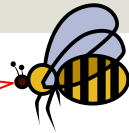


Newsletter

January 2016

Happy
New
Year!



Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association (SCIO)

- promoting the study and development of apiculture, and advancing the heritage, culture and science of beekeeping amongst its membership and throughout the wider community

Established 1910

Scottish Charity Number SC031754

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LOOKING FORWARD TO A BUZZY YEAR AHEAD!

Is **2016** going to be a great beekeeping year, with an early spring and a long, warm summer? We'll just have to wait and see. What's certain, though, is that ADBKA members will enjoy a packed programme of talks, demonstrations and workshops; probably the most interesting and varied line-up we've ever had. Among the many highlights will be **Gavin Ramsey's** talk on bee behaviour and **Nick Balfour's** update on the complex and troubling issue of neonicotinoids and the honey bee - see page 2 of this newsletter for further information on these two events. Later, look out for SBA Vice President, **Alan Riach**, on the subject of preparing honey and wax for showing, SBA General Secretary, **Tony Harris**, on queen rearing, and master skep maker **Bryce Reynard** on the secrets of this ancient art.

A highlight of the year is sure to be our trip in June to Perthshire at the invitation of commercial beekeeper **Murray McGregor** to visit his new queen-breeding and nuc making units. And did we mention our planned conference in August, when our keynote speaker will be the renowned author and authority on bees and beekeeping, **Clive de Bruyn**?

This is just a flavour of what ADBKA members can look forward to this year. Your 2016 membership card includes all of the details of our programme. If you haven't got yours yet, make sure you get your subscription renewal off to Leona without delay.

Thanks are due to Rosie and the events programme team for putting all of this together.

Why not make this the year you consolidate your beekeeping skills by undertaking one of the SBA's practical examinations? There are four assessment levels: the **SBA Junior Beekeeper** for 10 to 16 year olds; the **Basic Beemaster** certificate for any SBA member; the **Intermediate Certificate** for the more experienced beekeeper; and ultimately the **Apiarian Certificate**.

The practical examinations are normally conducted at the beekeeper's own apiary during the active beekeeping season.

Applications for this year's round of assessments must be made to Alan Riach at the SBA by 9 April 2016.

See further details on the SBA website (when it's back up and running!) at www.scottishbeekeepers.co.uk

*You should have sent off
your **2016 membership**
subscription form by now.
If you haven't, get it done
right away!*

JANUARY CHECKLIST:

- ✓ **Check hives routinely to make sure they haven't been knocked over by animals or wind**
Even if your hive has been toppled, there's every chance that the bees will still be hanging on as best they can inside. Make sure you are suited and gloved before setting things right.
- ✓ **Clear hive entrances of snow and dead bees**
Given a sunny, dry, calm day your bees will be keen to get out to defecate. They'll have been waiting on the chance, so make sure they're not trapped in by a blocked up entrance.
- ✓ **Check on the amount of remaining stores**
You should have hefted the hive at the beginning of winter, after autumn feeding has come to an end, so you'll be able to compare the weight then with what you find now. If in doubt.....
- ✓ **Place fondant on top of frames**
The bees won't take a liquid feed in the middle of winter, so place fondant or candy directly on top of the cluster
- ✓ **Consider oxalic acid treatment for Varroa**
Many beekeepers apply oxalic acid at the point in the year when there is little or no brood, meaning that the mites are exposed as they feed on adult bees (see p.3)
- ✓ **Start your planning and preparation to sit the SBA's Basic Beemaster examination this year!**
Tackling this practical assessment is interesting and fun. Why not make contact through the newsletter or on our Facebook page with other members who are planning to do the same and organise an informal study group?



Members' Events

TALK:

BEE BEHAVIOUR

- **Gavin Ramsey**,
SBA Bee Health Convener

Saturday 16 January 2016 at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray
Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS

TALK:

NEONICOTINOIDS AND THE HONEY BEE

- **Nick Balfour**,
Sussex University

Saturday 20 February 2016 at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray
Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS

2016 DIARY DATES**March**5th - SBA Wax Workshop, Thornes, Newburgh20th - SBA AGM, Dewars Centre, Perth19th - SBA Exams, Modules 1,2,3,5, 6, 7 & 8**April**

2nd SBA Module 9 (Microscopy) exam, Portmoak Hall,
Scotlandwell

16th - SBA Skep Making Course, The Pyramids, Bathgate

8th - 10th - BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adam College,
Newport

June23rd - 26th - Royal Highland Show, Ingliston**July**

24th to 29th - Federation of Irish Beekeepers Conference,
Gormanston

August20th - SBA Honey Workshop, Thornes, Newburgh**September**

2nd - Scottish National Honey Show, Camperdown Park, Dundee
SBA Autumn Convention (date and venue tbc)

October

SBA Tour - Speaker- Dan Basterfield
UK National Honey Show, Weybridge (dates tbc)

November12th - SBA Exams, Modules 1,2,3,5, 6, 7 & 8

At the time of writing, the Scottish Beekeepers' Association's website is unavailable. Hopefully it'll be back up and running soon, so that you can go to www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk to find out more about SBA events and download examination and workshop application forms.

FREE EQUIPMENT LOAN FOR ADBKA MEMBERS ACROSS THE NORTH EAST

Honey extractors;
Mini-melters;
Heather honey press;
Wax extractor;
Wax foundation press

Contact: Sandy Gordon 01224
484540

DANESTONE AB22 8AJ

Heated uncapping tray;
Electric uncapping knife;
Heather honey press;
Wax melter;

Unimel stainless steel 3 frame
tangential extractor

Contact: Erling Watt
074294 54572

watterlingg@aol.com

LONGSIDE AB42 4XQ

Heated uncapping tray;
Electric uncapping knife;
Heather honey press;
Wax melter;

Universal lightweight 9 frame radial
extractor

Contact: Joan Gilbert-Stevens

019755 81369

craigmill@btinternet.com

MUIR OF FOWLIS AB33 8NX

Combimel stainless steel radial 9
frame extractor;

Heated uncapping tray; Electric
uncapping knife; Refractometer;
Candle-making kit

Contact: Graham Torrie 013398
82038

adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com

CRATHES AB31 5QJ

WHEN ACID RAIN MIGHT BE JUST THE THING

Sadly, even at this time of year we can't let up in our campaign against the dreaded *Varroa* mite. It's still the number one threat to our bees.

During the coldest part of the winter the queen will have reduced her egg laying to the very minimal or may even have stopped altogether. This means that the adult female mites will be exposed in a way that they aren't at other times of the year. Rather than spending their time mainly within brood cells as they normally do, they'll be seeing out the winter being carried around and feeding on the bodies of adult bees. It's referred to as the *phoretic* phase of the mites' life cycle.

As a result of their exposure, the mites are vulnerable to the direct effects of a dilute solution of oxalic acid, a treatment for *Varroa* that has been used by beekeepers in the UK and Europe for many years.

There are a variety of ways in which it can be applied. Perhaps the most common is to use the 'trickle' method, where a weak solution of the acid is dribbled down between the frames where the bees are in their winter cluster. Many beekeepers will use a pre-prepared solution in a handy dispensing bottle that is marketed as 'Trickle 2' (so-called because it's enough to treat two full-sized colonies).

More recently, an oxalic acid treatment for bees has gained a licence* from the UK's Veterinary Medicines Directorate for use on honey bees. Api-Bioxal is produced by an Italian company called Chemicals Liaf and is available from the usual beekeeping equipment suppliers.

Some beekeepers buy dry oxalic acid crystals, mix their own solution and apply it using a large syringe. Others use a technique called *sublimation*, where the acid crystals are heated with a special piece of equipment and turned into a vapour that permeates the hive. Whatever method you decide to use, always follow safety instructions that will come with the product you buy. It's essential that you wear the appropriate protective equipment whenever you handle oxalic acid.

Further Resources

For more information on dealing with *Varroa*, including details of oxalic acid and other treatments, you would do well to look at the National Bee Unit's excellent leaflet, *Managing Varroa*, which can be read online or downloaded free of charge from <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=93>

For a good overview of oxalic acid treatment methods, see <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/oxalic.html>

*There are only seven medicinal products approved by the UK's Veterinary Medicines Directorate for use on honeybees. They are:

API-Bioxal, 886 mg/g Powder for In-hive Use

Apiguard Gel (25% Thymol) for Beehive Use

Apilife Var Bee-Hive Strip for Honey Bees

Apistan 10.3% w/w Bee Hive Strip

Bayvarol 3.6 mg Bee-hive Strips for Honey Bees

MAQS Formic Acid 68.2g Beehive Strips for Honey Bees

Thymovar 15 g Bee-hive Strips for Honey Bees

To find more information on these products and the regulations surrounding them, go to

<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Search.aspx> In the 'Species' pull-down list, select 'Bees' and click 'Search'.

A BEEKEEPER'S LIFE!

A beekeeper's life can be quite a trial
With problems aplenty, you don't always smile
But a warm summer day, spent watching the bees
Can lessen your tensions, and put you at ease.

Our busy girls, dear friends of the farmer
Best observed whilst wearing "Bee Armour"!

So beware of a peek when not wearing a suit
As bees can be grumpy, and put in the boot!

A warm ungloved hand, a vulnerable finger
Is just the right place, to put in a stinger!
But worse than the hand, often it's said,
Is a sting from a bee on the top of your head!!

But stingers aside, our bees will delight
Their simple existence, a humbling sight
The hive is their hub, their Queen at the heart
They labour and toil, they all do their part
They forage, they guard, they nurture and clean
All done in the dark, their genius unseen
A waggle dance done, the bees are away
To gather their stores throughout the long day.

And when finally home, they still do not rest
There's honey to make, and more care of the nest
As the numbers increase, and the bees feel a squeeze
They'll build up a swarm and fly off on the breeze
Be quick and you'll catch them, a new home to provide
If not they'll be gone, denting your pride!

Then comes the time to harvest your honey
Believe me, we'd starve if we did this for money!
We'd just like a chance to harvest a crop
A jar for our friends and for us, just a drop?!
We open the hive, our fingers a-shaking
And hope that the supers are ready for taking!

And so to the end, as autumn draws near
You feed and you treat, winter loss is your fear
The drones are shoved out, a brutal eviction
Next year will be better, the hopeful prediction!
So goodnight dear bees, sleep well through the snow
We'll see you next spring, all raring to go!!!

Sarah Simpson

Oxalic acid is a naturally occurring substance and is found in many plants, including spinach, cabbage, and broccoli. Rhubarb leaves contain around 0.5g of oxalic acid per 100g. Supposedly, the presence of the acid in plants discourages other animals from eating them, though it's clear that no one has told slugs about this!

It is claimed to be about 70 times more toxic to *Varroa* mites than it is to bees.

Used correctly, it is thought to kill upwards of 95% of the mites present in the colony.



Dear Beekeeper

I am delighted to inform you that at the beginning of November 2015 Bridge Veterinary Clinic was bought by the Ark Vet Centre, Lockerbie.

I have been retained as consultant and so apart from the name of the Practice and the e-mail address (now robert@arkvetcentre.co.uk) all the contact details you hold remain the same. I am available from 9.00am – 6.00pm weekdays, otherwise e-mail me to request a contact.

Robert D. Thurlow BVetMed MRCVS
 Ark Vet Centre Ltd
 51 Glasgow Street
 DUMFRIES
 DG2 9AG
 01387 259111
robert@arkvetcentre.co.uk

Note to members:
 Robert Thurlow at the Bridge Veterinary Clinic has been, for most of us, the source of the Varroa treatment Apivar.

9-frame radial extractor (electric) – FOR HIRE £10 per hire period

Steam wax melter – available ON LOAN £10 deposit

Both items available from: Jock McGregor,
 11 Marcus Road, Blackburn. Tel. 01224 790468

Aberdeen Bee Supplies

Jock McGregor is the local agent for Thorne Beekeeping Equipment. Contact him on 01224 790468 or e-mail: aberdeenbeesupplies@hotmail.com

MOVING TIME

Remember the golden rule for moving hives: *less than three feet or more than three miles*. If you move a hive in a single step more than three feet from its position within your apiary, the foraging bees will come back to the original site and will be unable to find their home. The trick is to move the hive more than three miles from its site, in which case the bees won't recognise any of their old flight lines and will soon orientate themselves to their new setting. Later, you can make the reverse move and settle the hive in its new position.

The only time you can break the rule is now. In the middle of winter when the colony has been stuck inside the hive for a few weeks, the memory of learned flight lines becomes faded. If you want to reposition a hive within your own apiary you can carefully move it more than three feet from its original position without causing any problems. When the bees finally emerge with the warmer weather they'll spend the first day or so working out where they are before setting off any distance.

According to.....

..... Mr Thomas Andrew Knight Esq. F.R.S. in the record of the Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, 1 January 1807, "Mr. Hunter conceived bees wax to be an animal substance, which exuded between the scales of the belly of the insect; but I am strongly disposed to believe that it is collected from plants, and merely deposited between the scales of the belly of the bee, for the joint purposes of being carried with convenience, and giving the temperature necessary for being moulded into combs: and I am led to this conclusion, not only by the circumstance of wax being found in the vegetable world, but also by having often observed bees employed in detaching something from the bases of the leaves of plants with their forceps, which they did not deposit on their thighs, as they do (I believe invariably) the farina of plants. I have also frequently observed the combs of very late swarms to be remarkably thin and white, and brittle; which are circumstances very favourable to the conclusion that the wax is a vegetable substance, for it would probably be less abundant during autumn than in summer; and that portion which had remained on the plants till late in the season would hence become more colourless by exposure to light, as well as more dry and brittle, than when at first exuded; but were it an animal substance, there does not appear any reason why it should be more dry and brittle, or less abundant, in the autumn, than in the spring and summer. The conclusions of Mr. Hunter are, however, always drawn with so much caution, and he united so much skill and science with the greatest degree of industry, that it is not without much hesitation and diffidence, that I venture to put my opinion in opposition to his authority."