

Somerset Bee-keepers' Association NEWSLETTER



All wrapped up for winter

With all colonies now well in to their winter torpor, we have some useful tips for you regarding hefting, feeding, monitoring and security.

We also have the latest in the confusing, but ongoing saga of winter oxalic acid treatment of varroosis/varroasis, and if that weren't enough to get your vital juices flowing, there is the earth shattering news that North Korean Leader, Kim Jong - Un is allergic to bee stings.



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www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Trevor Edwin Adams 1941 – 2014



Sadly, I must tell you that the immediate past chairman of Somerton Division, Trevor Adams, has lost his long struggle with the illness that had dogged him for the past 21 months. When Trevor was diagnosed with Myeloid Leukaemia he was considered to be so poorly that he was sent home to spend time with his family. That was in May of 2013. Trevor was made of much sterner stuff.

He had ups and downs in the following months, but as vice chairman, I had to deputise for him on only one occasion. During the summer of 2013 he did summon help with his bees, and I felt particularly guilty when, on arriving to help I declared, to an expectant, and bee suit clad Trevor, that 31°C was perhaps a little too warm for opening up hives. Stuart Dennes gave him a great deal of support during that summer and was amazed, as we all were, by the fortitude that he showed. Almost exactly a year ago, after a debilitating relapse, he asked to be taken to the new proposed apiary, so that he would have firsthand knowledge for the AGM, where it was to be debated. He made what I thought was a cursory inspection and we headed for the Halfway House for lunch. His 'powerpoint' presentation at the AGM amazed a good few with its erudition and his comprehensive grasp of a tricky subject.

Trevor served as chairman of Somerton & District Beekeepers' Association from 2011 -2013, and although he declared that he didn't know enough about bees, he was more than a worthy incumbent. Several weeks ago he decided that he could no longer care for his bees and donated them to the divisional apiary, and he has done the same with the majority of his beekeeping equipment too. I collected his honey extractor for one of our members who had bought it, but as I went to lift it into the wheelbarrow for transportation to my car, Trevor, concerned for my health, loaded it up and wheeled it up the garden path.

I mentioned his fortitude earlier, but it bears repeating. He was always fully aware of the eventual outcome of his illness, but had such a positive attitude to the remnants of his life, turning up to committee meetings, and the County Honey Show only nine weeks ago. He even orchestrated the proceedings for his own funeral.

Trevor hailed from London, but came to the South West to study veterinary medicine, liked it and stayed. He was well known in the area because of his career as a vet., but also for his connections with the church. He also served as a Justice of the Peace for several years. Among other things, we will miss his straight thinking, his ability to run meetings for just long enough and his ability to see the good in most people.

Above all else, at this time, our thoughts are with his wife Joan, their three children and their grandchildren.

Stewart Gould
Chair - Somerton Division

Hefting made easy

Hefting is a bit of dark art for some people. It's definition is nothing more complex than lifting. The point with hives is to know how much weight the colony is losing in colder weather, or worse still, warm winter weather. Regular hefting will flag up any changes in weight. Those changes, are significantly and primarily, changes in the amount of stores.

The following suggestions make the task easier and more accurate. First, buy a suitable luggage scale. If you don't have a cut out in your stand, as in the photograph on the front page, attach a heavy duty screw eye to either side of the floor of your hive - they can be bought for around £3.75 from most hardware stores. You can now attach the scales to the lifting hook, or under the floor, if you have that cut out, and lift the hive manually. It is only necessary to lift the hive off the stand a small way: just enough to get a reading. To obtain the total weight of the

hive, weigh both sides and add the two readings. The reason for this is simple. The stores may not be centrally located, so if you lift one side only, you may get a false picture.

If this is the first time that you have hefted this season, you need to know the weight of your hive and bees, so that you can calculate their stores. The following are typical weights of National hive components.

Brood box plus empty frames – 5 kg

Wax in a brood box – 1.5 kg

Floor – 1.7 kg

Crown board – 1.4 kg

Roof – 5.8 kg

7,700 bees weigh 1 kg, 40,000 bees weigh 5.2 kg

Total weight = 20.6 kg (45 lbs)

To calculate the weight of stores deduct 20.6kg (45lbs) from the sum of your scale readings. If you have additional brood boxes or supers, add a further 5 kg to obtain the weight to deduct. For a typical Winter the bees will require 20 - 25 kg (44 - 55lb) of stores at the start of Winter, and will consume 0.5 - 0.7 kg per week.

Thanks, in part, to Reigate BKA via Ebees

Temporary webmaster needed

Phil Stevens is unable to administer the website at present, and so a stand in is needed. This entails updating the various sections using information supplied by Divisions and BBKA. During a recent conversation on the subject, a member said that it was shocking that with over 800 members, it is proving exceedingly difficult to find one person who will volunteer to help out. Having said that, the person involved did not volunteer to do it. This is an extremely valuable resource and needs updating regularly to be effective. It will be much appreciated by the silent majority if somebody will step forward.

In the meantime, we hope that things, on the health front, improve for Phil and his family in the very near future.

Winter Feeding

Your bees should now all be tucked up, with mouse guards placed, and some form of defence against badgers and green woodpeckers in situ.

Take away tubs are excellent for winter feed, simply because it can be seen if replenishment is needed, without disturbing the bees. A lot of people have trouble making fondant. You can buy it, but making it is simple, and you rest assured that there are no unwanted additives.

To make fondant, add 300 ml of water to each 1 kg of sugar in a pan, dissolve all sugar and bring to the boil, stirring regularly. The time that you have to boil your mixture will depend on the power of your hob, but your main aim is to reduce the moisture content. Trial and error will give the desired results. I boil mine for 4 minutes only. Remove from the heat, and then stir constantly while the mixture is cooling.



This is to ensure the smallest crystal size, which will make the fondant more creamy, and therefore more easily workable by the bees. Keep stirring until the mixture turns milky and thickens noticeably. NB not setting, but maybe thinking about it. Pour or ladle the mixture into your take away tubs and fit the lids. In the heating process, the mixture will lose approximately half of the moisture content. As water weighs 1kg per. litre, it is easy to work out that 2 kgs of sugar and 600 ml of water weigh 2.6kg. After heating and reducing the moisture content, the ideal weight should be approximately 2.3kg.

This amount will fill four tubs. When the bees need fondant, they will consume one of these containers per. week. Please remember that the likelihood of bees starving at this time of year is far less than in the early Spring, when the weather is warm, they are eager to forage and there is no food available. Furthermore, their winter stores will be extremely depleted.

The inverted feed tub should be placed on the top bars of the brood chamber, or if you want minimum disturbance, above the feed hole in the crown board.

Lecture Day 2015

This is last chance for us to remind you that tickets for this event are available from Divisional secretaries. They are extremely reasonably priced at £12 for Somerset BKA members - for the day with meal/refreshments and £25 for out of county people. For Somerset BKA members wishing to have just refreshments (and no meal) the cost is just £4.

This year's speakers and subjects are:-

Celia Davis, NDB - A world of scents

Michael Palmer - The sustainable apiary

David Evans - Varroa and DWV

Simon Jones APHA (Animal & Plant Health Authority), our Regional Bee Inspector and his team will also be on hand to give advice.

To keep you up to date

On the 1st October 2014 The Animal and Plant Health Agency was formed when elements of Fera (Food and Environment Research Agency) and the AHVLA (Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency) merged. The APHA is an executive agency of Defra and aims to protect animal and plant health by preventing and controlling the spread of disease.

Bee Improvement For All

An all day event aimed at encouraging all beekeepers to improve their bees. The purpose is to help all beekeepers to continuously assess their colonies, so they have a good idea of which queens to cull, and which colonies to take queen cells from when they need new queens.

There will be tuition on how to raise queens using queen cells that bees often present us with during the summer, as well as some simple 'artificial'

techniques that may be suitable for the more advanced beekeeper, or those working in groups.

Further details: <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/beeimprovementforallday.html>

Date:- Saturday 21 March 2015

Time:- 9.00 for 9.30 - 4.30 approx.

Venue:- Odcombe Village Hall, Higher Odcombe, Somerset BA22 8XP

Cost:- £10 adult. £5 for under 18, who must be accompanied by a fee paying adult.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided but bring your own lunch.

The Royal Bath & West Show 2015

Long dark evenings are with us again and it is time to start planning for next year's Show – May 27th – 30th. Your help is needed for both the setting up and stewarding of the Bee & Honey Marquee.

Setting up will take place from **Sunday, 24th May to Tuesday, 26th May, 2015.**

Can you spare the time to help during these three days? Your help and enthusiasm is also required to steward the Marquee throughout the following four days of the show itself. The rota for stewards is either all day, 9.00am-6.00pm, or a half-day, 9.00am - 1.30pm, or 1.00pm - 6.00pm. This is an ideal opportunity to spend a morning or afternoon in the Marquee and the rest of the day enjoying the many and varied attractions to be at the show.

If you can help, please contact me as soon as possible on 01373 464736 or e-mail me, tredg@talktalk.net. I should like to have the rotas completed well before the end of March, for submission to the Show Committee's April meeting.

Why not also prepare an entry for the Show to enable Somerset to retain the County Shield. The competition for the Shield is between Wiltshire, Avon, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. A copy of the Show schedule can be obtained from Bernie Perkins, of Somerton & District Division on 01458 250095, who will be only too pleased to talk to you about the type and preparation of entries.

Ken Tredgett



Really cheap sugar

You probably already know that as a member of Somerset BKA you can register to become a customer of Booker Wholesale Foods. In the past, their sugar prices have not been brilliant, but they have an offer on until January 6th. Buy 2 x 25kgs sacks of Tate & Lyle granulated and you will pay £10.50 per sack. That works out at **just 42p. per. Kg.** The previous lowest price available seemed to

be Farm Foods at 59p. Per. Kg. Tesco are still charging a minimum of 77p. Per. Kg. Bookers have branches in Taunton & Yeovil, as well as others further afield. It might be worth stocking up

SBKA Special Lecture 2015

This coming year's lecture will be held on at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15 April a 7.30 pm. Please note that this is the Wednesday before the BBKA Spring Convention.

This year's speaker is, confirmed Anglophile, Keith Delaplane from the

University of Georgia, USA. Keith has not given details of his subject, as yet, but you can be certain that it will be topical, informative and, above all, entertaining.



The venue has changed from Hazlegrove School, and the new Venue is Norton sub Hamdon Village Hall, New Road, Norton sub Hamdon, TA14 6SF.

Entrance to this very popular event is normally free, but there is a raffle to support funds and contributions, to the prize pool, are always welcomed.

Further details will be available from your Divisional Secretaries in the near future.

Frome Division – Introduction to Beekeeping

Frome Division of Somerset BKA is running a course for a maximum of 12 people interested in traditional Beekeeping and an intention of keeping their own bees. The course is mainly theory with some practical support where possible. It will be supplemented in the spring with practical sessions in member's apiaries. A mentor and membership of Frome BKA will be offered to those wishing to proceed.

Subjects will be presented by experienced beekeepers who are members of FBKA and are volunteering their time. There will be 6 sessions on consecutive Wednesday evenings starting on the 21st January 2015.

Frome ASDA Supermarket has made their Training Room available for the course. It is intended that each session will start at 7:15 p.m. and will last for up to 2 hours. There will be a comfort break during each session when coffee and tea etc. can be purchased from a vending machine.

The Haynes Bee Manual will be supplied by FBKA and students will be awarded Associate membership of FBKA as part of the course fee. This makes you eligible to attend future educational, practical and social meetings. Protective clothing and any necessary beekeeping equipment will be loaned by FBKA for practical sessions and you are advised not to spend money on protective clothing or any other beekeeping equipment until after the early practical sessions in the Spring of 2015.

The fee for the course is £60 per person which helps support FBKA. There will be a reduction of £10 if you already have the required reference book and a further £10 if you are already a member of FBKA.

To register, or for further information, contact:-
Norman Elmer, 20a Roddenbury Close, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2AS

Tel 01373 466495
elmer@roddenbury.co.uk

Cheques should be made payable to "SBKA (Frome Division)"

Disease and Husbandry Day

Quite a way off yet, but this is a day to mark on your new 2015 calendar. Hosted by South East Division, there will be a plethora of Seasonal Bee Inspectors (5 in total) with Simon Jones at the head.



The day will start at 9.00 am, so if you are thinking of driving from the other end of the county, you will have to set out early, as Ansford is towards the Eastern end of the county.

The venue is Ansford Academy, Castle Cary and it will be held on Saturday June 13th from 9.00 am - 4.00 pm. The cost for the day is £5.00, and tickets are available from Lionel Horler are available from Lionel Horler, 15 Ancastle Avenue, Castle Cary, BA7 7JE.

Tea and coffee will be provided but bring your own lunch.

General Husbandry Course.

As part of a BBKA initiative Simon Jones and Gail Johnson are running a General Husbandry Course for beekeepers who are considering taking the General Husbandry Certificate. The minimum requirement for taking this exam is that the beekeeper has kept bees for three years and has passed the Basic Assessment.

This course is going to start on the 8th of March. For further information you can go to the BBKA website, where you can also enrol by clicking on 'Shop' and then 'learn' and then paying the course fee.

There are a limited number of places so please book as soon as possible

Regional Bee Inspector's Report for Somerset 2014

The weather this year has generally been good for beekeeping, and provided you were able to stop the bees from swarming, there should have been a reasonable crop of honey on the hives at the end of the season.

It has been a busy year for the Somerset Bee Inspectors with 21 positive inspections for European Foulbrood, and 3 positive inspections for American Foulbrood. These figures are higher than 2013 and it is important that every beekeeper continues making regular checks of their hives for signs of Foul Brood disease and exotic pests, particularly now that Small Hive Beetle has been found in Italy.

The Inspectors have also been busy giving apiary demonstrations and Bee Safaris to some of the Somerset Divisions. We also supported the Somerset Lecture Day last February by providing information to beekeepers on notifiable pests and diseases, and the Asian Hornet.

In other parts of the SW region we have piloted two Disease and Husbandry days. These days were in cooperation with Cornwall Beekeepers and North Somerset Beekeepers. They consisted of talks, comb workshops, and practical apiary demonstrations. Approximately 60 beekeepers attended each of these events. The feedback that we received was very positive, and we have decided to run four of these days in the SW region next year.

In discussion with Lionel Horler, SE Division has agreed to provide a venue at Ansford Academy which has rooms for the workshops and a teaching apiary on the site. The date agreed for the Disease and Husbandry Day in Somerset is the 13th of June 2015. There are a limited number of places on these days, so if you are interested in attending, then please contact Lionel to book your place.

Lastly if you are not registered on Beebase then please go on line and register. It is easy to do, just type 'Beebase' into the internet search engine of your computer and various options will appear. Being registered enables the Inspector in your area to see where your apiaries are, and if there is disease

in the vicinity they are able to make an appointment to check the health of your bees. In addition to this, if your bees are within 3 km of a disease outbreak Beebase will automatically send you an alert.

Beebase is also a useful learning resource containing a wealth of up to date beekeeping information.

Simon Jones RBI

Bee Inspectors for Somerset are:



Megan Seymour –North of the county –
Tel 07775119475



Eleanor Burgess-
South and West of the county
- Tel 07775119465

Simon Jones- South and East of the county-Tel 01823 442228 or
07775119459

Special Delegates Meeting - 13th December

It came as quite a shock when, on September 8th, I received a letter addressed to 'Dear representative of a member association of the BBKA', through a conduit called Ebees, which is intended to be an information source for newsletter editors. Uploading anything to Ebees ensures that it will be circulated globally. As an example, a prominent contributor is the Beekeeping Association of the ACT, Australia.

The letter was from Ken Basterfield, formerly of Devon BKA, now Avon BKA, who is a trustee of BBKA, suggesting that there had been grave mismanagement of BBKA and accusing another of the trustees of acting dishonestly. The other trustee was not named at this time, nor was the claim substantiated, but there followed a stream of letters and emails, through various channels, from Ken Basterfield, the accused trustee (Peter Sutcliffe) of South Cheshire BKA, Dr David Aston - president of BBKA and Doug Brown - chairman of BBKA.

The matter was discussed at county level, but not reported to our members, as it was firmly believed that it would die down, and that any more publicity given to it at this stage would, both exacerbate the situation, and bring the beekeeping world into disrepute. Somerset BKA recommended a Special Delegate's meeting to discuss the matter and a trio of ex president's of BBKA to mount an independent inquiry. To this end, there will be a Special Delegate's Meeting on 13th December, which will endeavour to unravel the mess. You will find it mentioned in this month's BBKA News, but not the subject matter.

In the interim, it is reported that Ken Basterfield has not attended meetings to which he has been invited and has distanced himself from BBKA. He has been suspended from several committees on which he sits.

It is sincerely hoped that this matter can be resolved quickly, and that if there are any irregularities and mis-management, the situation can be rectified. So that we can all get back to the prime objective of most members – keeping bees.

editor

Very healthy bees

In the oasis town of Kufra, in Libya, there are bees that arrived when the Sahara was still a green savannah, and have survived ever since, over 1,000km from their nearest neighbouring bees, and genetic analysis proves that they are unrelated and have been isolated for over 5000 years,

Because of the isolation, they remain free of the varroa mite and many other problems that threaten bees around the world. Today, the Sahara is inhospitable to honeybees, which can't survive in the large sand deserts, which lack any vegetation. So these bees remain isolated, and safe.

published in the journal Conservation Genetics.

Varroa Treatments - Latest

Nothing has changed really: only two oxalic acid treatments are available under the Cascade system. These are imported from Italy and Spain, on the basis that they are licensed in the EU and are therefore imported legally, but some suppliers are still selling oxalic acid for treating varroa, which has not been imported under the licensing scheme.

It may seem silly that a powdered oxalic acid is imported under licence, yet an almost identical product is available in the UK, but not licensed. Even that is not entirely true. Oxalic acid is freely available in the UK, for use as a timber treatment, and many companies sell it for that purpose.

Oxalic acid products previously used for treating bees, were sold in powder form and had to be diluted to a specific strength to avoid damage to the bees. Products now being imported, also have to be diluted to a specific strength, with exactly the same amount of care.

Will the VMD reconsider the outlawing of British oxalic acid, revoke the import licenses, or maintain the status quo?

Dates for your Diary



Saturday January 10 th	BBKA	BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting
Saturday January 2 nd - 2.00 pm	Somerset BKA	Council Meeting, Long Sutton Village Hall
Sat. February 21 st - 9.00 am	Somerset BKA	Lecture Day, Kings of Wessex Academy, Cheddar
Saturday 21 st March - 9.00 am	Yeovil	Bee Improvement for All. Odcombe Village Hall
Wednesday 15 th April - 7.30 pm	Somerset BKA	Special Lecture, Keith Delaplane - Norton sub Hamdon Village Hall
Saturday June 13 th - 9,00 am	South East Division	Bee Disease & Husbandry - Ansford Academy, Castle Cary

Members are welcome to attend the meetings of any SBKA division, but it is suggested that you check with the host or secretary as the time or venue may have changed. Further details are often available on the website or divisional newsletters. This list is taken from the Yearbook and may have changed or been added to since it was originally published.

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