

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 29th May – 3rd June 2018

Tuesday 29th May

This was a planned visit by our Seasonal Bee Inspector, John Zamorski, to collect samples from the hives to be sent away for checking for Small Hive Beetle, Tropilaelaps, and Varroa.

The apiary is part of the National Bee Unit's Sentinel Programme to monitor the influx and progress of the various bee diseases across the country. In my last report, I explained that I'd put dry Varroa boards under all four of the main hives and Small Hive Beetle traps in three of them.

So, when John arrived I scraped off the droppings from the Varroa boards into the sample envelope whilst John shook out the contents of the Small Hive Beetle traps. These were sent away for analysis. The results will be in a later report.

John then proceeded to inspect each of the hives for disease. This involves shaking the bees off each frame (into the box) where there is brood and examining the brood for any signs of disease. In a couple of instances, John also used the prongs of a uncapping tool to expose the some drone brood to check for Varroa. None was found.

As John inspected each hive it quickly became apparent that A10 had already swarmed and had several queen cells. In removing one of these we released a virgin queen which we caged with a couple of workers.

Both A1 and A3 looked ready for swarming but still had their queens so we split these - creating A1A as the daughter hive of A1 and A3A and A3B as two daughters of A3 as there were enough frames to make the extra split into a polynuc.

D1 had started the production of a couple of queen cells, so John recommended that this was split as soon as possible.

We put the caged virgin queen from A10 into A1A between the frames. Assuming she's accepted by the hive we can release her at the next visit.

Sunday 3rd June

This was the first full Apiary Session and we had ten people with various levels of experience to help plus Barrie Scott and Colin Lambert. We split them into two teams. Barrie's team looked at D1 and Colin's team looked at A1 and A3. Note that A10 was left alone as we knew from Tuesday that it was requeening.

Hive D1

There were no signs of any brood in the top brood box but 5 frames of good stores. In the bottom brood box there were 6 frames of BIAS (brood in all stages) and the queen was found marked white. There were two queen cells, one unsealed with a grub inside and the other was sealed.

As a result the colony was split to create an artificial swarm.

To do this, as had been done with A1 and A3 the previous Tuesday, the existing hive was moved to one side and a new hive with brood frames placed in the original position. The queen and the frame she was on with bees was placed in the new hive with the old second brood box of stores on top.

The original hive is now situated next to D1 on the same stand and is labelled D!A. The open queen cell was kept and the sealed one removed, in the hope of a new queen emerging. There are also frames of stores in this hive.

Hives A1 and A1A

The queen (marked yellow) was found in A1 along with eggs, larvae and capped brood.

In A1A, the bees were all over the caged queen, so a piece of fondant was put into the end of the cage and the plastic lug removed. Within a few hours the queen should be released. [NOTE on 5th June the queen had been released and the cage was removed]

Hives A3, A3A and A3B

A3 appeared to be queenless but had larvae and capped brood but no eggs and several open queen cells. A couple of queen cells were left but this colony needs to be checked again to see if any develop.

A3A and A3B were not checked.

Swarm C2

This swarm is the one collected in the apiary on 23rd May. In the five frames there is no sign of a queen or any brood yet. If it is still the same on the next inspection, it may be worth putting a frame of eggs in to see what they do with it.

Swarm C1

This swarm was collected outside the apiary the previous Thursday. We didn't look at it today but it needs an eye kept on it to see if it has a queen and develops brood (as we're doing with C2).

Notes

1. When carrying out artificial swarms, I keep the original Hive number with the existing queen and number the daughter Hive with a new number. Therefore in the example above, although the original Hive was numbered D1, when the new box was set up (on the location previously occupied by D1) it was labelled D1. The old box (that had previously been labelled D1) was labelled D!A. Essentially the labelling follows the queened colony rather than the box it's in - if that makes sense. The BBKA has a useful laminated A4 sheet explaining the Pagden Artificial Swarm method that I use, including step by step what you need to do (with diagrams) and the follow-up that you need to do a week later to see how well it has worked. If anyone needs the link then ask them to email me.

2. The number of colonies (including swarms) has risen from 3 to 10 in less than a week and is a reminder that you should always have at least one additional complete set of hive parts ready for each existing colony in case you need to split a colony as an artificial swarm. You should also have a couple of nucs ready (complete with 6 frames, preferably already drawn) to collect any swarms that appear.

3. Several posters have been pinned up in the Nucleus covering aspects of beekeeping from siting an apiary, through to bee diseases. We also have a “cutaway” hive in the corner of the lab in the Nucleus so you can see how the various parts of a hive fit together. This was skilfully engineered by one of our members, Ken Isherwood. It can be used for training sessions and demonstrations if required.

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager