



Varroa Treatment Options

Practical Fact Sheet

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Please note: This series of MBKA Fact Sheets are intended to accompany practical sessions and demonstrations at members' apiaries during the season.

Of course, there is no "right way" to keep bees and most objectives can be achieved in several different ways. The advice presented in these notes is therefore selective, representing the method or methods used commonly and generally accepted as "best practice".

They should be regarded as guidance notes. It is expected that revisions will be frequent in the early phase of their production!

There are a bewildering number of possibilities when it comes to keeping varroa levels below damaging levels. Broadly these can be grouped under 3 headings

- Breeding for varroa resistance
- Husbandry or "biotechnical" methods, avoiding chemicals
- Chemical varroacides

Breeding for varroa resistance

"Hygienic bees" are obtainable from some suppliers; these may offer some increased resistance to varroa population growth. The ideal outcome is probably breeding resistant bees, however this is not currently a sustainable proposition.

Husbandry or "Biotechnical" methods

It is possible to utilise one's knowledge of the varroa and honey bee life cycles to create in-hive conditions where varroa mites are trapped in designated frames of sealed brood, then removed and destroyed. Two effective methods are the use of a queen-trap frame and the shook swarm, with bait combs. These methods can be used during honey flows and do not involve the use of chemicals. They are however only applicable at certain times of the year.

Chemical Varroacides

At the start of 2018 there are no less than 13 "Authorised Products" licensed for use in the UK. Some of them have more than one method of application.

The products are subject to scrutiny and approval by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and a search of their website provides access to the detailed "Summary of Product Characteristics" (SPC's) which explain all the important aspects of dose, treatment frequency, beekeeper precautions and product application. **IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT YOU READ THESE DOCUMENTS BEFORE APPLYING ANY VARROACIDE TO YOUR BEES.**

Deciding on your approach

- Consult NBU's "Managing Varroa" booklet
- By monitoring, establish whether infestation is light, medium or heavy
- Assess the state of the colony, consider the time of year
- if using chemical varroacides, be aware of all safety aspects
 - Safety to the bees
 - Safety to the consumer of honey (observe restrictions on supers)
 - Safety to the environment
 - Safety of the beekeeper – in preparing products and in applying them