

Cumbria Bee Times

Editor: Val Sullivan, Brackenwray Farm, Kinniside, Cleator, Cumbria, CA23 3AG

Telephone: 01946 862604, e-mail:brackenwray@aol.com

(Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor and do not necessarily represent those of the CBKA)

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Summer

As yet another wet and gloomy summer unfolds, there is one difference compared with the last three or four similar summer seasons. This year the whole of England has been affected rather than just the North West corner. This has prompted FERA to issue two warnings to the Nation's beekeepers about starving colonies. Last week I saw colonies in Somerset which were completely without food.

Because of the threat of colony starvation this issue has a resume on feeding bees, a topic more usually reserved for the Autumn. The best feed for bees is of course their own collected and stored honey and pollen. In poor years it may be necessary to supplement not only carbohydrate in the form of sugars but also some form of pollen substitute which supplies the protein.

Finally: Remember that you must never feed over honey supers to prevent your honey from becoming mixed with commercial sugars.

Swarm advice

Taking a prime swarm on a whim
Put an end to this beekeeper, Jim.
His ability over-rated
He was right when he stated
One should never go out on a limb.

Notts EKE

Whitehaven & District Honey Show

The Annual Honey Show is on Saturday 18th August at the Gosforth Agricultural Show. Entry forms must be returned by 1st August. Request from, and return to,

Mrs A.McKenzie, Fellside, Wellington, Gosforth, Seascale, CA20 1BJ.

Alternatively they can be viewed and downloaded from the show website www.gosforthshow.co.uk

Feed for Bees

Commercial syrups (eg Ambrosia) A ready mixed syrup of invert sugar.

Advantages

Instantly available for bees to use

No deterioration with keeping

Comes in handy 12.5kg plastic jerry cans.

Disadvantage

Expensive

Home made syrups NB Always use White sugar.

Weak solution: 1:1 sugar to water i.e 1 kg to 1 litre. Stir or shake to dissolve. Feed in times of starvation. At this strength the bees can use the syrup immediately although they have to invert the sugar molecules in the honey sac before feeding For use to stimulate brood production also.

Advantages Can be made up as needed.

Disadvantages Goes mouldy if stored (prevent by adding thymol)

Strong solution: 1kg white sugar to 1/2 l water. For use in Autumn feeding. The bees can store this concentration for winter use without having to expend a lot of energy concentrating it.

Advantages Make up amounts as needed after assessing stores in the Autumn.

Disadvantage Difficult to get completely dissolved (do not use boiling water—HMF production.)

Candy

Commercial candy Baker's fondant. Use as emergency feed on top of brood nest or for use in Apideas etc.

Advantages

Easily obtainable

Disadvantage

Expensive

Bees need good water supply to dilute it

Home made candy Can be made using recipes from most bee books. Cream of tartar (to aid inversion of sucrose) is now considered to be both unnecessary and harmful to bees.

Advantages Increase culinary skills

Disadvantages Difficult to get mix and heating right.

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Branches and Secretaries

Carlisle

Fiona Roebuck
Old Town House
High Hesket
CA4 0JE
07779329255
froebuck@btinternet.com

Whitehaven

Val Sullivan
Brackenwray Farm
Kinniside
Cleator
CA23 3AG
01946 862604
brackenwray@aol.com

Cockermouth

Bill Mackereth
6 Whiteside Avenue
Cockermouth
CA13 9AR
01900 825188

Keswick

Sandra Wallace
Spooney Green
Keswick
CA12 4PJ
017687 72601

Penrith

Joy Rich
Holly House
Newbiggin
Penrith
CA11 0HT
017684 83910

Other Associations

Kendal and South Westmorland

Peter Llewellyn
1 Greenside House,
Hincaster,
Milnthorpe,
LA7 7NA
01539 562369
pdwllwellyn@yahoo.co.uk

Furness

David Walmsley
36 Oxenholme Road
Kendal
djwalmsley@hotmail.co.uk

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(in plastic buckets)

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Tel: 01524 751347 daytime
01524 791328 evening

Events for your Diary

Scottish Beekeepers Centenary celebrations

Scottish Beekeepers Association celebrates its centenary in 2012
The main celebration will take place on 15th & 16th September
at the Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling.

Lecturers include D. Basterfield NDB, Prof R. Paxton and Prof R. Pickard. There is a full Social programme and many workshops and demonstrations. On Mon 17th there are visits to Apiaries and a Honey production and packing plant.. For more information including booking forms go to:

www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk, telephone The Management Centre on 01786 451712 quoting event no59140 or telephone Peter Matthews on 01461 205525.

Whitehaven and District Honey Show

Saturday 18th August At the Gosforth Agricultural Show

Cockermouth Autumn Conference

October 6th. New venue– Embleton Village Hall. More details nearer the date but the speakers are booked: Gerry Collins, MSC NDB and Ian Molyneux our R B Inspector.

Annual Cumbria Beekeepers Conference

November 10th Newbiggin Village Hall(nr Penrith)

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Queen control

This Queen Trap Anti-swarm system, was developed in Finland by Juhani Waara, a bee farmer running approximately 3,000 colonies who has been using the system for 12 years in which time it has become a widely accepted method of preventing the loss of a swarm.

The system involves placing a second entrance above the brood nest above a queen excluder, on discovery of queen cells, the bee keeper simply has to close the bottom entrance to the hive and open the entrance above the queen excluder. The idea is that the returning forager bees carrying nectar will fly straight into the supers whereas any bees carrying pollen will drop down into the brood nest, this is said to reduce congestion within the brood nest giving the queen more room to lay. This configuration is left in place for 3 to 4 weeks at which point one of 3 things will have happened. 1. The bees have abandoned any plans of swarming and torn down the queen cells leaving the old queen in residence. 2. A new queen has hatched and killed the other queens, including the old queen if she was too weak. 3. A new queen has hatched and the old queen is still present probably due to supercedure

Whatever is found to be the case the main entrance can be left open and the second entrance closed off. This will allow any virgin queen present to get out to mate. The foraging bees to continue with their work. The system is currently being supplied only for the Langstroth hive, but it would be fairly straightforward for most beekeepers to construct something along similar lines for any type of hive. This seems like an ideal system for the holidaying beekeeper who is worried that their hives may swarm while they are away, or as a way of controlling swarming from hives in built up areas, where a swarm could panic the populace. I recently tried this method on a hive I had shook swarmed, and which subsequently put up 5 queen cells. It proved to be very successful with no loss of foraging bees. I am unsure as to what happened as it coincided with a period where all of my hives stopped laying, however egg laying soon resumed and the hive is doing very well, although whether I will get any honey this year is anyone's guess !

Richard Robinson