

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 30th Jan 2018

Purpose of Visit

Although, it's only a week since my last visit, I needed to start the programme of Varroa treatment before I go away for a few weeks, and do a quick check on the amount of stores.

Amount of stores

Each hive (A1, A3 and A10) was hefted to check the weight and none of them had changed much in the last week. Little of the fondant on top had been taken by any of the colonies, although A3 and consumed about 50g. I shone a torch down between the frames under the fondant to confirm that there were live bees and, as usual, a few bees came up to see what the light was. Later on, during the Varroa treatment, a few bees came out but the temperature at 6°C was going to tempt many to come out, even to go to the loo!

Varroa treatment

Oxalic acid vaporisation is one of the methods for treating for Varroa available to the beekeepers. It is not without its critics but the write up at [Beekeeping Naturally](#) is worth reading as are recent articles in BBKA News.

One of the most important points about using oxalic acid vaporisation is that the fumes are toxic to humans as well as Varroa mites - but doesn't harm the bees. It is essential, therefore, that the safeguards detailed in the above write up are followed and that you keep upwind of the hive whilst vaporisation is taking place. We will be happy to demonstrate the safe way to carry this treatment out at a future session at the apiary if there is interest. Some members may remember that Karl Francis did this at one of our monthly meetings last year, and he can supply vaporisers at less than half the cost of some of the commercial ones. I use one of his vaporisers to carry out these treatments. Please email the club for further details.

Each hive at Offshoots was treated in turn as follows:

1. The mouse guard (if fitted) was removed and entrance closed up. You can do this by putting masking tape across the small entrance that is in use - there is no need to remove the whole entrance block. See picture of A3.



2. The vaporiser board was inserted at the back of the hive. This is something that helps if you're going to use this treatment technique. It's not essential, but it makes administering the

treatment easier and prevents the vapour from escaping. See pictures - it's roughly the same external dimensions as a Varroa board. We can supply details if needed. It was made from a few scraps of wood and held together using frame nails.



3. The cup of the vaporiser was charged with 1g of oxalic acid powder.

4. The vaporiser was inserted into the vaporiser board ensuring that the cup was immediately beneath the escape hole. See picture of A10.



5. The gaps around the vaporiser were sealed with rags and the 12v car battery was put in place - but not connected. Here's another picture (but not an Offshoots hive this time and the battery IS connected).



6. The battery was connected and I moved as far away upwind from the hive as possible. The battery causes the heating plug in the vaporiser cup to glow and evaporate the oxalic acid.

7. After about 3 minutes, the battery was disconnected but everything else left in place for a further 3 minutes to allow the vaporiser to cool and the vapour to spread through the hive and recrystallise.

8. Then the vaporiser was removed - watching out for any residual fumes - and the rags left in place to provide a complete seal. The tape on the front entrance was also left in place.

9. After a further 10 minutes the vaporiser board was removed. The tape over the entrance was left on whilst the next hive was treated.

10. When all three hives had been treated, a cleaned and greased (with Vaseline) Varroa board was inserted under each hive, the tape was removed from all the entrances and the mouse guards put back.

Next Steps

In five days' time, the Varroa boards will be removed to check the mite drop count, before another vaporisation treatment, and the Varroa boards be will cleaned, greased and re-inserted.

After another five days, the whole process will be repeated. Although none of the colonies at Offshoots were showing significant levels of Varroa, these mite counts should show a drop in mite levels over the 16 days of treatment. The repeated treatments ensure that any new bees hatching over the treatment period have any mites on them "zapped".

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager