

## Christmas and New Year

So far, this month has been quite mild with just a wet days where I am. On these sunnier days the bees have been out flying.

Because the cluster is active, they will be consuming the stores around the brood area of the nest. You need to be aware that if they consume the stores around the brood nest and then the temperature drops again, as it has here in the last few dys, there will not be any food close to them and they can starve even if there are plenty of stores. This is called isolation starvation. The blood sugar level of the bee drops and they do not have the energy to move out to the food stores if they are not close to them.

The NBU have recently sent out starvation warnings and I did notice on a couple of mine whilst doing my Api-Bioxal treatment that they had taken a fair bit of their winter stores, so I have added some fondant to my hives.



So, we need to be thinking, do they have enough food? If in any doubt then feed. Place fondant in a container, to keep it moist, over the hole in the crown board. Takeaway type containers can be used (without the lid), or if large colonies the whole pack of fondant. Cut a space in the plastic wrapping that will fit over the hole so the bees can get into it.

In the past I have had colonies that won't come up through the hole to the fondant container above the crown board. I now tend to roll fondant really flat and place directly on top of the frames below the crown board.

One problem with using plastic bags is that, as the bees eat the fondant and the heat in the colony softens it, the whole bag can sink, trapping the bees that are in it and stopping other bees getting into the food.

Some areas have seen several instances of flooding. If hives are not on stands, check that they are not in water. Damp is a bigger killer of bees than cold and, at the least, can cause the bees to mouldy. All hives should be well ventilated, which they will be, if they are on mesh floors. Ventilation allows air to circulate keeping the inside of the hive dry.

December/beginning of January is the time for oxalic acid treatment. The only treatment which is authorised in the UK is Api-Bioxil, the oxalic acid treatment for bees. We have spoken about Varroa treatment in our recent Zoom meetings and we did a piece previously in 'The Buzz' about Api-Bioxal which can be found at the bottom of this web page. As with all treatments, read the instructions carefully before applying



Apart from keeping your eyes on the bees food stores, there should be little to do in your apiary, Make sure you check every now and then, to make sure your hives are nicely weathertight, strapped/weighted down and there are no dead bees blocking your mouse guards.

It has been a tough year for all of us but I would just like to take the opportunity, on behalf of the committee, to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Let us all hope for a better 2021