**August Tips**

August can be a very busy month as it is the month when the main honey crop is taken from the supers, extracted, filtered and stored/bottled in jars or in bulk.

Honey show entries are prepared with total attention to quality and appearance.

Early in the month remove capped frames of honey from the supers and take them home for extraction. Concentrate the frames of any uncapped honey into other supers and allow the bee’s time to cap them. Once capped, remove these frames from the hive and take them home for extraction. However before removal you could find the super still has many bees in it. These need to be removed and the method used is a 'clearer board'.

The most common and inexpensive method is to use a board with one or two Porter Bee Escapes in it. This is normally used as 'Crown Board' and a 'Feeder Board' so is pretty versatile in it uses. The Porter Escape is a simple mechanical one featuring two sets of weak springs which are closed together. The bees can push through the springs but not return as the springs close behind them. With the Porter Escape, make sure that the springs are set correctly and they let the bees through. However this type of bee escape is not without problems, so test each unit. After removing the cover slide, test by gently pushing your little finger through the springs at each end and make sure that the springs open correctly and without effort and then close together without much force onto each other afterwards. Importantly make sure the springs do not foul on the unit anywhere. If the pressure on the springs is set too high, bees get stuck part way through the springs, usually at the bee’s waist where the thorax is joined to the abdomen. Once a bee is stuck then the rest of the bees cannot get out and when you open the super you will get a face full of upset bees! If at some time a drone has managed to get into a super, due to its size it will block the escape if it tries to leave. If there is any kind of blockage, and if there are still a lot of bees remaining in the super, clear the blockage and leave everything in situ for another day or so. If there are only a few bees left behind, then shake them over the front of the hive and remove the super.



**The Porter Bee Escape**

Because of the above problems that can accompany a Porter Escape, many beekeepers have moved over to 'non-mechanical' types of escape often 'home made'. Many of these however require the use of a 'rim unit'. A rim is a sort of low eke about 1 “/ 30mm that sits on top of the super. The clearer board is then set on top of the rim with the super/s to be cleared on top of that. This allows clearance under the clearer system for the bees to get down onto the top rails of the frames below. A typical couple of examples are (a) a fast' clearer system called a 'The Canadian' clearer board, this a plain board with holes with inverted small plastic cones fixed under them through which the bees pass downwards. In using this system it is often found that while it clears the bees down quickly - say in about 2 hours, if the board is left on for a long period i.e. over-night, the bees will often have learned how to get back up into the super again. (b)Another successful clearer system is using the rhombus or circular clearers which are a plastic maze type of device fitted under the centre of a cover board with a 2" hole in it. The device has six or eight bee escape routes, which are designed to confuse the bees into being unable to return. N.B. If it is found that the bees will not leave the super then check to see that if somehow there is brood present in the super, if it is found that there is, you will have to immediately remove the frames with the brood.

     

**Cone type Bee Escape Rhombus maze escape**

If there is no nectar available and you decide that there is no honey flow left at all this year, it is time to get the supers off the hives. Some of the supers will have frames of uncapped honey and it would benefit the bees to be allowed to get this honey down into their winter stores. Leaving the queen excluder on, concentrate any frames of uncapped honey into a super immediately over the brood box. Under normal circumstances the bees recognise the 'no nectar' situation and they will clean out the super and move the honey into the brood box.

Some beekeepers would move this super **under** the brood box, because if there is ivy in bloom they will collect and store this nectar in the super if there is no space left in the brood box. Technically can it still be called a super now it is not superior - from which the name is taken? This 'undering' of the (super) box, gives extra space for the bees before the winter decline and provides more space for winter stores of up to about 20 kg. If you decide to place use this method of placement under the brood box, and then you can remove the queen excluder on top of the brood box ready for cleaning and storing.

Once the honey for processing has been completely removed to your honey room, it is time to treat against Varroa, do this when a hive inspection shows that there is no more or, very little brood to hatch. Mid to late August Varroa treatment allows the future 'winter bees' to develop, but there is an inherent problem that it may permit re-infestation from other hives in the vicinity. (It would be wise to consider a further oxalic acid treatment - weather permitting, in December.) There are several proprietary chemicals that can be obtained to treat Varroa with. Check with the C.D.B.K.A for advice on which treatment is currently giving the best results as to Varroa kill in the local area. In some areas Varroa mites are becoming immune to once effective products. Supplies of treatment chemicals are available from the association at competitive prices. Don't forget whenever possible fit a Varroa mesh floor with a white board under it, to monitor the mite drop.

At this time many beekeepers after removal of the supers, begin to give the bees a feed of 50/50 sugar /water solution ( 1kg of sugar to 1ltr water or, better at 1kg to 630ml of water), to give them a food supply to turn into winter stores. It is advised to apply this feed at dusk to prevent robbing either by wasps or other hungry bees. Hungry wasps can be a danger to beehives and they will rob any that are not well defended. To assist the bees in defending their home, it is time to reduce the hive opening to entrance to 8 mm by 20 to 25 mm wide and fit mouse guards too. A full entrance block with two 8mm x 8mm holes can be used as an 'entrance' and 'exit by the bees - they soon designate which is which. This two hole method keeps out mice and is easily defended by the bees.

Wasps, the bane of autumn picnics and bees winter stocks, can be captured in a wasp trap, this is easily constructed by cutting off the neck of a 2 or 3 litre plastic drinks bottle, at about 400mm down form the curve of the bottle neck often this is at the first corrugated line around the bottle. Take the removed part and invert it like a funnel (without the cap on it) into the bottle. Add beer, wine, and sugar water or, a jam solution and the greedy wasps usually will enter drawn in by the sugar aromas, then find they can't escape and subsequently drown.

**Hey Ho – Job Done**!

A glass jam-jar with a 6 mm hole in the screw on lid, one third filled with a similar sweet enticement will work well too.

The solution may need to be changed regularly to remove any dead wasps. Leave the jar/s near the hives away from where they will fill with rainwater

Once you have your full supers home to your 'honey room' it is time produce the golden nectar – "No, not Foster’s lager, but HONEY - the product of your very busy bees and your own beekeeping labours".

Uncapping the honey for extraction has for years been done by several methods - with an wide bladed cold or an electrically heated uncapping knife, a hot water heated uncapping tray ( good for removing rape honey), but nowadays many simply use a decorators hot air gun to quickly melt the caps off the cells. With the heat gun it is easy to find the proper operational distance from the comb. Just quickly melt the caps off the honey and move the heat onwards; this reduces a lot of the wax detritus one gets by using other methods. The frames are then placed into the 'extractor unit 'and the honey centrifugally spun out. There are radial and tangential extractors. Beginners can hire an extractor and riser bin for a very reasonable daily hire rate from the association, but do remember to pre- book it in good time. It is wise to do this as it may be in demand, so to be sure of its availability the C.D.B.K.A. Equipment Officer will advise you of the dates of its availability etc. Maybe two beekeepers can work together and share the costs and work load. Remember you must collect all equipment from the store and it must be returned in a clean sterile condition. If you are not sure of the safe method of using the extractor or rising bins or, how to best to clean them afterwards, ask for the advice or even the assistance of an experienced beekeeper.

Next the honey should be filtered through a double nylon or stainless filter, into a 'riser bucket' (with a lid) and left for 48 hours. If any are still present after the filtering, the tiny bits of debris will rise to the top of the honey from where they can be easily skimmed off.

The filtered honey in the riser, is then weighed out into the chosen size of jars or, into bulk 10/20/30 kg food plastic containers.

**DON'T FORGET TO ENTER YOUR HONEY AT YOUR ANNUAL "HONEY SHOW"**

Beekeepers who move their bees to heather moors, will be fully aware of the method of extracting our local ling heather honey, this done by pressure to remove the gel like honey from the cells of the comb. The honey comb is removed and then broken up into pieces and placed into a nylon bag to sieve out the wax debris and it is then pressed in a similar press to an apple press.

After final use, the cleared supers are prepared for a pre winter acetic acid treatment which protects them from a wax moth invasion. The empty supers are stacked on a solid bottom board and are made ready for the pre winter 'acetic acid treatment'. This performed with 80% w/w acetic acid.

**Method.**

Stack your boxes of combs to be treated and seal each of the box to box joints with tape and apply the 'acetic acid treatment'. This done by placing a saucer is filled with 80% acetic acid instead of acetic acid crystals on the top bars of the top box. Alternatively a 2 small absorbent pads soaked in the solution can be placed onto the top of frame bars in each box. Place a solid cover board over the boxes and seal it to the boxes to keep the fumes inside. The fumes kills the egg stage of the moth as well as all others stages and is useful to sterilise against Nosema spores. Please note, the acid is very corrosive so wear rubber gloves, do not breathe the fumes in. The acid will attack metal fittings and fasteners, so if you have metal frame spacers remove them. If there are any screw heads showing in your boxes put a blob of petroleum jelly on each. After a reasonable period of treatment it is suggested that you cover over these supers securely with plastic or, wrap each box individually in a plastic bag and tape it up. The supers should now be safe for the long winter storage.

It is the end of August that steady preparation for winter is started as you will see in the September tips However if the weather is good, an overlap of August jobs is permissible into September.

See you in September

**Bob and Michael**