

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 2nd September 2018

Stephanie Partington and Darren Helliwell volunteered to lead this session, and with just a couple of hives that needed checking and the Sentinel samples to be collected, we were done quite quickly with minimal interruption to the bees who seemed very busy bringing in stores.

Sentinel Apiary Samples

I have mentioned in earlier reports that the Offshoots Apiary is a Bee Unit Sentinel Apiary used to check for the incursion of the Small Hive Beetle (SHB) and monitor the levels of Tropilaelaps and Varroa, The first two are notifiable exotic diseases. Samples were taken at the end of May and these reported NEGATIVE for all three pests. Only 3 hives were sampled but this is a good indication that our colonies are in good health. A further check now helps to determine if any special treatment is needed before the bees go into winter. I plan to use Apivar treatment this year as I normally change treatment each year to guard against the Varroa building up immunity to one treatment.

A week ago I put DRY Varroa boards under 3 hives (A1, D1 and C2) along with SHB traps on the mesh floor behind the entrance blocks.

On Sunday, the dry boards were removed and the debris scraped into a sample bag. The reason for the dry Varroa boards, rather than Vaseline-coated as is normal when taking a Varroa count, is that the Vaseline would contaminate the debris and makes it more difficult to examine under the microscope. The SHB traps were also removed and shaken in the sample bag to remove any SHB.

The samples have been sent off for analysis and I will give the results in a later report.

Hive D1 and D1A

You may remember from earlier reports that Hive D1 was a colony of bees given to us by a member who didn't want them anymore. Back in May it was split and Hive D1A is its daughter hive. D1 has the original White queen but D1A has a new queen whom we've never seen.

I asked Darren and Stephanie to check both these colonies for BIAS (brood in all stages) and find the queens if they could.

D1 is a double brood and super so finding the queen could have been a bit of a challenge but she was there in the top brood box with 4 frames of brood, capped, larvae and eggs so all appears well. There were 5 frames of capped honey in the super on top.

It took a while in D1A to find the queen but Stephanie seems to have the knack of finding unmarked queens - she did in Hive C2 a while ago and managed to mark her. We didn't managed to mark the D1A queen but she's there along with 5 frames of brood. This colony has 8 full frames of capped honey so again, all appears well.

General Points

We will probably call a halt to “open” Apiary Sessions now as we start to plan for winter. We plan to extract some honey from the hives, apply Varroa treatment, and start the winter feeding programme.

At the moment we don't have any weak colonies so we may go into winter with 8 hives, 5 more than last year, which is a good result. Let's hope the winter is kind to us!

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager