



Newsletter



September 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

THE MYSTERIES OF QUEEN REARING

Every year Murray McGregor invites members of the ADBKA to visit his apiary in Blairgowrie. This year we visited his colleague Jolanta's queen rearing apiary near Lochend Cottage. The site wasn't chosen accidentally. Located in a sheltered sunny spot with an abundance of pollen and nectar sources and no nearby apiaries, it is in a perfect position for breeding good natured productive Scottish queens.

After the eggs are laid by the chosen colony, the frame is taken from the colony to Jolanta's Queen Rearing unit where the eggs are grafted into plastic cups on a frame.

This frame is then introduced back to the colony positioned to maintain the bees' perception that the colony is queenless, so that they are encouraged to grow queen cells from the cups with the eggs. After the queen cells are capped, they are removed from the frame and returned to Jolanta's unit where they are kept in the incubator at 35°C until they hatch. The young new born queens are then introduced to the mating boxes. Then they are at the mercy of the Scottish weather!

The apiary site at Lochend Cottage produces up to two thousand new queens a season. The main orders come from industrial beekeeping farms in England and there is a never-ending demand for Jolanta's queens as they have proved to be good natured, hard-working and productive. Usually new queens are introduced to a colony in a small plastic cage. Murray's daughter Linnet did a very precise demonstration of how to use a new method, which is less



stressful for the queens and a full video of this demonstration will be available to watch on the ADBKA website.

Every visit to Murray's apiary is an exciting and informative event, with Murray patiently answering endless questions. Big thanks to Murray, Jolanta and Linnet for this beautiful day, their work and this very interesting event. Olga Macaulay

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ADBKA Honey Show 2021

9 October 2021 at 2.30pm

Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray Road, Blackburn AB21 0JQ

With the 2021 beekeeping season coming to a close we are marking the turning point in the year with our annual Honey Show.

We are delighted to announce that Alan Riach will be our Honey Show Judge this year.

We hope for many entries from members, their families and friends. With 48 entry classes there are lots of opportunities to get involved. As well as honey and beeswax you can enter mead, art, needlework, baking, photographs and a range of hive products. Trophies are awarded for the best entries.

Have a look through the competition categories in the 2021 Honey Show schedule which is being circulated with this newsletter and will be available on our website – aberdeenbeekeepers.net.

Even if you're not able to enter this year, why not come along and join us at 2.30pm on Saturday 9 October to view the entries, join us for refreshments, a chat and take the opportunity to borrow books from our library.

Any member wishing to enter the show but unable to drop off or collect their exhibits can call me (Alison Goss - 07970 392322) and we will do our best to help.

- Please wear a face mask. Hand sanitiser will be available and all doors kept open to allow for fresh air.

Help us to make it a great show!

Aberdeen Beekeepers' ConventionSave the Date – 6th November 2021

Many of us have been looking after our bees through lockdown without much contact with other people. However, now that most people are vaccinated and restrictions have been lifted we hope that members will feel ready to get back to talking about bees with other local beekeepers. By then honey harvests will be in and show trophies awarded, so why now come and compare your experiences with others ?

Our convention will take place at the Aberdeen Airport Dyce Hotel (Best Western) in Farburn Terrace, Dyce on Saturday 6th November 2021. The convention is traditionally a full day event where we can hear from top beekeeping experts and cover subjects in a little more depth than is possible at our normal short meetings. The day will include talks by Lead Scottish Bee Inspector Luis Molero and by former bee inspector and leading BBKA member from Cheshire Graham Royle. Luis is expected to give an update on his work with the Scottish Government, as well as covering current issues in bee health. Graham will present "skyscraper beekeeping" which means how to produce strong colonies with plenty of foragers in order to fill multiple supers during a honey flow. The day will also include more light hearted talks, a beekeeping quiz, and time to chat. We hope that beekeeping supplies will be available for purchase on the day (to be confirmed).

Tickets will cost £25 per head. This includes coffee on arrival, lunch, and afternoon tea. There is free parking. Detailed programme to follow. Members wishing to attend can book their tickets now through eventbrite :

<https://adbka-convention-6nov2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY: SEPTEMBER

What you do this month has a huge effect on whether or not your bees survive the winter, so do as good a job as you can of winter preparations. Skimping on varroa treatment and autumn feeding is false economy and poor husbandry.

The key to successfully overwintering your valuable honey bees is to start with;

*A sufficiently **strong colony of healthy bees, well-provisioned in a ventilated and robust hive.***

If your colony is small and/or weak at the end of August, (say covering five-six frames or fewer) consider uniting it with a larger colony. If this isn't an option, then overwintering in a polynuc may give it a better chance, or as a last resort, reduce to say eight-ish frames in the centre of the hive, bookended by dummy boards with insulation in the outboard spaces. Remember that uniting takes about a week, so start early enough so it doesn't delay the remainder of your winter preparations.

Varroa treatment was discussed in the July and August newsletters and will ideally be well underway by now. It cannot be emphasised enough that a high efficiency, licensed treatment should be chosen and correctly administered, observing treatment durations, required ambient temperatures etc. You are required by law to keep records of licensed treatments, and treatments must be removed once complete.

Space precludes a detailed discussion of autumn feeding. The classic guidance is to feed a 2:1 (sugar:water) syrup in a rapid feeder. Expect to feed 10-12 kg of sugar (but sometimes more or less) per hive depending on how many existing frames of stores there are. Some beekeepers will use an invert syrup such as Ambrosia or Invertbee. This saves the effort of making syrup and may be easier for the bees to process, but it is much more expensive than syrup. There seems to be a growing trend to feed fondant (~12.5 kg per hive) in autumn instead of syrup.

Best practice is to feed all hives simultaneously, and in the evening if possible, to mitigate against robbing. Feeding will take a week or so and must be completed before the end of September before temperatures are too low for the bees to dehydrate the syrup, thus risking fermentation and mould later in the winter. If you have to feed later, invert syrup or fondant may be a better bet.

The set up for winter ventilation is a matter of debate; it's a question of an intangible balance between ventilation and retaining warmth. Most beekeepers agree that with an open mesh floor, a hive stand allowing airflow under the hive is required and the varroa tray is left out. Beyond that, do you have an entrance block in or out and do you leave feed holes open (with mesh) or closed? I have good overwintering success with the block in (and mouseguard carefully positioned over it) and the outer feedhole blocked with the central one open and mesh-covered. But the bees sometimes propolise the mesh, suggesting they'd prefer it closed. And I'm sure other beekeepers have equal success doing the opposite! The 'matchstick' technique you see in some books is considered outdated, or at least only appropriate for solid floors. Most beekeepers will put some form of insulation - expanded polystyrene, 'Kingspan', soft foam 'quilt', bubblewrap, hessian sack - between the crownboard and roof too, possibly creating space with an eke.

And finally, towards the end of the month or in early October, when feeding is complete, check the mechanical integrity of the hive to survive the winter. Is the stand robust? Are all the hive components correctly aligned with no gaps? Fit a mouseguard aligned so that bees can leave and enter if they wish? Many beekeepers put a brick or stone on top of the roof, and polyhives should be tied down.



Winter on the Horizon

We had a great turnout of ADBKA members on Sunday the 29th of August to hear Ian Mackley's talk on winter preparations. Winter losses are common, so it's in the interests of the bees and the beekeeper to prepare properly in order to ensure colonies have the best possible chance of emerging in good health next spring. Ian covered feeding, varroa treatment, hive configuration and plans for the winter. We had a lovely dry afternoon for this outdoor talk and, with our bees still at the heather, the hive stands made excellent pews!

A SUCCESS STORY FROM HELEN ANDERSON

My stock of honey jars was precisely zero and with honey harvest time looming I needed to replenish my supply. Through a social media conversation via the ADBKA Facebook page I realised several other people were also considering their options for purchasing jars.

I was about to take four weeks of leave from work and would have spare time to facilitate an order, so decided to explore the possibility of making a collective order for jars if other ADBKA members were interested. I was advised to contact Jamie Evans who had carried out a similar exercise in 2020, armed with Jamie's very helpful advice I launched operation honey jar.

A total of 27 members joined in this collaborative venture which took about two weeks to collate. Our order was placed with Compak, a company based in Bristol, they were most helpful and a pleasure to deal with. One week later my garage was filled with three pallets of boxes stacked almost to the roof. I spent the next few days dispensing boxes of honey jars and swapping beekeeper stories with those who came to collect their order. It was both a pleasure and a privilege to meet so many honeybee enthusiasts and learn from their wealth of experience. Sadly I don't envisage having time to repeat this exercise next year, however if another member is willing to take up the baton I am happy to pass on hints and tips!



DO YOU NEED MORE READING MATERIAL ?

We have been approached by BeeCraft magazine with an offer for a discounted bulk subscription. If we can get enough interested members the discounted rate would be £29.75 rather than £35 for the printed version and £19.75 versus the full price of £24 for the digital subscription. To register your interest please email Jamie Evans at aberdeenbeekeepers@gmail.com with the subject 'BeeCraft Subscription'. Thank you.

Please note prices are due to increase slightly from November this year.



ADBKA Needs You !

Did you borrow one of the Association extractors in 2020? Have you found two Perspex lids surplus to your requirements ? One of the extractors was returned without the two lids, and we would be very happy to have them reunited with the equipment. Please contact Erling on adbkamembership@gmail.com if you find the missing parts.



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

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OUT APIARY OPPORTUNITY

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.

I is for Invert Syrup

Common brand names include Ambrosia, InvertBee and ApilInvert. Plain sugar syrup is mostly sucrose ($C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$) which is a so-called disaccharide. This molecule is too large to pass through the bee's gut wall for digestion, so the bees add an enzyme - invertase - to 'invert' or break it up into its two component monosaccharides, glucose and fructose ($C_6H_{12}O_6$) which can be digested. If the resulting sugar solution is insufficiently concentrated (less than 80% sugar), it risks fermenting if stored. So the bees will dehydrate both nectar and a supplied sugar syrup feed before storage. Invert syrups have already been 'inverted' and dehydrated, i.e. are concentrated solutions of monosaccharides, thus saving the bees 'work'. This comes though at a cost to the beekeeper of perhaps three to five times the price of sugar syrup. Invert syrups are useful when either large numbers of hives need feeding and buying is preferable to making, and/or feeding either late or early in the season where some risk of fermenting of mouldy stores would remain if plain syrup were used. Invert syrups can of course be used at any time liquid feeding is needed and they keep well, unlike sugar syrup.

A sucrose molecule

