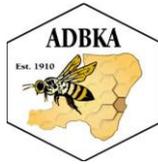




Newsletter

August 2021



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

ALL AROUND THE BLOOMIN' HEATHER

A sure sign that our short beekeeping season will once again be drawing to a close, the hives from our Crathes apiary were moved to the heather on the 1st of August. As well as the opportunity to get a heather honey crop, the move is part of our annual routine to allow the National Trust for Scotland gardeners at Crathes Castle to safely cut the hedges around our apiary site.

Word from the Chair

This week we heard that Government restrictions on social distancing and meeting people will be lifted on 9th August. These rules have been with us for so long that they have almost become normalised, and I suspect some people will still feel cautious about meeting in groups. That is understandable. However as most of us are now double jabbed the risk is much reduced, and there are also health benefits in getting out and doing things. I hope that you will now feel able to attend Association meetings again, in addition to doing other things that interest you. Our next event is Ian Mackley's winter preparations demo at Crathes on 29th August and that will be followed by others as we work back towards normality. I hope to see you soon.



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After many years serving the needs of beekeepers in the north east as agents for E.H. Thorne Beekeeping Equipment, **Jock and Margaret McGregor** have decided to take a well-earned rest. They would be very pleased to hear from anyone who may be interested in taking over their business and stock. If you would like to find out more, contact Jock on 01224 790468 or e-mail: aberdeenbeesupplies@hotmail.com

Very many of us will have visited Marcus Road over the years to get stocked-up from Jock's treasure trove in his garage. Many, too, will have taken the opportunity to seek advice from Jock and draw from his deep well of experience and knowledge of bees and beekeeping. We wish them both the very best for the future!

Our HONEY SHOW is back!

KINELLAR COMMUNITY HALL, BLACKBURN
SATURDAY 9 OCTOBER 2021 AT 2.00PM

The annual Honey Show is a highlight of our year. As well as giving you the chance to show off the products of your own and your bees' hard work, it's a great opportunity to meet and chat with other north east beekeepers about the highs and lows of the season, both this year and in 2020.

The success of the Honey Show relies on members taking part, so make sure you set aside the best of your jars of honey, frames, candles and craftwork now, in anticipation of entering them into the competition. Details of how to submit your entries will be given in next month's newsletter along with the full schedule.

TALK: WINTER PREPARATIONS

- Many, perhaps most, colony losses over winter and in the early spring are due to inadequate preparations in the autumn. This demonstration (likely to be more talk than hands-on with Apiary bees) will cover feeding, varroa treatment, hive configuration and plans for winter and is recommended for relatively novice beekeepers.

With the good news that the majority of Covid restrictions are to be lifted, there is no limit to numbers for this event and no need to book; just turn up.

Presented by **Ian Mackley**

Sunday 29 August 2021 at 2pm

ADBKA Apiary, Crathes Castle

ABERDEEN AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**ANNUAL HONEY SHOW**

Saturday 9 October 2021

- See front page. Further details in next month's newsletter.

THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY: AUGUST

Let's assume it's been a great summer and your supers are full!?

Is the honey ripe?

By ripe, we mean the honey has a water content of less than 20%; any higher and the honey will likely ferment in due course and would be illegal to sell or give away anyway. Honey that has been capped with wax is ripe, as the bees don't want it fermenting over winter either. Uncapped honey will probably also be present and may be ripe too; test it by holding the frame horizontally over the top of the super and give it a firm shake. Any drops of nectar falling out onto the frame tops indicate it is not ripe enough. You can always help the bees with the ripening process by moving capped super frames to the outside and uncapped ones into the middle. The water content of honey can also be easily tested with a refractometer. ADBKA has one for loan and they are relatively inexpensive to buy. Once the honey is ripe, the super can be removed and extracted.

How do I get the bees out of the super?

The most common method is probably the Porter bee escape - plastic 'one-way bee 'valves'' that fit into holes in the crownboard which is then temporarily positioned between the supers and the brood box, with the central hole in the escape(s) uppermost. Do not 'store' Porter escapes in position in the crownboard as the bees will propolise them and if you do not clean them up, they will not work when needed. You must check and set the springs to a bee's width, or about 3mm, by gently bending them. Too narrow and the bees can't pass; too wide and they can get back into the super. Use two Porter escapes if your board has two holes. I find 'Porter clearing' generally takes at least two days to complete. 'Rhombus' escapes which have no moving parts will clear supers in a few hours. They can be temporarily pinned underneath the central hole in a crownboard but generally require an eke below them. Do not leave clearer boards on longer than necessary.

When you remove the super; (a) be prepared with a bee brush or feather to remove any stragglers, (b) handle the super with the consideration that a fine food product deserves – don't just put it open-bottomed on the ground for instance, and (c) cover it so bees can't return to it (a couple of blank boards are handy) and remove it promptly to a warm, hygienic place where bees can't get at it, because they will very quickly find it if they can. Expect grumpy bees after you have removed supers.

Storing supers

After extraction you have 'wet' supers containing residual honey. They can be stored like this, although I suspect this is mostly practised by large scale beekeepers. Put the supers back on the hive above a crownboard with the holes open for a couple of days. The bees will take the residual honey downstairs, tidy up the wax and the super can be cleared again and removed. Store the 'dry' supers stacked in a cool, dry place, with a board on top and bottom to keep pests out.

If there are little stores in the brood box, feed 2:1 syrup until stores are adequate, then start varroa treatment.

Immediate feeding may be critical if an extended period of bad weather comes along, as the hive is still relatively populous and will quickly go through what little stores it has.

AUTUMN VARROA TREATMENTS

There are two optimum times in the year for routine varroa treatment; in late August after the summer crop has been taken but when the mite load per bee is at its highest and the newly emerging long-lived 'winter bees' need protection (viruses transmitted by varroa reduce bee longevity), and in December when there is little or no brood present so all the mites are on the bees and at their most vulnerable. Bear in mind that whatever you do, you will not permanently rid your colony of varroa mites - the only realistic aim is to keep their numbers low enough to not affect the colony. All your colonies should therefore be treated simultaneously to minimise mite repopulation via robbing and drifting.

Beekeepers do not need a personal licence to administer 'hard' chemical treatments (which are veterinary medicines) but to be strictly legal must only use a UK-licensed product and administer it according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Integrated pest management principles suggest it is good to (a) use different chemistries between autumn and winter and (b) occasionally change the chemistry/product used in the autumn. Oxalic acid, in its licensed forms of ApiBioxal, Oxuvar or OxyBee, is undoubtedly the most suitable mid-winter treatment. It is proven, relatively cheap, quick, highly effective on the phoretic mites on the bees and has no ambient temperature constraints. So a typical annual regimen will be an oxalic treatment in December and something else in August. But what should the 'something else' be? This table:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11Cmc30H-zyXx6Wi7qWqHhIbZJStICBGG>

...compares all fifteen currently licensed varroa treatments, four of which are oxalic acid-based. All have advantages and disadvantages - technical, economic and practical - so it is not immediately obvious that there are one or two 'best' products to use. A particular issue for the beekeeper with one or two hives is that the smallest pack size is often for five hives, and the products usually only have a short shelf life so the excess cannot be saved for next year.

Achieving high treatment effectiveness - by choosing something appropriate and administering it correctly - is really important. Because of the exponential character (think Covid 'R' number) of mite population dynamics, even just a few extra surviving mites after a suboptimal treatment will result in many hundreds of otherwise avoidable mites a few months later.

Apistan has been around a long time and mite resistance is widely reported. Although it is still available, I'd suggest that it is in all beekeepers' interests that Apistan is not used. Apiguard appears attractive, but the requirement for a minimum 15°C ambient temperature throughout the treatment should be noted. The average temperature in Aberdeen in September is around 12°C.

The choice often comes down to MAQS or Apivar. MAQS is attractively available in a two (Langstroth) hive pack (which will treat four National hives), has a short treatment period and is the only treatment that can be used with supers on. BUT, in the early days there were many reports of MAQS-treated colonies going queenless; use only one MAQS gel pad in a National hive, create plenty of volume using say an eke and provide good ventilation, all to avoid excessively high local vapour concentrations. Many choose Apivar, despite its long treatment period and five-hive minimum pack size. Remember:

- **Suitable health and safety precautions should be taken with all treatments, especially the organic acid ones (oxalic acid, MAQS).**
- **Treatments must be removed at the end of the recommended treatment period.**
- **All treatments must be properly recorded. Here is the SBA-recommended form:**

<https://scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/images/education/techdatasheets/TDS%20number%2012%20Veterinary%20treatment%20record.pdf>

Ian Mackley

BEE CABIN

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

WE'RE HERE FOR ALL YOUR BEEKEEPING NEEDS

DESS, ABOYNE AB34 5BB

For the convenience of beekeepers out with our location, we will now be holding a Thursday evening pick up point in KINGSWELLS Aberdeen.

Orders through www.beecabin.ecwid.com, Telephone 07809229375 or email beecabin@gmail.com received **BEFORE 4pm on a Thursday** can be collected between **7pm to 7.30pm** on a Thursday evening. Location, Park and Ride LOWER car park Kingswells Causeway off the A944. This is for a trial period but will continue throughout the season if viable.

Aberdeen Bee Supplies

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

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

BEESWAX WANTED

The members of Inverurie and District Men's Shed (www.inveruriemensshed.co.uk) are looking for a supply of surplus beeswax in order that they can experiment with making polishes.

If you can help out, contact Leith Robertson on 07741411535 or email leithmr@gmail.com

BEES FOR SALE

Two colonies in National hives. Contact Alastair Black on 07802 930692 or email completion_re@hotmail.com Maryculter

EQUIPMENT

- Flat pack Nat. hives (W. Red Cdr.), OMF floor, brood body, 2x supers, crown board & flat roof (w. metal): £165
- Poly nucs: £36
- Brood frames (Hoffman) x10: £12
- Brood foundation (wired) x10: £15
- Hive tools (s/s) trad. pattern: £8

Can deliver locally.

Enquiries: (01224) 580137

aberdeen.honeybees@gmail.com

FOR SALE

- 4 x complete Smith hives
- 4 x round feeders; 4 x English feeders
- Queen introduction cages, bee escapes, hive tools, uncapping fork, etc.
- 2 x veils and jackets
- Bee books

Contact Margaret Spalding on 01356 624426 or 07720863005

Brechin

A Beekeeping Alphabet

H is for Hive

A container in which honey bees are kept. The earliest traditional forms were hollow logs and pots made from mud or clay. Skeps - woven baskets - have been used for two millennia. The main disadvantage of all of these types is that the colony must be significantly disturbed if not destroyed to get the honey. The idea of bars seems to have come about in the 1600's and a series of incremental developments took place over about 100 years from the mid 1700's - one might pick out Kerr (modular design), Huber (stacked, mobile frames) and Dzierzon (bee space) - culminating in Langstroth's design comprehensively implementing bee space around moveable frames in a modular hive in 1851. This then provoked the invention of foundation, queen excluders, frame extractors etc.

Without reaching for a book or catalogue, how many reasonably modern hive types can you name? [Some possible answers at the bottom of the page]

Ian Mackley



**Langstroth, National and 14 x 12 National, Commercial, Smith, WBC, Dadant, Warré, Glen, Rose, Flowhive, and of the 'long' hives, (Kenyan) Top Bar Hive, Dartington long hive and its plastic equivalent the Beehaus, Layens.*