

Croydon Beekeepers Assoc. Newsletter

A division of Surrey
Beekeepers Association

Founded 1879

February 2015

Gearing up for spring



It begins to look like spring is very nearly here – another early one, according to the meteorologists. The girls are busy bringing in pollen – always a good sign that the hive is queen-right – and the general level of activity increases. Time to monitor the level of stores very carefully! And hope there won't be swarms in March . . . !

Of course, as brood rearing increases so does the level of Varroa infestation. David

Shepard has written an article for this newsletter which serves as a very timely reminder of what is involved in managing this deadly threat to our bees.

There are a number of events this month, including the Surrey Bee Day on 14 March and a Bee Disease Clinic in Croydon on 29 March. Do book asap. Happy spring time!

Tracey

The new Croydon Beekeepers website has arrived – www.croydonbeekeepers.org.uk

Mark Stott – CBKA Chairman

You may have noticed that our website looks different . . . that's because we now have a new and updated version.

The site will continue to provide a list of events and a range of other information for beekeepers and the public alike.

*Chairman: Mark Stott
Secretary: Joyce Atkinson
Treasurer: Tamar Devane
Editor: Tracey Carter*



www.public-domain-image.com

Dates for your diary



- 7 March: Bee Trade Exhibition, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire
- 13 March: Different Ways of Presenting Honey - talk and tasting, Warlingham
- 14 March: Surrey Bee Day, Cobham
- 29 March: Bee Disease Clinic sponsored by BDI, Spa Hill Allotments, Croydon
- 11 April: Reigate Auction of Bees and Equipment, Mickleham
- 17-19 April: BBKA Spring Convention, Newport, Shropshire
- 25 May: Surrey County Agricultural Show, Guildford

It's still a work in progress so please do watch out for further developments:
www.croydonbeekeepers.org.uk

Thank you to Colin Marshall

We cannot mention the website without thanking Colin Marshall for his huge contribution over the years. Colin set up and managed the

very first Croydon Beekeepers website. Starting with nothing, Colin built up the website to include information and photographs so that it provided a key means of promoting our activities to the residents of Croydon and I know that many people have been introduced to our beekeeping activities through it. The 15,000 hits on the website clearly demonstrate its value and popularity.

Colin has now decided that it is time to pass on this task to a new Webmaster. On behalf of the whole Division I would like to thank him for giving his time so generously.

Paul Taylor will be taking over the role of webmaster and will be working with Tracey Carter (our newsletter editor) to build on the excellent work done by Colin.
– Mark Stott

Forthcoming events

Bee Trade Exhibition – Saturday 7 March, 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Hall H1, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

For more information about this event visit the website: www.beetradex.co.uk

'Different Ways of Presenting honey – A Talk and Sampling Evening' – Friday 13 March at 7.30 p.m., Warlingham Methodist Church Hall, Limpsfield Road, Warlingham CR6 9LE

Margaret Ginman, General Secretary of the Bee Farmers' Association will speak on the

subject of presenting honey – one that is no doubt of great interest to all beekeepers,

regardless of whether or not we enter the honey shows.

Surrey Bee Day - Saturday 14th March 2015 - Cobham Village Hall, Lushington Drive, Cobham KT11 2LU. 9.30 a.m. Registration, 10.00 am Start, 5.00 p.m. Close

Remember to book your ticket for the 10th Surrey Bee Day in a couple of weeks' time –

March 14 to be precise! A full programme with well-known

beekeepers and a hot lunch await you. Email me at rickwoodsaka@gmail.com or

telephone 01932 244 326.
Further details are on our
website:
www.surreybeekeepers.org.uk

[k](#) and a flyer is attached for
more information.
Please make cheques payable
to 'Surrey Beekeepers

Association'. – *Sandra
Rickwood*

Croydon Bee Disease Clinic – Sunday 29th March, 2.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.,
Spa Hill Allotments, Spa Hill Road, Croydon SE19 3TU

Sponsored by BDI

Cost: £1 per sample tested

We will be testing samples of
bees for Nosema and Acarine.
If you want your bees tested
please bring a sample of 30
adult bees along. We will
have the microscopes set up
and people on hand to help,
but are encouraging everyone
to get involved with the
testing. If you cannot make it
on the day why not ask
another beekeeping friend to
bring your sample along!

The first priority is to test for
Nosema as that is most
common, however we can
also look a few bees for
Acarine. This is less common
since the introduction of
Varroa treatments but can still
occur

How to collect the sample?

For reasons I don't
understand, to get a

statistically reliable sample
you should collect around 30
bees. Older bees generally
have a higher load of Nosema
spores so are easier to test.
There are a number of
techniques used. My method
is:

- Chose a warm sunny
day when the bees are
flying. Ideally early
afternoon.
- Close the entrance to
each hive using a
block or sponges.
- Wait a few minutes for
the foraging bees to
return to the hive and
gather on the front.
- Either pick them up
one at a time and pop
into a large matchbox,
or brush them in to
honey jar. Note: this is
a fiddly job and takes a

bit of care and
patience!

- Take the container
home a pop in the
freezer to humanly kill
the bees. Allow 24
hours to be on the safe
side. The sample will
keep in the freezer
until the clinic so you
can collect them
anytime during
March.
- Please thaw your
sample bees just before
the test to avoid
decomposition and
bring them along in a
match box or other
cardboard receptacle.
Putting them in a
plastic bags makes
them wet and mushy
and hard to test!



What to do if you your sample has Nosema?

Since the withdrawal of Fumidil B a couple of years ago some people are mistakenly under the impression that there is no treatment. This is not true. The best way to combat Nosema is to break the cycle

of infection this can be done simply by changing the brood comb. Either with a Bailey change or 'shook swarm'.

We can discuss the options for treatment further at the Clinic.

Finally it would help greatly if you could email or phone me to confirm if you are planning

to attend. *That way we can make sure there is enough tea and cake!*

This event is open to members of Croydon Beekeepers and any other beekeeper in the area.

Reigate Auction of Bees & Beekeeping Equipment - Saturday 11 April 2015, Mickleham Village Hall, Surrey RH5 6EE. Viewing from 11.00 a.m., Auction begins at 12.00 p.m.

This annual event is very popular – see documents sent with this newsletter for further information including auction Terms & Conditions.

To sell items you will need to register before the event – please do so asap as the number of lots is restricted. A catalogue of Items for Sale

will be published on the Reigate website by Friday 10 April:
www.reigatebeekeepers.org.uk

BBKA Spring Convention – Friday 17 April to Sunday 19 April, Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB

See the BBKA's website for further information about this major annual event:
http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php

Surrey County Agricultural Show – Bank Holiday Monday 25 May, Stoke Park, Guildford

Would you like to be a steward, in the bee tent, at the Surrey Show?

By offering your help you will receive free entry to the show with a free lunch and tea and/or coffee during the day. It is a great day when you can talk with other beekeepers and share ideas. You will have at least 2 hours free to go around the show as well as time for lunch in the Bee Tent. The sample menu for lunch is set out on the attached form. This year we would like to hear from anyone who has children aged between 7 and 16 and who would also like to help on the candle rolling stand. Many of our customers are children and they like dealing with people of their own age.



The Surrey County Show
Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 2015
Stoke Park, Guildford
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk

The Surrey County Agricultural Society, 8 Birtley Courtyard, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LA
Tel: 01483 890810. Email: scas@surreycountyshow.co.uk
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Attached is the form for volunteers to help as stewards at the Surrey Show on Monday 25th May 2014. Please get your applications in to Michael Main by 28th April.

We would also like to see as many entries into the show classes as possible. There is the Vincent Challenge cup which is awarded to the division which achieves the most points from entries as well as the Golder Memorial

Trophy awarded to the winner of the Novice Class. So why not get a group of members to get together and prepare some entries to the show for the first time this year. The show schedule is also attached. For every 5 entries a free ticket to the show is supplied and you have the whole day to go around the show.

Michael Main,
Chief Steward

Why it is Not So Easy to Keep Bees Today

David Shepherd

Beekeeping is certainly more demanding today than it was in the years before Varroa destructor arrived on our shores in 1992. Two species of Varroa (destructor and jacobsonii) are naturally parasitic on the Asiatic Honey Bee (*Apis cerana*) whose natural habitat extends over areas of Eastern & Southern Asia; over thousands of years it has evolved a lifestyle which enables it to survive much better than our own *Apis mellifera* (Western Honey Bee).

As early as the 17th Century *Apis mellifera* was being moved to other continents outside Europe: settlers looking to set up new lives in new territories took their bees with them; so perhaps it is quite surprising that Varroa failed to reach our shores much earlier than it did.

Varoosis as it is now known, was probably first identified in the Western Honey bee in the Philippines in the 1960's; by the 1970's it had reached



Europe and by 1987 the USA. So of course we were not at all surprised when it did arrive (certainly those who were members of beekeeping associations): we were advised to send samples of 'suspected' bees to the National Bee Unit for testing. I remember well my letter informing me that my bees were infested and I am not sure whether the same letter explained how I should go about removing the little blighters. I also remember asking a tobacconist if he had any very old tobacco that he could sell me cheaply: "no I am NOT going to smoke it ... well no that is not strictly true.... I am going to light it, but my bees will be 'smoking' it ... actually I am going to smoke them!" I received a very suspicious look and I am sure received little discount, but it certainly seemed to

work. It was much later that the varroa floor was introduced so there was no estimating of population.

It did not take long for varoosis to spread rapidly Northwards; the National Bee Unit stopped accepting samples of bees for varroa checking and in a short time just about everyone became infested. Miticide strips appeared on the market to be suspended between the frames: the National request was for everyone to treat their hives the same weeks each year (two treatments during the last weeks of September and first weeks of October) so that we could rid the UK of this parasite for good! But of course not everybody bothered and of course there was the problem of any infested feral colonies . . . it did not work!

Today only Australia and (surprisingly) the Isle of Man are totally varroa free. Not only do varroa mites parasitise bees but they are

vectors for up to 15 different virus diseases, also the Nosema microsporidian (fungus): Nosema and Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) are very common problems to be found with our local bees.

There are no treatments for virus diseases and we will now never completely remove Varroa from our colonies: the best we can do is keep their populations at a minimum and trust that our bees' natural hygiene and immune systems will cope with the problem. This of course means regular monitoring (minimum of four times a year) and keeping colony stresses to a minimum which includes gentle handling.

Varroa populations can build rapidly in weeks so current advice is monitoring at least:

1. in early spring;
2. after first nectar flow;
3. after the summer harvest;
4. early winter.

More if needed.

Miticide strips were used as a routine treatment by most beekeepers in autumn and it was not too long before resistant mites started to

appear. We are not in an area of the UK where resistant mites have evolved but we still must beware of over-using one treatment. A number of procedures have now evolved under the heading of Integrated Pest Management (IPM):

a] biotechnical controls: eg drone brood removal, queen trapping and use of finely ground (icing) sugar; breeding of varroa hygienic bees; the use of predatory mites *

b] use of natural oils: many have been tried but Thymol and its preparations work well on phoretic mites (the mites on adult bees – not in the brood). The vapour has to remain in the hive for a period of time which covers two brood rearing periods and is temperature dependent i.e. not effective in cold broodless times.

c] natural organic acids: formic, lactic and oxalic; the latter two are only effective against phoretic mites.

Honey bee colonies are classed as a food producing animals and therefore

beekeepers must comply with regulations: the NBU (see [Bee Base](#)): has a list of approved medicines that legally can be used for chemical treatment despite all the chemicals being 'natural'. The list is called the Veterinary Medicines Register and states that if an animal or animal product is to be put into the human food chain, then:

- *'only authorised veterinary medicinal products can be administered in accordance with the label instructions should be used;*
- *or products administered in accordance with an animal test certificate may be used'.*

'Substances such as Oxalic acid or self made Thymol solutions are not legal and should not be used and beekeepers are liable for prosecution if traces are found during routine honey sampling. It is important to note that some products available on beekeeping manufacturer's websites are not registered medicinal products and although available, should not be used'.

It appears that the same situation exists in the USA.

All of the above must be terribly confusing for experienced beekeepers (let alone those new to the craft) especially since Oxalic Acid, Thymol and Formic Acid are legally used in other European Countries - Oxalic acid and Thymol are freely available from a number of UK beekeeping equipment suppliers and used by an increasing number of beekeepers. The only legal Formic acid preparation is marketed as MAQS: the use of pure Formic Acid is not. Several legal Thymol preparations are permitted but pure Thymol is not. To confuse things even more a number of commercial preparations containing these substances are classified as 'hive cleaners' and NOT as a medication – what does that mean, legal or not?

The situation is slightly better explained by a section from the Bee Craft website:

'Please note that oxalic acid is not licensed for general resale in the UK and it is unlikely ever to be approved as that is a very expensive process and no company would spend a lot on a

product which is cheaply and easily available. However the National Bee Unit advocates its use and, as it is licensed in other parts of the EU, it is available on prescription from a vet with a Special Import Certificate (SIC). Details of vets who are willing to help beekeepers can be obtained from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate or from Bee Base . There is also the 'Bee Vet'.

It appears that there is a 'let out': under the 'cascade principle' if a medication for a condition is 'unavailable' and is used successfully elsewhere (in Europe) it may be prescribed by a qualified Vet. who must have a 'special Import Licence' to 'prescribe' the medication.**

So if you wish to remain legal buy your preparations from a Vet: try the Bee Vet on www.bee-vet.co.uk who specialises in Bee Medicines especially those requiring an import licence – I believe there are other Vets that can be found on-line whose prices are quite reasonable.

Whatever choice of treatment you chose and assuming you are using varroa floors, there

are certainly some very important rules to follow:

- Never Lower Your Guard where Varroa is concerned: continuously monitor populations.
- You MUST remove Honey Supers before any treatment is undertaken and always carefully follow instructions about quantity and periods of withdrawal of honey supers – some medications have potential for seriously harming your bees so stick to the recommended doses.
- Always keep a record of all Medications used and where purchased – see record sheet.
- Reduce hive entrances after a nectar flow: most varroa transfer occurs through robbing. You cannot prevent your own bees robbing other colonies but you can prevent

other bees robbing
yours.

Notes:

* Details of procedures are
available in texts and on-

line: the breeding of
hygienic bees is a very
long term strategy.

**More information can be
obtained and a record

sheet downloaded from:
[http://www.nationalbeeun
it.com/index.cfm?pageId=
353](http://www.nationalbeeun
it.com/index.cfm?pageId=
353)–

- *David Shepherd*

Our local agent for E H Thorne Beehives Ltd is:

Richard Palmer tel 020 8679 0401 or email palmersbees@hotmail.co.uk