

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report December 4th 2018

Apiary Sessions were suspended after the session on September 2nd but work in the apiary has continued as we prepare the colonies for winter.

Apivar Varroa Treatment

The Apivar strips were removed from all the hives on November 13th. Some of the bees had cemented them between the frames making them difficult to remove. In the same way that the path was cleared between the frames to insert them, pushing a hive tool gently down between the sides of the strips and the adjacent frame helped to free them for removal.

Switching from Syrup to Fondant

The rapid feeders containing 2:1 syrup were removed on November 20th and replaced with fondant packs containing a 2:1 mix of pure fondant and Candipolline. The latter contain pollen and other nutrients (Beet sugar (sucrose) sugar syrup, pollen, caseinate, allumen, glycerine, vitamins E300, L asorbic acid (vitamin C) 400IU/kg.).



We make these packs up to contain about 750 g (500 g of fondant and 250 g of Candipolline). We use takeaway food containers that you can get from Sainsbury's (packs of 8 for just a few pounds). We wrap the filled pack (without the lid) in cling-film and then put the lid on and store them until we (or rather, the bees) need them. This makes it easier to get the lid off when you're ready to invert the pack over the hole in the crown board - not forgetting to remove the cling-film first!

The rate of consumption of the packs varies with the colony as some will have more stores than others, and some colonies will be bigger than others. Not surprisingly A10, the poly hive, is consuming it faster than almost all the others. Bees in poly hives only seem to cluster at the very coldest temperatures, are more active and move around a lot, particularly at the top of the hive - the warmest place.

When the bees are feeding from this pack it can be quite busy as you can see in this photograph from another poly hive:



Insulation

As it's now getting quite cold (2°C today) it's a good idea to fill the empty super with the food in with insulation. Otherwise there's an empty super full of cold air sitting on top of the hive. This block of cold air can dissuade the bees from venturing up to see if there's any food up there.



This is a pile of Kingspan foam insulation, some of it donated by a club member and some from a neighbour who's a builder.

It comes in different thicknesses - 1000 mm is ideal but two 500 mm blocks will work just as well. You can cut it to size or use odd blocks to fill the empty super.

Into Winter

We are now into winter according to the Met Office, who say that winter starts on December 1st. In reality, winter starts on December 21st at the winter solstice, when the Earth is furthest from the Sun. It's the shortest day and bee colonies start to increase. From the summer solstice (June 21st - the longest day) they have been decreasing but now they start to build up again, slowly at first, with the Queen starting to lay in January.

So now is the time to start planning. Clean all the old boxes, make some frames, throw out all the old stuff . . .



Derelict Area

We've mentioned before the derelict area next to the Apiary. For several years it's contained lots of the old equipment from the Offshoots hives.

With the help of the Offshoots staff and volunteers, we've now cleared the area and collected a lot of old boxes, some of which we don't intend to keep.

Some of them might be of use to someone but a lot of them are Langstroth boxes (mainly wooden nucs).

We also have around 20 Langstroth METAL frames (complete with METAL foundation) and an assortment of Langstroth frame parts.

If anyone can use any of these spare items, drop us an email at eastlancsbees@gmail.com and we can arrange for you to have a look at them.

We'd be glad to see them put to good use and if you can give a small donation to Offshoots (who's equipment it was) then that would be appreciated.

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager