



Newsletter

May 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

Varroa Reporting in Scotland

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The Scottish Government Honey Bee Health Team have today (21/04/21) issued a brief on the legal requirement of reporting Varroa in Scotland. What follows is extracted from their full guidance, to view or download the full brief please [click here](#). (For those ADBKA members receiving a printed copy of our newsletter, the best way to find the full briefing document is to access the newsletter on our own website at <https://aberdeenbeekeepers.net> and click on the link. Ed.)

Dear Beekeepers,

Following our previous communications, we are writing to you to further explain the process of reporting Varroa in Scotland. Reporting of Varroa in GB will be possible through the beekeeper's own record in BeeBase. <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>

BeeBase is the National Bee Unit website, it has therefore a heavy slant on English and Welsh beekeepers. We have started to work with the NBU colleagues on improving the content to reflect the Scottish Beekeeping community needs.

We strongly encourage all beekeepers in Scotland to register in BeeBase. It is free and completely safe. Your apiaries and details are not visible to any other beekeeper. We have waited for the National Bee Unit to create the functionality in BeeBase before we got in touch with you all. The functionality is now live and reporting of Varroa is a legal requirement from today, the 21st of April 2021.

Reporting of Varroa will be at apiary level. The requirement is to report the presence of Varroa in any colony, so if seen in a colony, the apiary is considered as positive for Varroa. The National Bee Unit has *defaulted* all registered beekeepers to *having Varroa* in their colonies. Therefore:

- If you have Varroa in your apiaries: Your record in BeeBase is already updated. Please just check that your details are correct and your apiary locations are up to date.
- If your apiaries are free of Varroa: Please go onto your record on BeeBase and change the Varroa status of your apiary

For detailed instructions on how to register on BeeBase, what to do if you can't register, or how to edit your records on BeeBase please refer to the full briefing note, by [clicking here](#). Although we strongly encourage registration on BeeBase, it is not compulsory, so those who wish to report Varroa but do not wish to register on BeeBase can do so by emailing us on Bees_mailbox@gov.scot

We are grateful for your assistance with this and as always, if you have any questions or wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us through our mailbox: Bees_mailbox@gov.scot

With kind regards

Scottish Government Honey Bee Health Team

BEE BLETHER - the weekly Q&A Zoom 'beekeeping clinics' for everyone, beginners and experienced beekeepers alike, continue on Tuesday evenings. The details of the next three events are: **May 11, 2021 19:30; May 18, 2021 19:30; May 25, 2021 19:30**

To join the Zoom Meeting use the following link EACH WEEK

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87684911114?pwd=bE9WUHI4TkNWK2E4NkhacmlmdWVZFz09>

Meeting ID: 876 8491 1114 Passcode: 335563

We look forward to seeing some of you on the call.

Ian Mackley

The Aberdeen Highland Games are due to be held on 3 July this year, not 20 June as shown in our events programme.
Unfortunately, this year we won't have an ADBKA stand at the event.

TALK: SWARM MANAGEMENT: THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS

- a look at swarm prevention and control in the context of the people and ideas that shaped what we practice today

Presented by **Graham Torrie**

Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 7pm

To book your place for this online talk please register at:

<https://adbka-swarm-management-19may2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

VISIT: QUEEN REARING SITE: AT COUPAR ANGUS

Presented by **Murray McGregor**

Saturday 26th June 2021

(details to follow)

THE MYSTERY OF THE VARROA MITE, DWV AND THE HONEYBEE
A recording of this talk by Amy Cooper is available to view on You Tube.

The link is - <https://youtu.be/ofUDIINo0to>

An aid to the retrieval of swarms at a height !

When the bees in the colonies in my garden swarm, their favourite place is a Korean fir, only about twenty feet from the hives. They usually settle on its lower branches, where they are easy to retrieve. Once or twice in the years I have been keeping bees I have had a swarm high up in pine trees overhanging our driveway and consequently have lost them. Last June I had another occurrence of a high swarm and within 15 or 20 minutes I contrived the tool shown. It uses a three-part extendable aluminium pole easily sourced online which I bought years ago to clean our dormer windows. It is equipped with a threaded plastic termination to which can be attached brushes, squeegees and the like. I also had to hand a plastic bucket which had contained "wild bird" fat balls. I drilled a wee block of softwood with a hole a bit less than the outer thread diameter and attached it to the bottom of the bucket by screwing it to a wooden plate on its inside. I then used the plastic thread on the pole attachment to tap its own hole in the outer block. I screwed the bucket to the pole and extended it so that it was located just under the swarm. A sharp jab and the swarm fell into the bucket which I then gently lowered to the ground. The only potential challenge is that of controlling a suddenly heavy bucket at the end of a long bendy pole!

Ken Gow

**The Importance of Drones, by Lynne Ingram**

Inverness-shire Beekeeping Association has invited anyone who is interested to 'Zoom in' on this talk, which will start at 7.30 on Tuesday 11th May.

Anyone wanting to register for this talk, should email president@inverness-shirebeekeepers.org

THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY: MAY**Swarm Management**

The main issue in May and June (and sometimes later) is swarming. Although a natural reproduction mechanism, swarming is in many respects not a good thing: swarms have a low survival rate in the wild, they are bad beekeeping PR as the public generally find them scary, they can be a nuisance to unwilling hosts where they settle and to beekeepers called in to remove them, and if you want a good summer honey crop, losing half the workforce doesn't help. Colonies do not have to swarm to survive in the long term. So we aim to prevent and control swarming so that bees do not leave our apiary. However, even skilled and experienced beekeepers will sometimes lose a swarm.

The simplest thing we can do right now to delay or discourage swarming is to ensure the bees have enough space - congestion is a swarming trigger - so once there is brood on about five-six frames and bees on most of the rest, add a super.

Inspections must be made on a seven day cycle. The seven days is important; if an egg destined to be a queen were laid immediately after an inspection, the cell will be sealed and, weather permitting, the swarm may leave on day eight. So look at the forecast and your calendar and **if you can't inspect on Day 7, do it earlier** rather than later.

Remember that simply destroying queen cells will not stop swarming - once bees have the swarming urge, they will simply keep making more. A common mistake is to destroy queen cells, thinking you are buying a bit of time, without realising the colony has actually already swarmed and that you've just removed the ability of the remaining bees to rear a new queen. Half the bees having left is not as obvious as you might expect (a clue is that the queen cells will be sealed). If as a beginner you find queen cells, a top tip is to leave them alone, note whether unsealed or sealed, complete the inspection, and then go away and think calmly about what you are going to do next, seek advice if necessary, then come back an hour or two later and do it.

Space precludes discussion of swarm control manipulations. Hopefully you will be prepared, having pre-selected a method and obtained the right kit. The Pagden, Nuc and various vertical split methods are common.

Finally, if you can it is worth having stroll around the immediate area of your apiary each evening during the swarming season. Swarms usually initially cluster for a few hours on a tree or post within a few tens of metres of their hive. You may notice unusual bee activity and find a swarm cluster that you can catch and rehome.

Comb Change

If your frames are two or three years old or more, they are probably blackened, possibly chewed and could be accumulating disease. Changing your combs every three years is good practice. A good way of doing this the 'Bailey Comb Change' and May is a good time to start as it takes four weeks or so to complete. [Beebase](#) which is a Beekeeping information resource for Beekeepers, has a fact sheet called 'Replacing Old Brood Comb' (nationalbeeunit.com) which explains how to do it. You will need a brood body and frames with new foundation. Remember that to produce wax, the colony needs a lot of well fed, young bees, so start when the colony is strong and if there isn't a good flow on (e.g. OSR) throughout, then feed thoroughly.

The Honey (Scotland) Regulations 2015 provides a legal definition of honey:

"honey" means the natural sweet substance produced by Apis mellifera bees from the nectar of plants or from secretions of living parts of plants or excretions of plant-sucking insects on the living parts of plants, which the bees collect, transform by combining with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store and leave in honeycombs to ripen and mature.

What do they mean by "secretions of living parts of plants"? Well, this is a reference to extrafloral nectaries. Right now, here in the north east of Scotland, we have a great example of this, in abundance. The wild cherry or gean tree. As well as providing nectar from its blossoms, the tree also secretes sugar-rich sap from two small, red raised lumps on the petiole (the stalk that attaches the leaf to the stem). See *the attached picture*.



Find a gean tree near your apiary and look out for your bees working on the leaf stalks.



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

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

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.

Stork Services are working to develop a wildlife haven on a site at The Quad, Kirkhill Industrial Estate. They have asked whether any of our members might be interested in siting a couple of hives there. If you are interested, find out more by contacting Karen Simpson at Stork on 07552675085.

A Beekeeping Alphabet

E is for European Foulbrood

One of the two notifiable brood diseases (the other being American Foulbrood), EFB is a bacterium (*Melissococcus plutonius*) which infects the gut of the larva and quickly kills by outcompeting the larva for food. The larva dies before the cell is sealed. However, EFB does not necessarily kill all the larvae and may be present for long periods of time at sub-lethal levels. Infected hives do not necessarily need to be destroyed and a shook swarm can be performed to transfer the colony onto new, clean comb. Signs of EFB include larvae lying in unusual, awkward positions in the cell, dead larvae appearing 'melted' and yellow-brown in colour, bad smell from secondary bacterial infection, sunken and possibly perforated cappings concealing dead larvae.

EFB is not something that only happens to other, vague and distant beekeepers - there were eight locations with confirmed cases of EFB in Aberdeenshire in 2020.



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