

Tamryn and Tom Miller are still on the lookout for bees! Someone out there please help!

Branch Meetings.

This newsletter would normally contain a long list of meetings and activities for beekeepers over the coming months but sadly - due to Covid 19 - there is nothing to report. However, although we had to cancel our April and May Branch

Meetings - which were due to be about queen rearing and making up nucs - John McCann has kindly jotted down a few notes regarding this topic:

Hello all,

Hope you are all well and enjoying good beekeeping. It is a great pity that we were unable to have our last two meetings on producing our own queens. The main reason for producing these queens was to provide nucs for our beginners - so here are plans for those beekeepers who can manage to produce nucs themselves. In so doing they will produce home bred queens.

I have made it into two parts

- (1) Those who have a strong double brood available.
- (2) Those who have a strong colony surplus to their requirements.

(1) Using a strong double brood

(a) Find the queen and put her in the bottom box with frames of sealed brood.

(b) Reassemble the hive in the following order: Floor, Broodbox with queen, Queenexcluder, super or supers, queen excluder, Broodbox containing all the rest of the frames (this must have eggs and young grubs), crown board and roof.

(c) The top box will produce queen cells. After four days cut out any sealed cells (these have been formed from three or four day old grubs and are no good). Leave all the rest of the unsealed cells.

(d) On the ninth day after you reassembled the hive you should have nice sealed queen cells. You now make up two nucs from the frames in the top box. Each nuc will have four frames - one of which will have one or two sealed queen cells on it. Make sure to fill the feeders at this point.

(e) Move the nucs to another location or stuff the entrance with grass. This is so the bees will not fly back to the old hive. The top box is now removed from the original hive.

(f) After ten days look into the nucs and with a bit of luck you will have a nice laying queen. Now contact our Education Officer Cliff Porter who will sort out beginners in need of bees. You will be paid for the nukes.

(2) Using a strong surplus hive

(a) Put the queen in a new broodbox with a couple of frames of sealed brood and make up the rest of the box with frames with foundation.

(b) Fill out the old brood box with frames of drawn comb or foundation and reassemble the hive so it is: Floor, old brood box, Queen excluder, super or supers, queenexcluder, new brood box with queen, crownboard, feeder, roof.

(c) After four days remove any sealed queen cells in the bottom box and leave the rest of the unsealed cells.

(d) Keep feeding the top box and after nine days make up three nucs. Two using frames with sealed queen cells from the bottom box and one with the queen and four frames from the top box.

(e) After three weeks you should have three nucs ready to contact Cliff about.

Let's hope we can salvage something from the season!

STAY WELL

John McCann

Thanks for that John - much appreciated.

Another of our members, Brian Seddon has been busy doing some very interesting work collecting bee venom:

Bee venom harvesting: a self-isolationist's folly

Brian Seddon, Thatto Heath
Spring 2020

This spring I built and tested a homemade electrical apparatus for honey-bee venom collection. The design is crude and consists of a wooden block with a glass base. Stainless steel electrodes span a section of the glass spaced 8 mm apart. I started with a two-electrode design to test the concept and reported news of the result to Liverpool beekeepers.

By early May I had built a 10-electrode bee-venom collector to gain information on harvesting yields and bee behaviour with a larger scale device. In operation, bees landing on the electrodes experience electrical stimulation and respond by ejecting sting venom onto the glass plate. This venom appears as tiny white-yellow spots (c. 200 μm). There is a high density of these spots along the lines of the electrodes; fewer on other parts of the glass. I have operated the apparatus for 10 min periods only, since I do not wish to disturb my best hive too much. Venom collection rates are estimates of around >5000 spots per hour. I am keen to develop the techniques and explore further designs to optimise bee venom harvesting in my neck of the woods.



I would welcome guidance from LBKA members on ethical, medical and technical matters I should consider. Is there harm to bees in forcing them to sting? What are the long-term effects of electrical stimulation on the health and wellbeing of the bees, hive and apiary? Are there genuine therapeutic uses for bee venom extracts. Are the health claims quackery. Are they supported by any scientific evidence? Ideas on the technical challenges I face scaling this apparatus beyond the hobbyist, or dare I say cottager beekeeper? Am I wasting my time?

If you would like further information or would like to answer any of Brian's questions please contact him directly: beeseddon@gmail.com

General BEEKEEPING ADVICE FOR MAY
from 'Dr. Dave Harrison' our resident Apiary Manager

"He's forgotten more than most of us know about beekeeping" so listen up for his latest pearls of wisdom....



"Hello everybody, greetings from the apiary. May is the time of the year we all look forward to in beekeeping groups. Down at the apiary in Woolton we have been preparing the hives for swarming. We should all have been through our colonies seeing that all is well. The weather has been very good and our colonies are building up rapidly. But after a very wet winter, it is has been very dry for the last couple of months - make sure that your apiary has water for the bees to collect.

Well, that's enough for now - stay safe! Time for me to Buzz off!"

Thanks Dr Dave.

HISTORICAL

The Isle of Wight has been in the news recently - it was also in the news a little over a century ago....

After two disastrous seasons (1907 and 1908), 1909 saw the first mention of the 'Isle of Wight Disease' and the recommendation to destroy infected colonies. 1910 saw the disease recede but it's worth mentioning that a beekeeper who did have an infected colony refused to have his bees treated. This resulted in communication with Lancashire MPs to support a Bill seeking compulsory powers of entry - this was recorded in a leaflet by the Board of Agriculture in their Yearbook.

By 1912, fortunes had seemed to turn around - this was noted as a great year for honey - although it was also noted that there were a puzzling amount of swarms. For the next few years the Association did not seem to fare too well at all and as many beekeepers joined the forces for the First World War, bees were left to be looked after by less experienced people or disposed of. As a result, the Isle of Wight disease took a real grip across the country and no effective remedy seemed to be forthcoming. The association lost many valuable members to the war and

stocks were devastated by the continuing spread of the Isle of Wight disease. Very pertinently it was said at the time that:

"When bees do not prosper neither does the nation."

In 1913 there were 8 apiaries affected, 1914 found 32 affected, in 1915 it swept the country and by 1916 it was estimated that 70% of all stocks had been wiped out. In 1918 the Ministry of Agriculture started a re-stocking programme - importing Dutch and Italian Queens believing that they had greater resistance powers.

Acarine is usually associated as being the cause of the 'Isle of Wight' disease - but it is likely to have been a combination of factors. Thankfully, solutions were found, fortunes were turned back around and the status quo was eventually restored. History shows us that people are almost as resourceful as the honey bee when it comes to finding a way out of seemingly impossible situations - let's hope that we find a way out of our current difficulties soon.

Over and out - Happy Beekeeping.

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