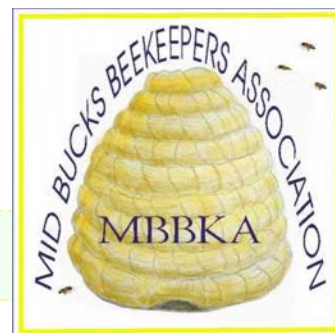


Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association



Newsletter for May 2011

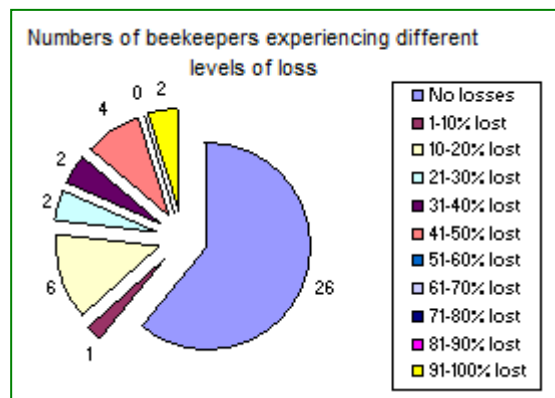
Colony Losses Survey 2011

We have had **43** responses to the Colony Losses Survey this year; thank you everyone who took part. However, our beekeeping membership is now over 100 so less than half our members who keep bees have responded. If you have not yet given us your numbers please do so; the more members who respond, the more reliable will be the figures.

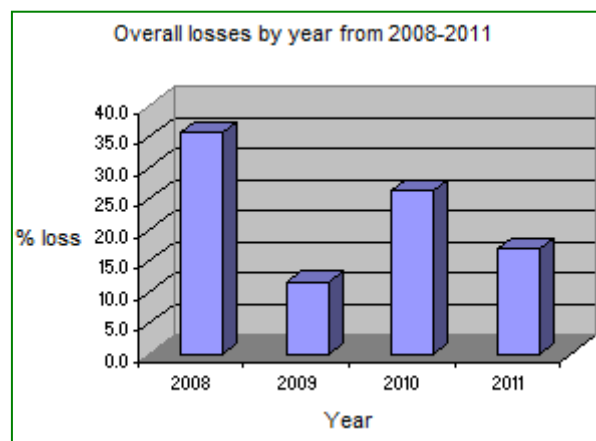
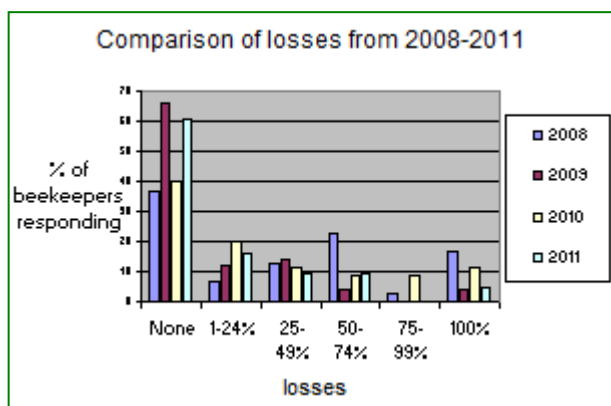
These are therefore the interim results and I will publish an update later when more numbers come in. This winter has been very much better than 2009-2010, in spite of the long cold spell in December and January. Out of a total of **172** colonies in November 2010, **143** survived queenright on 15th April 2011. **29** colonies were lost, **16.8%** of the total. This means that about **1 in 6** colonies were lost.

The chart alongside shows the numbers of beekeepers who experienced different levels of loss.

26 out of the 43 respondents lost no colonies and most of the others lost only one or two colonies. Unfortunately, two beekeepers who had 1 and 2 hives respectively lost all their stock.



The size of the colonies going into winter appears to have been a major factor. The most common reason given was that of weak colonies going into winter. Small colonies are always going to be more susceptible to harsh weather conditions. There were also a couple of reports of colonies superceding late in the autumn and the resulting queen failing to mate and becoming a drone layer. The two charts below show comparisons between 2008 and 2011. On the left are the percentages of beekeepers suffering different levels of losses and on the right are comparative figures for overall losses. Last winter was not as good as 2009 but considerably better than the other two. It is still too early to discern any trends in the numbers.



Summer Programme

Thursday 9th June

Visit to Bob Hunter's Apiary

Near Great Hampden

11:00 - 1:00 (See next page for details)

Saturday 11th June

Keeping Bees Healthy

Talks and demonstrations on how to recognise, treat and prevent the main honey bee diseases.

Julian Parker, Seasonal Bee Inspector in association with MBBKA members.

10:30 - 3:00 at the Bowls Club.

(See next page for full programme)

We plan to put on displays at the following events. If you come along to any of these, please spare an hour or so to help us on the stand.

Saturday/Sunday 25th/26th June

Haddenham Garden Centre

(times to be announced)

Saturday 16th July

The Lee Flower Show

12:45 - 5:00 at the The Lee.

Saturday/Sunday

30th/31st July

Worlds End Nursery

"Bee Weekend"

(times to be announced)

Saturday 20th August

Aston Clinton Horticultural Society

Show and Fete

(times to be announced)

Thursday 1st September

Bucks County Show

Weedon Hill, Aylesbury
10:00 - 5:00

More overpage ...



Keeping Bees Healthy

Saturday 11th June

10:30 - 3:00 in the Bowls Club

How to recognise, treat and prevent the main bee diseases.

On Saturday 11th June we shall be holding a series of talks and demonstrations on how to recognise the main honey bee diseases, the treatment to give and, most importantly, how to prevent them.

The day is aimed primarily at the **first and second year beekeepers** but is also open to everyone who wants to find out more about bee health.

There will be a series of short talks and demonstrations with plenty of time for questions and discussion.

The day will be run by **Julian Parker, Seasonal Bee Inspector**, with assistance from experienced members of MBBKA. The timetable will be:

10:30 - 11:00	Healthy brood	Apiary hygiene, changing brood comb
11:00 - 11:30	Varroa	Life cycle, control methods, Integrated Pest Management
11:30 - 11:50	Coffee break	
11:50 - 12:20	Foul Brood	Causative organisms, recognising, action to take
12:20 - 12:40	Other brood diseases	Chalk Brood, Sacbrood, Bald Brood, Chilled Brood
12:40 - 12:50	Exotic Pests	Asian Hornet, Small Hive Beetle, Tripilaelaps
12:50 - 2:00	Lunch	
2:00 - 2:30	Adult Bee Diseases,	Nosema and Acarine. diagnosing Nosema, control methods
2:30 - 3:00	Round-up and quiz	
3:00	Finish	

Tea and coffee will be available. Please bring your own packed lunch. You do not need to register in advance.

Visit to Bob Hunter's Apiary

Thursday 9th June

Bob Hunter has kindly agreed to show people around his apiary at **Hampden Bottom Farm** on **Thursday 9th June** at **11:00 am**.

The apiary is situated at OS Grid Reference SP 852 026. If your satnav accepts latitude and longitude, the figures are: 51°42'56.85"N, 0°46'5.39"W.

From Aylesbury, head towards Ellesborough and take the Missenden Road from Butlers Cross towards Great Missenden. Go past Chequers. About 1 mile on the right is the road to High Wycombe. Go up this road and the apiary entrance is about 200 yds on the left. There is room for about 3 cars in the apiary entrance and space for more across the road. We shall meet at 11:00 at the entrance to the apiary.

The visit will take 1½-2 hours. Afterwards we shall have lunch at the Plough in Cadsden.

Come along if you can spare the time. Bob has invited us before and it is fascinating to see how a real master beekeeper looks after his bees.

Queen Raising at the Association Apiary

On Wednesday 27th April a good number of people came to the Association Apiary in the evening when we started a queen raising exercise using the Miller method.

This involved removing the queen and two frames of brood from a strong colony and putting her into a nucleus box with a special frame made up of two pieces of foundation cut into "V" shapes. The idea is that the bees draw out this foundation in which the queen lays eggs. After 7 days the frame is put into the queenless colony for them to raise queen cells. Unfortunately, as so often happens in beekeeping, it did not go entirely as planned.

Before we started, the colony we planned to use had begun to produce queen cells. Nevertheless we carried on and removed all the queen cells from the brood frames we transferred to the nucleus box - or so we thought!

It seems we missed one and that was enough for the queen to swarm which she did before laying eggs in the special "Miller" frame.

If we have a good strong colony we may try again in June.



Miller frame at start



This is what it should have looked like after 5 days in the queenless colony

Apiary Sites Available

We have had a number of offers of apiary sites.

Some of these are private gardens where the owners would like a beekeeper to keep one or two hives, others are land owners who have space available. Details are in the table below.

Area	Details
Aylesbury	Garden site adjacent to a park. Suitable for one or two hives
Bierton	New beekeeper would like to become "apprentice" to a more experienced beekeeper
Bulbourne	Garden site suitable for one or two hives
Dunsmore	Beekeeper needs help looking after colonies. Would be suitable for new beekeeper wanting to gain experience
Great Missenden	Farm site
Stone (Aylesbury)	Farm site
The Lee	Garden, suitable for one or two hives
Wigginton	Orchard site
Wingrave	Garden site suitable for one or two hives

If you are interested in finding out more about any of these, please phone me on **01494 866516** or email chairman@mbbka.org.uk.

Congratulations!



This year 6 people from Mid Bucks took BBKA module exams - various combinations of modules 5, 6 and 7. I am delighted to report that everyone passed.

100% Success Again

Congratulations to all.

More overpage ...





Buying and Selling Bees



Last year I gave some advice on buying and selling a nucleus of bees and have been requested to print it again in this newsletter. Even though we don't have as many beginners as last year, there is still demand for good quality nuclei.

Breeding Bees for Sale

If you have one or two colonies more than you need, why not offer them for sale? If you have never sold bees before, the BBKA publishes guidelines for buying and selling nuclei which can be found at http://www.britishbee.org.uk/files/nucleus_leaflet_2009.pdf. This is a brief summary.

1. Nuclei will normally contain 3-5 frames of British Standard brood combs all of which are fully drawn.
2. There should be a laying queen, reared this year or last year and marked with the correct colour.
3. Brood should occupy at least half the total comb area and there should be eggs, larvae and sealed brood present. There must be no active queen cells.
4. There must be some food available.
5. The colony must be healthy and not show any signs of brood disease although a small amount of chalk brood is acceptable.

The BBKA notes make no mention of temperament but this is very important if you are selling bees to a new beekeeper. It is well known that the temperament of bees can change quite quickly and the colony you sold as docile can turn aggressive.

Nevertheless most experienced beekeepers quickly get a good idea of the character of their bees and it would be most unfair to sell bees to a new beekeeper if you knew they were likely to be difficult to handle.

Selling bees does not require you to provide a "follow-up" support service but you should be prepared to offer guidance on hiving the bees and their immediate care.

The best way to supply the bees is in a nucleus box which the purchaser will take away and return to you after the frames have been transferred into their hive.

As for how much to charge? It is very difficult to say but at the moment the going rate for locally produced nuclei of bees seems to be between £80 and £110.

Breeding good colonies of bees is a great help to your fellow beekeepers and a useful source of income for yourself.

Buying Your First Bees

If you took our beekeeping course this year you may be very keen to get hold of your first colony of bees as soon as possible. There are a few things you need to do beforehand.

1. Decide where you will keep the bees. This could be in your own garden or in an "out-apiary". If you are keeping bees at home it is important that they are sited in a way that will cause least nuisance to your family and your neighbours.

If you would like some advice, someone from the MBBKA will come along and have a look at the site and tell you if they think it is suitable.

2. Obtain your equipment. The minimum equipment you will need is:

One hive comprising floor, brood box, queen excluder, 2 x supers, cover board and roof.

Frames and foundation for the boxes.

Bee suit and gloves.

Hive tool, smoker, bee brush, feeder and mouse guard.

If you are happy to assemble the bits yourself, Thorne's "Package 2" starter kit at £200 is reasonably good value.

3. Attend practical sessions at the Association Apiary. I strongly urge all new beekeepers to come along to at least **two** training sessions at the Apiary in Stoke Mandeville before getting your first bees. We do not have sufficient resources in the Association to come out individually to each new beekeeper to show you how to handle bees in your own apiary. The training sessions will give you the confidence to handle the bees yourself.

4. Go along to see the bees you are buying. If you are buying bees from one of the Association members or from a local supplier, ask the breeder if he will take you to see the bees before you buy them. This way you will have a much better idea of what you are buying and the breeder will give you advice on how to transfer them into your own equipment. Don't be shy about asking questions. Most beekeepers are only too happy to talk about their bees!



If you haven't yet sent in your colony loss numbers please do so.

If you are on email, you can reply directly to the message sent with this newsletter, otherwise, please use the form on the next page.

Frank Rickett,
Chairman

Tel: 01494 866516

Email:

chairman@mbbka.org.uk



*Wow! A colour-coordinated wheelbarrow!
Can we have a matching beehive please?*

Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association

Colony Losses Survey 2011



Name _____

Number of queenright colonies on 1st November 2010 _____

Number of queenright colonies on 15th April 2011 _____

Observations about losses _____

Suspected reasons for losses _____

Please return completed form to: Frank Rickett, Fairholme, Perks Lane, Prestwood, Bucks HP16 0JQ
email : chairman@mbbka.org.uk

The results are confidential. The only reason why we ask you to include your name is to avoid counting the same beekeeper twice.