



Beetalk

Newsletter of The Blackburn and East Lancashire Branch of
The Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association
December 2011 www.blackburnbeekeepers.com Registered Charity

COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONTACT DETAILS for 2012 SEASON

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Brian Jackson. Vice Chairman	01535 634503		bmjackson1@talktalk.net
Victoria Winstanley. Hon. Sec	01282-701692		vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk
Philip Ainsworth. Hon. Treas.	0771 3161480		philipainsworth@btconnect.com
Caroline Coughlin. Honey Show Sec	07702 824920		caroline.coughlin@hotmail.co.uk
David Rayner. Education Officer/Librarian	01200 426898		davidrayner1@yahoo.co.uk
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Bob Fulton. Communications Officer	01254 772780		home.brew@talktalk.net
David Bush. Member	01200 428152		david.bush2@talktalk.net
Karen Ramsbottom. Member	01254722514		john.rammy@ntlworld.com
Alistair McLean. Member	07815049283		AlistairMcLean@ymail.com
Ellen Howarth. Member.			helen@waltonhowarth.co.uk
Steve Ganner. Member			stevegana@hotmail.co.uk

Michael Birt. Web Master/Beetalk Editor webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

DELEGATES TO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Philip Ainsworth. Hon. Treas. 0771 3161480 email philipainsworth@btconnect.com
Vici Winstanley. Hon.Sec. 07827292844 email vicicoaffee@yahoo.co.uk

MEMBERS SERVICES

Bayvoral - Apiguard - Oxalic Acid -
Thymol - Fumidi 'B'

These Chemicals for treating bees can be obtained from:
David Bush Phone 01200 - 428152
Dave will have them available at beekeeper's meetings.

LIBRARY

There is an extensive range of books on all
aspects of beekeeping that can be borrowed from the
Association library.

Please contact
David Rayner on 01200 426898

MEMBERSHIP

REGISTERED MEMBER. Subscription for the 2012 season will be £30.00

PARTNER MEMBER. This is for partners of registered members living in the same household wishing to keep bees and includes full insurance cover. However they will not receive their own copy of BBKA news. Subscription will be £17.00

COUNTRY MEMBER. This is for people who do not keep bees, but wish to receive BBKA news and attend branch meetings etc. This class of member does not include any insurance cover. Subscription will be £12.00

IMPORTANT INSURANCE NOTICE

Under the new constitution, prompt payment is essential. Basically, payment will be required by the 31st December each year as insurance is now based on the current years membership. New and lapsed members insurance cover will not start until six weeks after paying their subscription.

For insurance purposes subs will need to be promptly, otherwise you will not have third party insurance

SUBS SHOULD BE PAID TO PHILIP AINSWORTH HON. TREASURER Phone 07713161480

Address ::::: Phil Ainsworth Riverside Cottage Potters :Lane Samlesbury Preston PR5 0UE

Association Swarm Catchers.
For the 2012 season

A small charge is made to collect swarms to cover expenses which is up to the discretion of the individual collector.

**BLACKBURN, DARWEN, ACCRINGTON , MELLOR, PRESTON and
ROSSENDALE
AREAS**

Karen Ramsbottom.
Telephone 01254722514
E-mail::: john.rammy@ntlworld.com

CLITHEROE AND SURROUNDING AREAS

John Zamorski
Telephone **01200-427661**
E Mail::::: john@johnzamorski.wanadoo.co.uk

David Bush,
Telephone **01200 428152**
Email :::david.bush2@talktalk.net

BURNLEY, NELSON AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Nigel Banford
Telephone **01282-861170**

Please feel free to ring any of the above in your area and they will do their best to sort out the problem.

Swarm collectors will not come out to Bumble Bees and Wasps problems

FUTURE BRANCH MEETINGS

19th Feb 2012 @ 2pm .Samlesbury. Preparations for the coming season with John Zamorski

21st March 2012 @7pm. Alma Inn, Laneshawbridge Annual Dinner

15th April 2012 @ 2pm Towneley Hall. Queen rearing with the committee

**Details of all the meetings can be found on the web site on the events page at
www.blackburnbeekeepers.com**

We will, where possible open hives so bring along your protective clothing just in case.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in any of the articles in 'Bee Talk' represent the personal opinions of the Contributors and in no way should they be regarded as the official opinions or views of the 'Lancashire & North West Beekeepers Association' nor of our local Branch of this association 'The Blackburn & East Lancashire Branch'

For Sale Protective Clothing

1. Cotton Bee Protective Boiler Suits all sizes a bargain at £20 each
2. Net Veils that need to be fitted onto a hat at £3 each
3. Box of thin but very strong gloves at £3 for a box of 50 pairs

**These are available by ringing Bob Fulton on
01254-772780**

3. Available from Early March 2011 Fitted Veil at £15.
- All in all if you buy the protective Suit, Veil and Gloves you will have yourself fully protected at a cost of £35 compared to something like £85 to £100 from other suppliers.

Sugar and Candy

20 kilo Buckets at £12

10 Kilo Buckets at £6

1 Kilo Bags at 60p

Candy Sticks at 30p per stick

These are available by ringing David Bush on

01200-428152

UK Honey Labelling Regulations

Below is our simple advice on honey labelling. For more detailed information - go to the website of the Food Standards Agency. www.food.gov.uk

1. The Word **HONEY**'s required.
2. The weight must be on the label - we will ensure it is the legal size and format.
3. You can specify the area where the honey is produced. For example, Lincolnshire, Forest of Dean, Scottish Borders.
4. You can specify the type of honey. For example, Heather, Borage. The honey must be at least 75% of that particular type.
5. If you are selling the honey, you must have your name and address on the label. It does not need to be complete but you should be able to be found from the information.
6. If you are selling the honey through a third party, you must have a lot number.
7. New for 2003 You must have a best before date on the jar. We suggest 2-5 years from now.
8. New for 2003 You must have a country of origin on the jar. For example - Produce of England, Product of Scotland, Harvested in Wales. Adding the country to the end of your address is not acceptable.

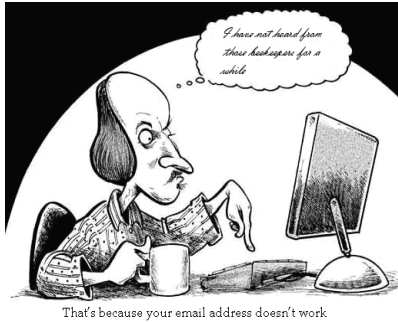
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From EH Thorne's online catalogue 2010 - other sources are available



What's in the Honey Pot

A few snippets of news and information that may be of use to you



Editorial

Our membership secretary reports that several members' email addresses no longer work and emails are bounced straight back at him by the "mailer-daemon". If you've been feeling neglected by your Association lately, please check that we have your correct email address. You can rectify this problem, if it applies to you, by emailing

Michael Birt at webmaster@blackburnbeekeepers.com

Editorial



Well everyone, another season over. Some of us have had a good year and some of us not. I guess that's how it goes in the beekeeping world as it all depends on a few factors. Nosema has taken its toll on a few of our members and gave them a bad start. Lots of us were also caught out with the season itself. It started off great and the bees did very well, too well really as the hives were chocker block full of bees and honey. Then the bad weather came and the bees could not get out so they did what all hungry bees did, they eat the lot and some of us ended up with bees that were starving. The weather then again turned really good and the bees started to swarm. Some of our members had swarms in mid to late September. What was strange is that when they looked into the old hive the new queen had been mated so there must have been drones flying. All this late in the season. Beekeeping in the UK is such a trial sometimes and this year has been no exception, but that's why it's such a fantastic hobby.

The venues have been well attended. Towneley Hall is a great venue, and will continue to be, but the committee has decided to also have some of our meetings at other venues. Details are on the website under events.

Well that's about it for this time. Hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and all the best wishes to you all for the New Year. Hope to see you all back in the UK about April time.

Updates of all events and any new can be found on the website at www.blackburnbeekeepers.com

Michael

Meet some of the Committee for 2012



John Zamorski (Chairman)



Brian Jackson (Vice Chairman)



Vici Winstanley (Hon Secretary)



**Phil Ainsworth
(Hon Treasurer)**



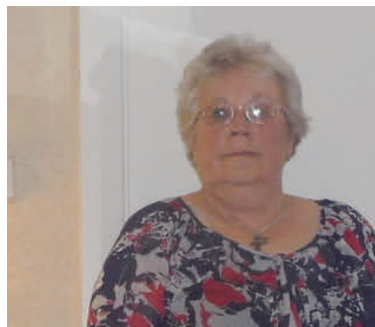
**Caroline Coughlin
(Honey Show Secretary)**



**Dave Rayner
(Education Officer)**



**Bob Fulton
Communications Officer**



Annette Hawkins Committee Member



Alistair McLean. Committee Member



**Michael Birt.
(Webmaster and Beetalk Editor)**

MERRY CHRISTMAS



*On Behalf of all the Committee
We wish to thank everyone who worked and
helped
to make the 2012 season a really good
one.*



Happy NEW YEAR

*On Behalf of all the Committee
We wish all our members.
a lovely Christmas and
that 2012 will bring peace and
happiness and lots
of great things with your bees.*

Chairman's Chat

Here goes with my first letter as the new chairman. Firstly, I would like to thank everyone for the honour. Brian has served us well over the last six years and I have to try and fill the position he has left. I am sure in his new role of Vice-Chair he will be there to help and advise me. My sincere thanks go to him for the support and help he gave me while I was secretary.

I first joined Blackburn Branch over 20 years ago as a complete novice. I had always been interested in everything “insecty” and was not long back from two years in Australia where I had my first encounter with a swarm. The Beekeeper who came to collect it spoke to me for over two hours and his passion for his hobby was obvious. He tried to get me started there and then but because my two year posting was nearly over I had to decline.

I came back to the UK and thought no more of it until I discovered David Bush had started keeping bees. He introduced me to the late Ken Preedy and I was hooked.

I attended a three day course at Thorne's in Wragby and can remember Les Thorne saying to me, “it will take you seven years to learn all about bees and then another seven to realise you don't really know anything” Well I have now past my third seven years and I am still learning. I still ask questions and you all should not be afraid to.

There is nothing a Beekeeper likes better than to talk about his bees. What most of you will have realised by now though, is that one question can give more than one answer. What you need to do is listen to everything and then decide which you think is best for you.

I joined the Committee after two years as a member and took on the job of Librarian. Then I did a spell as Programme Secretary then Secretary for seven years to eventually become Chairman. I have seen the branch more than double in numbers since I started (Pre Varroa) What I would like to see now is some of the newer members stepping forward and having a go at helping so that we can bring new ideas to the format.

Perhaps it may be a good idea to limit the time people spend in the officer positions on the committee. Maybe something to discuss for the next AGM.

Anyway, that's enough blather. I hope everyone has a good Christmas and lets look forward to bumper honey crops next year and not too many swarms.

John Zamorski

Secretary report 2011

It was the first year in the new venue at Towneley Hall with its purpose built lecture theatre and facilities which has brought a steady flow of members to the monthly meeting. We had some very informative speakers who have shared their knowledge and experiences with us such as John Goodwin (Honey Show Judge). The branch all gleamed with pride at the Honey Show with yet again an increase in entries and the fantastic comments from John who was impressed with the high calibre of exhibits.

On the less positive side Towneley Hall does present a concern over the lack of opportunity to gain practical knowledge and experience, however in 2012 we hope to change this as we will be supporting Towneley Hall and Offshoots with the Native Black Bee

Project this will see an apiary of 10 hives in 2012 within the Towneley hall grounds. We will have access to these for teaching purposes and Beekeepers can volunteer to support in the to help maintain the apiary if anyone is interested please contact David Rayner. This will also provide further opportunity to support new beekeepers as there has been a very high demand in the requirement for mentoring and we have struggled to meet the requirements of some members and hope to improve this offering in 2012.

A thanks need to go Dennis Lee for the organisation of the programme in 2011 and the fantastic Dinner dance at Burnley football Club. Dennis will be leaving us for pastures new and we wish him well in the move back to the Midlands. At the Branch BBQ the rain held off just long enough so that we could feast of the home-baked delights courtesy of Margaret Jackson.

I am sure that John Zamorski will cover this in his report as Bee Disease Liaison officer however the importance of monitoring the health of your bees is paramount to preventing the spread of disease as you will know from recent emails AFB has been located in Preston.

I have enjoyed my first year as secretary and looking forward to the year ahead however we need your support and input to make this a success and drive forward our association.

On a final note I want to thank Brian Jackson for his 7 years as Chair we are grateful for Brian's support and commitment and his wife's fantastic home-baked offerings.

Thanks Vici

Message from our outgoing chairman Brian Jackson

How time flies - 7 years as chairman has gone by very quickly. The art of beekeeping has gone through great changes these last few years, especially the information now available to one and all. I must admit that as far as I am concerned beekeeping has moved away from what and why I have kept bees for the last 60 years.

I have arrived at the milestone of 80 years young and therefore I feel it necessary to step down and allow someone younger to take up the challenge for the future. I have enjoyed my time as chairman and am pleased to hand over to John, and I feel sure that with him in charge the society will continue to succeed and grow, so lets hope that the bees continue to do their bit as well.

I must admit that whilst we need to keep up with the times and not forgetting about Varroa etc. and their treatments, I find the need for examinations is taking over from good old common sense and practical ability. As I have often said " You can read all the books written about bees BUT the bees have not.

Finally thank you to all for your patience and understanding and more so for your friendship throughout my stewardship. Don't worry I'm not going anywhere - I've simply moved to vice chairman. This is good as there was no " vice " as chairman .

Hoping all of you have a happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous 2012 especially with the bees.

Brian

Swarm Catchers

It is advisable due to outbreaks of AFB in our area that any collecting of swarms that are out of the vicinity of any members apiary or swarms from an unknown source should be carried out by our official swarm collectors and so eradicate any swarms collected which may have AFB spreading the disease to our area.

The reasons being

- ♦ The official swarm collectors have an area where they can keep collected swarms away from any other hives and observe and check them for AFB. If AFB is found then the swarm collector can immediately contact the bee inspector to sort out the problem.
- ♦ Any swarms collected will be treated with oxalic acid to rid them of any Varroa that could be on the swarm.
- ♦
- ♦ Once these checks are carried out the swarm when put in a Nucleus will be offered to members of our association in need of a Nucleus of bees.

A message from the Treasurer

Fellow Beekeeper/s

At the Annual General Meeting held at Towneley Hall on Sunday 20th November 2011, the membership agreed the New Subscriptions for the year, and I therefore enclose a membership form for 2012. Can I draw your attention to the 'Early Bird' renewal. If you renew your subscription before 31/12/11 a Registered Member will be £ 25.00. If it's renewed after that date it goes up to £30.00.

At the meeting a wide discussion was held as to how the club performed in the last year and the committee acknowledged that our move to Towneley Hall had not been as fruitful as we had hoped, especially in relation to actually handling Bees. David Rayner of Education officer gave a talk on the new developments that are happening at the Hall, including a new Apiary with 10 hives, which the Blackburn Club will have access to at their meetings. This will give us a chance to have some practical meetings and demonstrations as well as talks. It should also improve our offer of giving Beekeeping Lessons and Exams, as well as Extra training periods for members if required.

The other discussion revolved around the communication the club gives to its members, which again the committee agreed could be improved on. We have therefore set up a new post of Communication Officer, which Bob Fulton has been voted to as the officer in Charge. It will be his job to keep the membership up to date with happenings in the Club, Beekeeping world and general information you need to know. He will also liaise with the Webmaster Michael to get our website up to speed with events.

Remember our club is only as good as its membership, and we look forward to welcoming you to the Meetings, Annual dinner, Barbecue and Honey Show. When the BDI certificates are sent out we will be enclosing a list of the events. Please try to attend as many as you can.

I look forward to receiving your cheques in the post before 31.12.11 and on behalf of the committee can I wish you an enjoyable festive season and a great beekeeping year in 2012.

Phil Ainsworth

From Helen Howarth Committee Member

I started keeping bees about 12 years ago, high up on the moors in Rossendale, and joined the Blackburn and East Lancashire Beekeepers.

It was a difficult location forage wise and as with many a novice completely lost them after a swarm, followed by a harsh winter. However I knew that the swarm had survived as from then on I found honeybees collecting nectar from my garden plants where there had never before been any bees!

We moved to Colne some 8 years ago and I restocked at that point. Although at 730ft above sea level and with much more variety in the forage around, it is still a difficult location compared to other parts of Lancashire. However the bees do take themselves off to the heather, which is less than a mile away, and this leads to interesting honey with no effort from me!

I have both National hives and a Dartington.

I chose the Dartington to try to avoid having to lift heavy supers when doing the summer inspections, but to date have not managed to take any honey from this hive. I have not given up hope yet!

I was encouraged to take my Basic BBKA Exam which I found to be less traumatic than might be expected, with the practical taking the form of a friendly inspection of the bees with an expert, where I am sure I learnt more than I

demonstrated! Since then I have started taking the BBKA Modules and have been awarded my Intermediate Certificate.

I would recommend both the Basic Exam and the Modules to everyone as it opens up so much more knowledge and

insight into the life of the honeybee which gives greater understanding and interest to your beekeeping.

A message for Bob Fulton the new communications officer

Hello Everyone,

At the last committee meeting it was decided that the club needed a member of the committee to become communications officer and I was elected to take on the job.

With all the changes that are going on in the within the club such as the “bees in the borough” project at Towneley Hall, the mentoring scheme and many new and inexperienced beekeepers joining the club, it was felt that information needs to get out to the members. This is now what I will be doing along with Michael Birt the webmaster and Beetalk editor. What my roll will roughly be is to gather any information on what the club is doing, pass it on to Michael who will put it onto the website or/ and Beetalk so that everyone knows all the latest news and updates.

For the members part it's just a matter of sending anything you want including and if it's OK it will be published.

My e-mail address and telephone are 01254 772780 home.brew@talktalk.net and I will be at most meetings. Let's hope we get plenty of info but in the meantime you all have a great Christmas and all the very best wishes to you all for the New Year

Committee Meeting 30th November 2011 – Held at Salmsbury War Memorial Hall

Attendees: J Zamorski, Karen Ramsbottom, Dave Bush, Steve Ganner, Phil Ainsworth, Brian Jackson, Alistair McLean, Vici Winstanley, Bob Fulton, Helen Howarth, Dave Rayner

Apologies: Caroline Coughlin, Annette Hawkins

Programme 2012

The programme for 2012 was agreed and this will be placed on the website and Beetalk in December.

Committee meeting dates

Committee meetings will take place in January, April, Sept, November and the dates will be confirmed in due course.

Information for Beetalk

It was agreed the committee needs to encourage its members to contribute to Beetalk such as success stories, questions, useful information etc.

Beekeeper donating Bee's and equipment

A beekeeper due to medical reasons has given up keeping Bee's and wants to donate his bees and equipment to the association. It was agreed that the 2 hives would be looked after by the committee until next year at which point we will discuss and agree what to do with them and that the remaining equipment would be auctioned off in the February meeting.

Swarm catchers

Bill Ainsworth and Bob Fulton have decided to step down from swarm control in their local area and therefore Vici Winstanley, Helen Howarth, Karen Ramsbottom and John Wilson have offered to take over. John Zamorski will provide some coaching on identifying diseases.

Education – Basic exam how do we push this?

Discuss and agreed that we needed to encourage more members to take the basic exam and that if anyone had any queries these should be directed to Dave Rayner.

Any other business

Phil Ainsworth confirmed that all members in the last 2 years will be sent a letter confirming the information on the increase of subs for 2012

It was agreed at the end of each meeting the more experience beekeepers will take any questions from the members. It will be agreed before each meeting on who will take the question and answer sessions.

AGM Summary

Brian opened the AGM for his last time as Chair and gave a few words of thanks to all who had supported whilst in his role as Chair. This followed by the Secretary report by Vici Winstanley.

We were then given an update by Dave Rayner on his newly appointed role as a Bee Breeder for the Native Black Bee Project in Pendle based at Towneley Hall and Dave also discussed how our association and the project could work in partnership to support new and existing beekeepers learn new skills. (For further details on this project and how you can get involved visit www.offshoots.org.uk).

John Zamorski as the associations Bee Disease Liaison Officer then gave a brief update on the AFB found in Preston and the concerns that not all apiaries are registered on Bee Base. John also confirmed that an official report will come out from Ian Molenoux.

The Honey Show Secretary report was read out by Phil Ainsworth on behalf of Caroline Coughlin, which is available to read on the website.

Phil Ainsworth as the association Treasurer gave his report on the past year and discussed that concerns around increase in admin expenses and paying for the Tea/Coffee at the monthly meeting due to not every attendee paying the agreed £1. Also that Lancashire is increasing subs by £1.50 and therefore as a committee the proposal of increasing subs to £25 for full member was agreed. It was also agreed that if subs were not paid until 2012 then they would increase to £30 for a full member. Phil confirmed that he would be sending a letter out to all members.

The committee also acknowledged that there had been some learning's from the past year around communication and keeping its members update with the latest information. It was therefore decided that a new post of communication officer would be put in place to ensure our members were kept fully informed. A second concern was the lack of practical experience when coming to monthly meeting however going forward and working in partnership with the Native Black Bee project we will have the opportunity to view the hives at Towneley.

The committee members were agreed as follows

Chair.	John Zamorski
Vice Chair.	Brian Jackson
Secretary.	Vici Winstanley
Treasurer.	Phil Ainsworth
Programme Sec.	Annette Hawkins
Honey Show Sec.	Caroline Coughlin
Disease Liaison.	John Zamorski
Education Officer.	Dave Rayner
Communication Officer.	Bob Fulton
Committee Members	Karen Ramsbottom, David Bush, Steve Ganner, Helen Howarth

The meeting close on a thank you to Brian Jackson and Bill Ainsworth for their contribution to the association over the years and they were presented with life memberships.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ 2011

1. How many stomachs has a worker bee?
2. How many frames in a National brood chamber?
3. What is the optimum (fine) granulation temperature for floral honeys?
4. What is the name of our Regional Bee Inspector?
5. What defines a flying insect?
6. What is the colour of the pollen of Willowherb?
7. Name 5 natural substances that may be taken by the bees
8. What is noteworthy about the honeybee *A.mellifera* *Caucasia*?
9. Does blackberry honey granulate easily?
10. Moveable frame beekeeping was invented by the Rev. L.L. Langstroth.
What was his nationality?
11. What is the queen colour for 2012?
12. What are the approximate dimensions of the small hive
beetle?
13. How many times does a drone mate?
14. What is likely to be the last available wild forage for
honeybees in our district?
15. Apart from propolis, what other ingredients make tincture of propolis?
16. What is the predominant colour of the honeybee *Apis mellifera* *ligustica*?
17. In what region of the South West did Brother Adam develop the
Buckfast bee?
18. What approximately, are the cross sectional dimensions of the National
brood chamber?
19. What is Certan?
20. N.D.B. What do the initials stand for?

Answers on the penultimate page.

My thanks to Roy White of the Somerton Division. This is a slightly amended version that he created for the Somerton members last year.

I DON'T NEED ONE OF THOSE!!! Peter Edwards, Stratford-upon-Avon BKA

At £16.85 each (remember I am using Thorne's prices) Wood and Wire Queen Excluders are expensive!

To a prudent beekeeper that might be reason enough to consider the alternatives, but my main dislike of them is their durability. The wire breaks away from the wood very easily and the wooden frame is easily broken if the excluder is well propolised down. If the wire warps away from the wood then it will create a gap that will allow the queen into the supers.

So what are the alternatives? Plastic is not an option in my view as I cannot clean it with a blowtorch. The zinc short-slot excluder has served me well for many years and some that I framed myself in the 1980s are still going strong but I eventually gave up framing them through lack of time; it seemed to make no difference to the crop. The excluder must be removed fairly carefully if propolised down or it can easily be distorted; the secret is to peel it off from just one corner. The zinc excluder can be cleaned with a blowtorch, but this does require great care.

Recently, Thorne's have introduced a steel version of the short-slot excluder and this is, in my view, a real winner - very strong, easily cleaned and at £6.07 a saving of £10.78 over the wood and wire version.

Now I can hear some of you saying that the round wires are smoother and do not injure the bees as they pass through them. Personally, I have never seen any damage resulting from a bee going through a Slotted excluder and recently read that, in general, bees do not move up and down through the excluder very much—bees below pass honey through it to waiting bees above.

If you must have wire then Thorne's have an 18" square version without the wooden frame at £9.84.

Excluders are also sometimes described as honey excluders but that cannot be true either when we see colonies with upwards of six and sometimes as many as twelve supers of honey on them above a

Did you know?

“The *Melipona* species of stingless bees in the tropics store honey and pollen. It's an important food store for them in the wet season when there's a dearth of flowers.

"Mean worker longevity during periods of resource dearth was nearly double that during periods of resource abundance, suggesting that workers actually forage less to conserve energy rather than increase their foraging effort to find more resources during periods of resource scarcity.

At the same time, brood production drops to nearly zero. Workers consume larval provisions and, in some cases, the young larvae themselves, but workers never eat pupae.

Thus, colonies curb reproduction in favour of maximizing the number of workers that survive until floral nectar and pollen again becomes abundant

Michael

Queen Selection to Improve Stocks

Queen rearing and breeding are the subjects of many lectures and books and made to seem very complicated and difficult. Indeed many of the methods require advanced skills and only become easy after much practice. This does not have to be the case and for beekeepers with a few hives, most of the methods of queen rearing are outside the requirements of the beekeeper. This does not prevent a beekeeper with even two hives improving their queens and stocks by methods that are part of their normal manipulations.

With all livestock selective breeding can be practiced whether it is dogs, cattle or even bees. The first principle is to decide which characteristics are desirable in the livestock and breed from those which best match requirements and not from those with a poor fit. In the case of bees the characteristics of individual bees are not the important factor but the behaviour of the hive; the genetics of which are determined by the queen. This is best done by keeping records of the characteristics desired and then determining which are the 'best' colonies. This has to be done over a considerable time as characteristics such as honey production or swarminess are seasonal whereas temperament and such like may be immediately obvious. Disease resistance should be a major factor in selection.

Once the rating of the colonies has been assessed this should be noted and only those with a high rating should be considered to use for selection.

Bees are undoubtedly the best at raising queens as they have had millions of years of practice. Most bees will try to raise queens in the early summer, which is why we inspect the colonies for swarm control.

In the perfect scenario a high rated colony will try to raise queen cells at the same time as a low rated colony and when the colonies are split for swarm control all of the queen cells can be removed from the low rated colony and replaced with queen cells from the high rated colony. The bees will not notice the difference and selection has taken place with two or more colonies headed by better queens.

More frequently the swarm preparations are not at the same time and this simplistic operation is not possible. The principles however can still be applied as removing extra queen cells from the best colonies at time of artificial swarming and placing them in nuclei or other queen rearing colonies will give a stock of 'better' queens. These queens once mated and proved for laying can be introduced into 'less good' colonies after the old queen has been removed. The benefits are a 'better', younger and hopefully more fecund queen, which will reduce the possibility of swarming in the following year.

If the 'best' colonies are not inclined to swarm, as all of the genetics required are contained in the eggs, the production of queen cells can be prompted by splitting a colony before swarming is evident. If you ensure that it has sufficient young bees new queen cells will be raised very quickly.

A good basic principle if one has more than two hives is to take queen cells only from the 'best' third of colonies and cut out and replace queen cells in the other two thirds. Immediate replacement is necessary with sealed queen cells otherwise the colony will raise queens from larvae that are too old to produce good queens.

A few years of selecting only from the 'best' colonies will see an improvement in stocks.

Further improvement can be obtained by adjusting the drone stock in the area by only allowing significant amounts of drone to develop in the 'best' colonies; use other methods of Varroa control. In the poorer colonies, use drone removal actively both for Varroa monitoring and control by removing as much capped drone brood as possible.

This will only work well if the area has mainly drones from 'good' colonies and will only have a minor effect in areas of high densities of hives. It will also benefit other beekeepers in the area and if they can be persuaded to follow the same principles,

ANSWERS TO Christmas Quiz

- 1. Two**
- 2. Eleven**
- 3. Around 13 centigrade**
- 4. Ian Molyneux**
- 5. 3 parts to the body (head, thorax and abdomen), 6 legs, 1 or 2 pairs of wings, 1 pair of antennae, external skeleton.**
- 6. Blue/black**
- 7. Nectar, water, pollen, propolis, honeydew**
- 8. An exceptionally long proboscis**
- 9. No. It is low in glucose content**
- 10. American**
- 11. Yellow**
- 12. 5-7mm long, 3-4.5mm wide**
- 13. Once. He disembowels himself in the process**
- 14. Ivy**
- 15. Alcohol, (normally grain alcohol ethanol) and water**
- 16. Yellow**
- 17. Dartmoor**
- 18. 18.125" (460mm) square**
- 19. It is a biological larvaecide available for the control of wax moths. It is sprayed onto the combs**
- 20. National Diploma in Beekeeping the highest qualification you can get in the craft today**

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