

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

A very happy and healthy
New Year to all our
beekeepers and their bees!

**SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR
2010 NOW DUE!**

PLEASE BRING TO MEETING OR
MAIL TO TREASURER

(Still only £7 full member and £3.50
spouse / partner / child at same address)

FBA Question Panel 17 Dec 09

This was our third annual question panel, and was as great a success as the previous two. Chaired by SBA President Alan Teale, with DWFBA President John Durkacz, FBA President Enid Brown and SBA Secretary Bron Wright, we certainly had a panel of experts to answer our questions.

The first question (Janice Furness) was on how to treat good quality brood comb from colonies that had died out over winter for re-use. The panel were unanimous, however, in thinking such comb should not be re-used, but melted down and the frames sterilised in a Burco boiler or with a flame thrower, then fitted with new foundation. If one were sure the colony had died from starvation, then theoretically the frames could be re-used, but with the present high foulbrood risks new foundation was definitely preferable. Replacing a third of the brood frames with new foundation every year should be standard practice. If there were the slightest

You will see we have agreed
a title for our newsletter –

*The winning title suggestion came
from Graeme Dickson who will be
receiving his prize at our next
meeting.*

suspicion of EFB or AFB leading to the loss, then the inspectors or Gavin Ramsay should be notified.

Melting down old comb for re-use in new foundation did mean there was a minute chance that it could contain foulbrood spores.

The second question (Bill McCrae) was on how best to protect the outside of hives for winter. Cuprinol Duck's Back was recommended, as wax-based therefore waterproof but allowed wood to breathe. For better circulation of air within the hive it was recommended that the outside frames be removed, so that even if the outside walls get damp, it will not spread to the frames. Open-mesh floors also aid ventilation greatly and prevent frames going mouldy from damp. Dummy boards at the outside edges also help insulate. Alan Teale doesn't treat the wood of his hives as it is cedar, but over-winters on double brood with only 7-8 frames in each. He also recommended a thick layer of polystyrene over the crown board / under the roof. Any colonies on solid floors should have a

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

matchstick either side of back of crown board to allow ventilation; this should be removed in early February.

Peter Bett wondered if anyone had tried keeping hives in a greenhouse through the winter to protect them from the worst cold. Nobody had, and Alan Teale thought it a bad idea as the bees would use too many stores, be confused about the outside temperature and try to fly too soon. Enid said her bees up north endured temperatures of minus 14 and were fine.

Isabel Brown asked whether the orientation of the brood frames made any difference to the temperature in the hive. It was thought to make no difference to the bees, only to the ease of examination for the beekeeper since the warm way (frames parallel with entrance) avoided twisting one's back. Smith hives, not being square, can only have frames the cold way (frames parallel with the side walls, ie pointing towards the entrance). All commercial beekeepers use the cold way.

Jim Bell asked what seed honey the panel recommended for soft set honey. Enid thought Oil Seed Rape by far the best, but the proportions she used varied from Graeme Sharpe's recommended 10% to as much as 50%. Bron thought clover a possibility too. Alan gets no OSR and no clover, but stores his honey in 30lb buckets, melting these in a warming cabinet at 32C until pourable but still semi-set. He then mixes it well before jarring and finds it sets well and very fast.

Finally, Bill McCrae asked what the SBA's attitude to research projects on bee diseases was. There was much discussion of this. Alan Teale said the SBA supported such research wherever it could, and will be supporting a Ninewells project on the neurological effects of neonicotinoids on bee memory. The SBA did not have a formal policy on

pesticides – they would like to see good research coming in on which they can base a policy as they feel there is not yet enough information available.

Everyone present enjoyed the evening immensely. It concluded with Janice's home-baked stollen, Sandy's wine, and cups of tea. *Janice Furness*

Bees for pollination

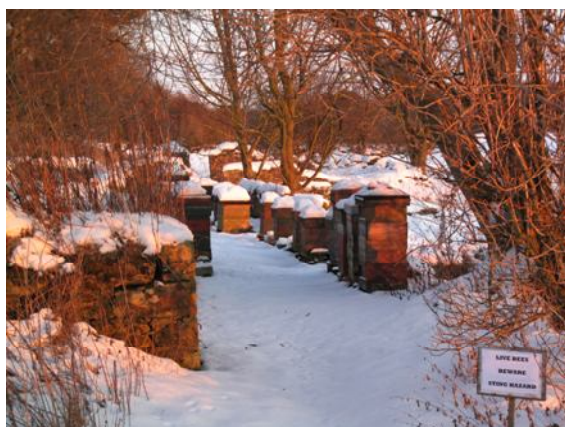
Tom Wood of Allanhill Fruit Farm near St Andrews (07809 599 643) wants more hives on his land to pollinate his strawberries etc. An Arbroath beekeeper had twenty hives there but fourteen of these have died out. Can anyone help?

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

Seasonal Bee Care; Winter

Now that the festive season is behind us we can devote more time to considering our bees. Although we have had a lengthy spell of severe winter weather this should not affect the bees provided the hives are in sound condition and well positioned. There are other requirements such as strong colonies, healthy bees, good varroa control and adequate stores. If the bees have been confined for long and there is snow on the ground and the sun shines they may be enticed outside for a cleansing flight and many bees may be found dying on the snow and this can be alarming. There is a lot of advice in the text books on what the beekeeper should do to avoid this but I am not sure that it works. Acclimatised bees can withstand long confinement better and are less likely to fly out in bright conditions when the temperature remains low.



Dunfermline and West Fife Association Apiary
6th January 2010

Apiary Sites

Hives should preferably receive some winter sun and should have reasonable air movement around them. Frost pockets should be avoided and they should have some shelter from prevailing winds. Keep them raised at least 9 inches off the ground. All this helps to prevent dampness and reduces the amount of condensation inside the hives.

Hive Types

There is no doubt that the old WBC hive and polystyrene hives winter the bees well. But they are more expensive and WBCs are more awkward to manipulate and remember that you should try to keep all your equipment standardised.



Single walled Smith Hive

The single walled hive is perfectly adequate for Scottish conditions provided the wood is in good condition and treated to shed water. I use Cuprinol 'Ducksback' which is non-toxic to the bees and wax based. The roof should have

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

some ventilation and a strip of wood inside which keeps a permanent space above the crown board so allowing air flow. This prevents mice getting in under the roof edges and gaining access through the feed hole in the crown board. Don't forget the mouse excluder over the entrance! There is nothing better the wood mice like than a cosy nest inside a hive in the winter and free stores when the bees are clustered and cannot defend themselves. Smaller colonies will winter fine on a single brood box but stores will need to be checked in late winter and early spring. There is plenty of room for bees in double brood boxes or brood and a half to store food to see them right through to the following spring. Remember that strong colonies do need room to cluster in empty cells and it is safest for them to have a good canopy of sealed stores to gradually move up into as the winter progresses.

Winter Feeding



A simple method of sugar bag feeding

Ideally all feeding should have been done by the previous autumn. During the winter if the hives are light and the cluster has moved to the top bars then they may be at risk of running out of stores.

You should remove the crown board, place an empty super on top and then directly over the cluster a block of baker's fondant or sugar bags. The sugar bags are prepared by piercing several times with a screwdriver, then immersing in a bucket of water for a few seconds and again placing over the cluster. I then place some plastic sheet over the fondant and insulation above this and then the crown board and close up. Ordinary loft insulation or even better, polystyrene board are useful. With strong stocks clustered deep down in the hive and plenty of stores it is not necessary to fuss over the bees to this extent. Beekeepers are creatures of habit and all develop their own favourite methods over the years.

In late winter and early spring the bees will cluster under the fondant or sugar bags where they have needed them. They slowly eat into this and may even draw out a little comb. There is a lot of warmth generated and this is all very reassuring to the beekeeper. It is incredible to think that in the depths of winter the bees can maintain a warm central area in the cluster, even in the most severe weather, where the queen can lay and a brood nest slowly develop.

Other Useful Activities

You should regularly check your apiary, especially after stormy weather in case hives are upset. Green Woodpeckers are not a

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

problem in this area but once they learn how to get into hives they can cause a lot of damage. This can be simply prevented by draping the hives with mesh. Sometimes mouse guards come loose and have to be repositioned. Moving the hives short distances within the apiary is feasible in prolonged cold spells but avoid doing this unless there is good reason. Make sure the roofs are sound and not leaking. If there is dampness along the outer walls, removing the outer combs and replacing with dummy boards can help though this is better done as part of the autumn routine.

Winter Varroa Treatment

Most beekeepers are now using an Integrated Pest Management control even if they do not call it that. We no longer rely on the use of pyrethroid strips as there is strong evidence of varroa resistance to this medicament in Scotland. The use of open mesh floors and summer drone brood uncapping allows us to estimate the level of varroa infestation and take appropriate action. Regular dusting with icing sugar during the summer, and a thymol based treatment after honey has been removed seems to be working well in our area. If this is complemented by a mid-winter oxalic acid treatment then control should be adequate at least until the spring check.

Now that your bees are settled for the remainder of the winter you should be planning for next spring and summer. Have you all the equipment you require? How about repairs and cleaning out your smoker? Have you worked out your swarm control plans? What about reading and studying? What about increasing

your colony numbers and helping to provide bees for all our new beginners? There are many fascinating developments on the scientific front as beekeeping enters this new age. Never before has there been so much potential for the good yet so many dangers to the survival of the honeybee.

John Durkacz

President Dunfermline & West Fife Beekeepers

DATES TO NOTE:

21 Jan 2010 – FBA – VONEF, Cupar, 7.30pm,
Basic Beemaster Syllabus, *Enid Brown*

28 Jan 2010 7.30pm (registration from 6.45)
Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell
Beginners class 1: associations; equipment; types and parts of hive; where to site hive; responsibility to bees and public. *Enid Brown*

4 Feb 2010 DWFBA Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell:

Food Standards and Safety with special ref to honey. *Kirsty Steven*

18 Feb 2010 FBA - VONEF, Cupar, 7.30pm
The EFB and AFB outbreaks. *Gavin Ramsay*,
SBA Diseases Officer

25 Feb 2010 7.30pm Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell
Beginners class 2: The occupants of the hive, castes, life cycles, division of labour; the colony's year; the beekeeper's year. *Janice Furness*

4 Mar 2010 7.30pm DWFBA Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell:
Swarm Prevention and Control and Increasing Stocks. *Graeme Sharpe*

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter January 2010

18 Mar 2010 7.30pm FBA - VONEF, Cupar
Annual General Meeting followed by **Bee Disasters** (bring your favourite story) and **cheese and wine**.

25 March 2010 7.30pm Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell

Beginners class 3: Bee anatomy; Reactions to stings. *John Durkacz*

1 April 2010 7.30pm Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell
Joint DWFBA, FBA and **Beginners class 4:** video, and meet the members

8 April 2010 7.30pm FBA, VONEF, Cupar: **Queen Rearing.** *Margaret Thomas NDB*

Note change of date: The FBA April meeting will be on the 8th, not the 15th. This is to allow members to attend Stoneleigh.

22 April 2010 7.30pm Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell.

Beginners class 5: Summer work; how and when to open a colony; handling and controlling bees; simple swarm control; preparing bees for winter (sound hives, shelter, young queens, stores / how to feed; predators, varroa control). *Enid Brown*

29 April 2010 Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell.

Beginners class 6 Hygiene and Disease; adult diseases; diseases of sealed and unsealed brood; treatment / control; maintaining healthy colonies. *John Durkacz*

6 May 2010 7.30pm Portmoak Hall, Scotlandwell

Beginners class 7: Pollen and nectar sources; collecting pollen, nectar, water, propolis; conversion of nectar to honey. *Janice Furness*. Removing the crop; clearer boards, extraction, hygiene, straining, bottling and selling your honey. *Enid Brown*

Beekeeping Weekend

How about something different this year?

In the past we have had our Heather Picnic to the Dunfermline Heather Apiary near Muthil.

I have a friend who owns the Slochd Mhor Lodge about 4 miles north of Carrbridge and thought that it would be good to book the lodge and make a weekend out of it. Possibly arriving on a Friday evening and staying until the Sunday. The lodge is self catering but we could go out for our evening meals.

On either the Saturday or Sunday could be the visit to my heather apiary near Tulloch Moor, Loch Garten. Claire Paton also has bees nearby. The other day could be spent doing something different, ie mountain biking, walking, visiting an historic site, wildlife park just to mention a few of the options.

To make this possible I now require a definite 'yes' from members so the lodge can be booked. I thought possibly the weekend Friday 13th – Sunday 15th August might be OK.

Please contact me asap – honeybees@onetel.com with your views and whether you are interested or not.

Further info on the lodge can be obtained –

www.slochd.co.uk

Enid Brown