

North Bucks Bee Keepers' Association

Newsletter June 2016

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Calendar at-a-glance

13 th July	BBQ party
25 th September	Honey show

Swarm Hotline

With the swarm season well and truly in full swing, I'd like to take the opportunity to remind members of the protocols that we, as an association, have agreed to follow, *writes Andy Fenner.*

We are offering a swarm collection service for the public for a number of reasons. Firstly, we are increasing our public profile and assisting the wider community in dealing with 'the problem'. It generates very good feedback from the public who are then more inclined to treat a swarm of bees with less fear and more fascination. Secondly, it helps relocate the bees that could otherwise become feral to new homes where they will be well treated and cared for appropriately – both new members and older members who've lost stock over last winter. The perfect example of everyone being a winner!

Collecting swarms does require some knowledge and experience to complete successfully. I am very happy to guide new members through the process and would actively encourage those who are interested to contact me and accompany me with any nearby collections. It is important that the job is done properly and professionally and, with a little guidance, is not complicated.

The new protocol is that we have a new mobile number – 07342930854 – that will be used to co-ordinate collections. The number advertised through our public website, as well as

given by the council and police, will remain as before and calls will be transferred to the new mobile. Members can, of course, call it directly.

I found that, last year, one of my biggest issues was rehoming bees. Could I ask that any member who would like to receive a swarm to contact me directly at fennerfamily@hotmail.com where I am co-ordinating the process. Some members have already done so and do not need to write again.

For the first time we will be charging for the service. The committee have agreed a fee of £10 which will be split between the charity 'Bees Abroad' and the association itself. This fee may be waived in case of people who are deemed unable to pay it. I do hope that all members agree that supporting the Bees Abroad charity is a worthwhile thing for us to do.

Finally, if any members are not interested in having bees but would like to accompany me on a collection regardless, please do contact me to arrange it as and if a suitable swarm arises.

Thank you

Andy Fenner (Swarm co-ordinator)

Seasonal Notes

May's weather has been much of a mixed bag of cold, wet, warmth, sun and an exceptionally heavy storm in and around Leighton Buzzard. The great Robert Manley hailing from the Chilterns used to say that we needed a really cold wet May to have a chance of a great summer crop – well we shall see. Oil seed rape seems to be disappearing almost as soon as it came into flower – with, for me some colonies producing 1+ full supers and the remainder filling just a frame or two of stores or even less. Some say that the oil seed rape crop is not what it was – less productive for the bees but still retaining its fault of crystallizing sometimes even before fully ripened. As the old hands will know only too well, the crop has to be taken off, if necessary, comb by comb following this technique; Combs which are sealed (or sealed, bar a cell or two) immediately extract. Combs totally unsealed or partially sealed should be removed and held, each face in turn at a right angle say 1ft above remaining super frames and given quick heavy shakes downwards. If no honey is released it may be safely assumed that the comb is ripe for extraction. Try to extract that day in a warm room or continue to keep combs warm until you can extract (but do extract as soon as you can because once crystallization starts the whole process can be complete in "a few hours" and your comb become a dead loss).

Under English law, the moisture content of most honeys (oil seed rape honey included) must not exceed 20% and leaving uncapped frames in a warm room may just lower the water content of combs exceeding this limit to within it.

Crystallized honey

What to do with combs containing cells of crystallized honey which you cannot extract? Here are some thoughts;

- If only minor, ignore and hope bees clear and solve the problem.
- Melt down (a steam driven uncapping tray will do this). But however careful you are not to overheat, it has always seemed to me that “the taste” suffers.
- Give back to the bees putting in a top super after decapping all affected combs and place a cover board below that super with entrances restricted to one opening of one bee space and hope bees will rob clean.
- Hold all affected combs back to the end of the season and then place in a suitable size box and place above floor and below brood-chamber.

I have described the procedures often in the past so will not repeat – do call me if you need to know more.

Don't panic

Again, this is mostly for beginners. When a queen takes off with a swarm it can take a long time for the new queen to come into lay and for brood to emerge as the example below illustrates...

1st June Egg to become Queenie laid

16th June Queenie born

6th July Queenie mates having been held up by the most severe storms our region has ever experienced (NB: I hope not!).

12th July Queenie comes into lay

Beginning of August – first of Queenies' brood emerges.

If you are in doubt, give bees a “test comb” of eggs.

Unless emergency queencells are built, you have a queen and must just wait for laying to start (hopefully!).

However careful you are, a new laying queen may not emerge (for example, fails to return from her mating flight)

It is a good plan always to raise a few spare nucs with good laying queens. Then if a colony fails to raise one, your nuc is on hand to head the queenless colony and perhaps ensure a crop which otherwise might be lost

Bees and the Law

They say that an old lawyer never retires – and I am no exception. It really worries me that widely across the UK “bee world” beekeepers and the appliance manufacturers who produce labels are not up to speed with the new regulations and please may I point out that failure to comply may well have criminal as well as civil sanctions. In BeeCraft July issue I will be raising these matters – but all I will say here is that if you would like me to express a view on your own honey label, I will gladly do so, but I cannot provide legal advice. Do take me up on this if you wish. Here is a question for you: “Did you know that most food products offered for sale must have a lot number unless the ‘BB date’ is in day/month/year format”. Wording like “Best Before end October 2019” or “Best Before

end 2019” does NOT dispense with the need for a lot number. Correct labelling is now a “hot topic” with the Trading Standards who are literally descending upon shop shelves and ordering the withdrawal of products illegally labelled and it is costing the food industry a lot of money. Don’t let it be your jars of faultless honey which are removed from the shelves!

A Party – Wednesday 13th July

Yes, a party. By very kind invitation of Steve and Deb Snook, we are invited to their delightful house in Bletchley on Wednesday 13th July, k.o. probably 7:30pm for a BBQ type knees-up. Further details to follow, but please note the date now. Not to be missed!

County Honey Show at Buckingham Garden Centre, 25th September

Plans for this eye-watering event are well advanced and we and our friends at Buckingham and District BKA are planning something spectacular. It will be much more than a honey show. This year the show is being organized for the whole county (it is NBBKA’s turn to do this) and we really want everyone to play some part on the day or at least to come along to join the fun.

So please, not only put the date of the party, 13th July but also the date of the Honey Show, 25th September – in your diaries.

Apiary Health Days

With the imminent departure of Karen Smith, our seasonal bee inspector, it has not been possible so far to fix any Apiary Inspection Health days. Being able to recognize diseases or pests should be a standard by which every beekeeper should be judged so I am seeking to remedy this situation.

And an apology

Elizabeth was rushed into hospital with a horrible skin infection, cellulitis, which has left her feeling very weak but thankfully, she is on the mend. This has slightly taken my eye off the very important ball, NBBKA, and I fear some hoping to hear from me may not have done so. But we are both bouncing back and normal services, whatever that is, will shortly resume.

Best regards

Andrew.