

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 24th April 2018

This is the first full report from the apiary for 2018. All three hives have come out of the winter well and have been very active during the recent warm spell. Pat Smith accompanied me during these inspections and helped with the handling of the hives.

A1 National Wooden Hive (Warm Way - frames parallel to the entrance)

Through the winter, this was a double brood box, on a mesh floor, with a crown board on top of the upper brood box, on which there was a pack of fondant. A super containing insulation sat on top of the crown board, and under the roof. No queen excluder was fitted.

The tasks today were to remove the super, insulation and fondant, check the brood status, check the state of the frames for possible replacement, and see if the floor needed replacement.

The frames in the upper brood box had no brood but plenty of stores. The lower brood box had three frames of capped brood and larvae and the queen (marked yellow for 2017) was seen. Most of the frames in the two brood boxes are in good condition and many are marked "2017" having been put into use last year, so no major comb change is needed at the moment. The floor looked fairly clean and free of dead bees so it was not changed. The super and insulation plus the pack of fondant (barely used) were removed.

The hive now looks like this:



A3 National Wooden Hive (Warm Way - frames parallel to the entrance)

Again, through the winter, this was a double brood box, on a mesh floor, with a super to hold a pack of fondant, above the crown board.

All the fondant had been consumed, so the empty pack, insulation and super were removed. Both brood boxes had three frames of brood and larvae in the centre of the boxes, though the queen was not seen. All the frames looked in good condition (as for A1) so a comb change is not necessary at this stage. The floor was changed but looked clean so may not have been necessary.

This hive now looks like this:



A10 National Poly Hive (Cold Way - frames running away from the entrance)

This hive is a poly mesh floor with poly brood box and poly super. Above this was a wooden crown board on which there was a pack of fondant, inside a wooden super containing insulation under the poly roof. A wooden super had to be used as we have no spare poly super.

Half the fondant had been consumed and this, along with the wooden super and insulation was removed. The poly super underneath was very heavy with stores. The brood box had eight frames of capped brood and larvae and some of the outer frames had capped drone cells. The queen was not seen. This colony is running out of space, and the presence of drone cells indicates preparations for swarming or possibly supercedure, though no queen cells were seen. A poly super was added above the brood box and below the existing super to give the colony some space to expand, but needs to be checked again soon to see if queen cells appear. It may need splitting soon. All the frames looked in good condition (as for A1) so a comb change is not necessary at this stage. The floor cannot be changed at the moment (unless we put the hive onto a wooden floor) as we do not have a spare poly mesh floor. The supper added today was one of my own (hence the colour banding!) for which we also need a replacement).

This hive now looks like this:



Next Steps

A1 and A3 need regular checks now to monitor progress. We need to decide whether to put queen excluders on these hives.

A10 needs to be checked again in the next few days to see if it needs splitting sooner rather than later. The wooden crown board needs to be replaced with a poly crown board.

We need to order a spare floor, spare brood box, and a couple of spare supers for the poly hive plus a couple of spare poly crown boards.

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager