

Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association

Newsletter for January 2009



Over the past week we have seen some pretty low temperatures. My car thermometer measured -11° last Tuesday evening which is as low as I can remember it for many years. It should not be too much of a problem for the bees however. Provided the colony is reasonably strong they should form a tight cluster and get through the cold spell. Often it is damp weather rather than extreme cold that kills the bees.

It is important that they have enough food. At our last meeting in November, Ged Marshall said he gives all his colonies a block of candy during the winter. If they want it they will take it; if not they will ignore it. He looks again during February and if they have eaten it all he will give them more.

Many beekeepers maintain that if you give them enough stores in the autumn you should not need to feed during the winter. I am sure this is right but I like to err on the cautious side. It is relatively simple to place a block of candy on top of the crown board and let the bees decide.

Suggestions of where to get ready-made candy and a recipe for making it yourself are given overpage.

Our next meeting will be a **Quiz Night** with a buffet supper on **Wednesday 21st January**. This will be our main social event of the year so please come along.

Quiz Night

Wednesday 21st January 2009

starting at 7:30 pm in the Bowls Club

The quiz itself will start at 8 o'clock and will last for about 1 hour. The questions will be set by Gill Peacock and there will be a prize for the winning team.

No more than 4 people per team. There will be **no entry charge**.

After the quiz we will have a buffet supper and would ask everyone who comes to bring some food or drink to share. So that we can get a good mixture of different types of food, it would be a great help if you could let Jane Arnold-Round know what you will be bringing. She can be contacted by email on secretary@mbbka.org.uk or by phone 01494 481344.

There will be a raffle in aid of *Bees for Development*; if you have any unwanted Christmas presents please bring them along and donate them as prizes.

Other Dates for your Diary

Friday 30th January 7:30 pm

Update on Colony Collapse Disorder
by **Norman Carreck**

at The Environment Centre, High Wycombe

Wednesday 18th February 7:30 pm

Hearing Dogs for the Deaf

at The Bowls Club, Wendover.

Saturday 7th March

Bucks County Beekeepers Association
Annual Seminar, Wendover Memorial Hall

Norman Carreck at High Wycombe

On Friday 30th January at 7:30 pm Norman Carreck will be coming to High Wycombe Beekeepers to give an update on Colony Collapse Disorder in the UK. Norman is well known to many of us. Previously he was at Rothamsted; now he is the editor of the Journal of Apicultural Research and writes regularly for BBKA News.

The talk will take place at The Environment Centre, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe HP11 1QX. MBBKA members are all welcome.

More overpage



Oxalic Acid treatment for Varroa

Many beekeepers are now using oxalic acid treatment during the winter as part of their integrated approach to controlling Varroa.

Oxalic acid must be used with great care. It is harmful if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed through the skin and can kill the bees if used incorrectly.

There are a number of important points to consider when using oxalic acid.

- The treatment is only effective when there is little or no brood. The acid will not penetrate the wax cappings so any mites in brood cells will not be killed. Now is probably a good time to treat because of the very cold weather over the past few weeks. The cluster will have remained very tight and it is unlikely the queen will have laid.
- Oxalic acid is used in a dilute sugar solution. The concentration of acid is critical. Too strong and it will kill the bees, too weak and it will not be effective.
- There are a number of preparations on the market that make up the correct solutions. The most popular appears to be Oxuvar made by Andermatt Biovet AG and sold by many suppliers. This has a ready-made solution of oxalic acid and a separate container of sugar. Mixed together they make up 500ml of solution, enough for 15-20 hives.
- Using a syringe, trickle 5 ml of solution evenly over each seam of bees.
- The made-up solution will not keep so any that is left over should be disposed of safely.
- Oxalic acid treatment should never be used more than once per colony during the course of a year.

The BBKA has produced a very useful advisory leaflet on using Oxalic Acid. This was included in the **Advice for Beekeepers** booklet that was in your "Welcome Pack" from the BBKA. You can download a copy from the BBKA web site at www.britishbee.org.uk/files/Oxalic_Acid_Cleaning_B13.pdf.

Subscriptions for 2008/2009

If you haven't already renewed your subscription for 2008/2009 please do so as soon as possible.

This will be the last newsletter we will send out using the old mailing list so if you do not renew by the end of January you will not be able to receive the next one.

If you need a membership form, please contact our Membership Secretary, [John Dadswell](mailto:John.Dadswell@mbbka.org.uk) on 01296 624091 or email membership@mbbka.org.uk

Winter feed for Bees

Bees should never be fed liquid syrup at this time of year but you can give them a block of candy if you are worried that they may be short of food.

Bakers fondant can be obtained in small quantities from specialist cake and confectionery shops. Commercial "Bee Candy" is a mixture of sucrose and dextrose and can be obtained in quantities of 2.5kg and above from John Parslow at Bledlow (tel. no. 01844 344948) Please contact him to check availability and price.

The candy or fondant is ready for placing directly into the hive and any you don't use will keep for a long time.

In small quantities it is more expensive than using candy you make yourself from granulated sugar. This is quite easy to make if you have a jam-making thermometer available.

Mix together 6lbs sugar, 1 pint of water and a teaspoonful of cream of tartar.

Bring to the boil stirring continuously until the sugar has dissolved

Simmer for about 10 minutes until the temperature reaches 120°C. Make sure the mixture does not burn.

Allow to cool but before it sets pour it into suitable moulds. I use shallow baking tins lined with greaseproof paper. When it is cool, don't try to separate the candy from the paper; simply place it directly into the hive on top of the crown board with the candy exposed to the bees.

If you don't have a jam-making thermometer available, take a few drops of the boiling liquid and place it on a cold plate; when ready it will solidify immediately to a soft consistency.

Bucks County Seminar

Each year the associations that make up the Bucks County Beekeepers get together for their annual seminar on the first Saturday in March.

Tea, coffee and cakes are provided. The cakes are made by volunteers from the various associations.

It would be nice if we could provide six cakes or plates of flapjack / cookies etc as our contribution.

Any cakes left over are raffled and the proceeds go to a research fund or beekeeping charity.

If you would like to help please contact [Jane](mailto:Jane@mbbka.org.uk) on 01494 481344 or email secretary@mbbka.org.uk.

I hope to see you all at our Quiz Night on January 21st.

Frank Rickett

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