

“The Buzz”

October

As I look out of the window writing this, I can see the wind blowing, rain falling and the leaves falling. I can safely say Autumn is upon us and this is the time to make sure the girls are getting tucked up for winter.

Your varroa treatment should be finished by now, which was the main purpose of my recent hive



visits when there was a break in the weather. It was bright and sunny but a cold wind, as I took my chance to do some final checks on the hives and remove my Apivar strips. So, on these days, forage is still being brought in. Bees are still dusty with the balsam but are now also bringing in the flowering ivy, the last forage of the year, with the exception, of some garden flowers that are still producing pollen and nectar.

As the bees' food supply is dwindling, but the bees are still fairly active it's important to check food supplies, making sure they will still have enough to go through the winter. Leaving them short of food at this time of year is almost guaranteed to cause problems for them in the early spring, especially if we have a mild winter.

Full hive inspections should be finished and most of the drones evicted by now, which may explain the dead bees in front of your hive if you find any. Saying that, a few of our other beekeeper clubs and friends, on Twitter, have posted photos of lone drones hiding themselves away in corners trying to keep out of the way to extend their board and lodgings tenancy!

Any uniting of hives should have been completed. On our recent club Zoom meeting we discussed whether people leave supers on above the brood box or under-super (placing the super under the brood box). It is a personal choice but I under-super. In my mind it hopefully allows the bees to move the stores up into the brood box with them and then the supers being empty for Spring and me potentially missing the start of the queen laying again in the upper box, which if I over supered would mean me being on brood and half. Under-supering also acts as a potential wind break for the cold winter months. Whichever way you decide on, please remember to remove your queen excluder.



The reason being that if the cluster moves to the food and the queen cannot get through...well you can guess the rest.

Now is the time for mouse guards. Our furry little friends do like a nice warm hive with food to settle in to. My mouse guards have been on for a few weeks now since the first nightly temperature drops. I know we will get a few nice days for final foraging but have never noticed any problems with

foraging bees getting in and out of the hive or leaving pollen on the mouse guard holes.

It is quite exposed at one of my apiary locations, so it is worth checking your hives are strapped down properly. One of the saddest sights is a hive on its side with the bees hanging gamely on whatever foothold they can get. Check that your hives are not in an area that is likely to flood or in a frost pocket.



I know fair number of our members use polystyrene hives and the insulation properties are great. For those of you, like me, who use wooden hives I have never had any issues, but I do check my hives for any damage or gaps and I do insulate the roof. I place a block of Kingspan (builders insulation foam) inside an empty super and place on top of crown board and under the roof. You could use carpet or straw filled bags. If I have a colony that I am concerned about and for beginners, who are naturally still inquisitive, I have in the past

used a Perspex crown board but then placed a solid one over this so you can still have a little peek if you want to put your mind at rest.

Hives should still be checked every couple of weeks for damage and to make sure there are enough supplies, by hefting and topping up with fondant if necessary.

As you all know, if you ask one beekeeping question you will get loads of different answers. But, this is what I have been up to, and hopefully for our members coming into their first winter after a difficult year with not much support, it will give a little insight as to what we can be doing now.