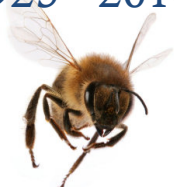


1923 - 2018



Medway
Beekeepers
Association

Celebrating over 90 years of support for beekeeping
And beekeepers in and around the Medway Towns



Newsletter January 2018

Happy New Year!! This is a quiet month but we need to check the mite drop on our colonies and treat if necessary. Also, don't forget to heft and check the stores. Feed fondant if you think your bees are getting low on food. Sorry to remind you all, but our annual subs are due this month and lastly don't forget to put the AGM date into your diary.

Past Events:

Saturday 16th December 2017

Bob Smith – A Review of Varroa Controls



Bob Smith (R) with The Chairman

Just 12 hardy members turned out on a cold afternoon to hear a very interesting little talk on Varroa control. Yes, you heard me correctly, I can hear you all saying "What, varroa control that's not particularly interesting!" However, Bob in his own individual way, presented a fascinating review of all the approved medications plus a couple of non-chemical methods.

Varroa first appeared in the UK in 1992 so we have had 25 years of managing this little blighter. Of course many things have changed since those early dark days. Most beekeepers now use 'open mesh floors' and more particularly they have moved away from 'leave alone' to 'active management'. We know now that we must keep on top of varroa if we want healthy productive bees. Most beekeepers are naturally averse to using chemicals but have really been forced to do so in the absence of more effective means. However, the early major losses are thankfully much more rarely seen now that things have settled down.

There have been attempts to breed 'varroa resistant' bees but so far this seems to be rather allusive. Varroa was 'imported' from Asia where the native *Apis Cerana* co-exists with the mite quite successfully. This is probably due to a number of strategies that these bees have developed, including, shorter brood development time, more frequent swarming and the fact that brood cappings have a hole in them, which allows the workers to sense the mites presence and remove them before they mature on the larvae.

Apis Mellifera has none of these characteristics and so is ill equipped to deal with the problem. There are at the present time 13 approved varroacides and Bob made an evaluation of each one with regard to their effect on the bees, the beekeeper and the environment. Some are extremely toxic and dangerous to use, others are relatively mild but have honey tainting issues. The length of time it takes to apply the correct dosage can also

work against the beekeepers as can the time of year when there may be brood or honey supers in place. What do we use in an emergency? To quote, "It is no easy task to kill a bug on a bug in a box of human food!"

Bob then looked at non-chemical methods. Drone culling is probably now seen as not a very satisfactory way to control the number of mites in a colony. After all a lack of good drones does nobody any good in the end. Queen trapping and shook swarm combined with the use of 'bait comb' are two very effective methods of control. Both are widely documented, queen trapping is a little complicated regarding timings but a shook swarm plus bait comb is relatively straightforward to do.

Finally Bob summarised for us and suggested ways in which we might reduce the amount of chemicals we use so both our bees and ourselves might be both safer and healthy.

The key he felt was to monitor individual hives. If the mite drop is very low (<2) leave them alone and continue to check. But if it high (>10) then you must act.

Depending on the time of year, you could use Thymol products after the honey harvest or maybe MAQs, which although quite nasty is useful, providing you have a large colony and it is not too hot. MAQs may also be used as an emergency treatment as it does not affect honey in the supers. Combine these with a comb changing technique such as a shook swarm perhaps during the 'June gap'. The key is to always precede any treatment by monitoring, then the use of quite dangerous materials such as oxalic acid, may even be avoided.

It is important to have a plan that is informed and to manage our colonies instead of just routinely using chemicals at any particular time of year. However, to do nothing is not an option.

Our thanks go to Bob for his time and effort in providing not only a very informative session but also a thought provoking and entertaining one.

We finished off the afternoon with a quiz, which the Chairman put together and the usual raffle.

Paul Lawrence

January's Events and Meetings:

Saturday 20th January 2018

Topic: Extracting and Cleaning Wax, making candles.

Time: 2pm to 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4LG

Wednesday 24th January 2018

Bee Chat

4th Wednesday of the month at The Pier, Lower Upnor, ME2 4XA, at 7.30pm.

Future Events:

Don't forget to put this one in your diary:

Saturday 17th February 2018 MBKA Annual General Meeting

Time: 2pm to 5pm

Venue: Wainscott Community Hall, 16 – 18 Holly Road, Wainscott, ME2 4LG

Sunday 14th January 2018 Sidcup Lecture 2018

Time: 2pm

Venue: Orpington Village Hall

This Lecture by Dr Karl Crailsheim could be particularly useful to those members studying 'Nutrition' in The Study Group Session 3.



Honeybee Nutrition

Prof Crailsheim teaches that the social organisation of honeybee colonies is every bit as complex as the way they collect, store and share their nutrients. In fact the colony has a "common stomach": they exchange food by the process of trophallaxis and even share their own products (royal jelly). He also considers that the reasons for colony losses in Europe include many nutritional aspects; therefore key facts about the quality and quantity of food for honeybee colonies will feature in this talk.

Soon after finishing his PhD, Karl Crailsheim started to investigate the honeybee as a super-organism, focusing on behaviour, physiology and health. Concerned about the mounting losses of honeybee colonies, in recent years he has focused increasingly on the threats to honeybees, such as diseases, parasites, malnutrition, weather, climate and agrochemicals.

Recently retired from Graz University in Austria, his huge range of publications and research papers will continue to be cited in scientific journals around the world.

He is an excellent speaker, and this event will be a first rate winter brain food for the region's beekeepers.

Tickets:

Tickets are £7.00 on the door, or £5 in advance, including tea & cakes

Please pay by bank transfer to:

Sidcup KBKA, Acc. No. 51629569 – Sort Code 60-19-19 providing your name as the reference.

Beekeeper's Bazaar:

The following items are available for sale:

The Honey Bee Inside out – Paperback (2nd Edition)

Written by Celia F Davis – in excellent condition - normally £25 - yours for just £15.

For more details contact Paul Lawrence on: 01634 365067 or email:

paul_lawrence@blueyonder.co.uk

Also available:

Do you fancy a set of past magazines? Simon Marshall has 10 years worth of BBKA and Beecraft magazines, which he doesn't need anymore. Would you like some or all of them? He would also be happy to bring them along to the next meeting if anybody wants them.

Simon lives in Rainham so you can call round if interested. Please contact Simon on: 07761656925.

A Letter from Margaret Wilson, Vice Chair, BBKA

This letter is number 4 in Margaret Wilson's series of Positive Thinking.

To read this latest addition **Click on the link:** www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/latest-news

You will find the letter under: General Information and Alerts.

Winter Meetings:

We look forward to seeing you at this winter's meetings. A list of the meetings can be viewed by going to: www.medwaybeekeepers.co.uk/events

MBKA on Social Media:

If you would like to join us on Facebook please go to:

www.fb.com/medwaybka and click 'like'.

And Finally:

Whether you are old or new members, if you have any news, ideas, amusing stories or comments about the website or for any future newsletter, please get in touch with me, Paul Lawrence at the address shown below, we really do appreciate your input.

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Newsletter and Website Enquiries

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