

Hoping for a better year...

Firstly I would like to wish you a happy New Year and let's all hope for a better one than last year.

So, last month I started by saying how mild it was for December. Well, what a January we have had so far, over in East Lancashire! I am so 'over' snow now but I think there is more to come.

The NBU have sent out warnings of bees who may be starving, in spite of good food stores going into the winter months. Probably due to the milder weather in December, when on warmer days the bees have been flying and inside the hive they are still quite active. Consequently, they are going through winter stores very quickly and if you haven't already put fondant on, then check your bees to make sure they have enough food.



Even if you have put food on, check that they aren't separated from it and if necessary move the food frames nearer the cluster. If the stores are capped, score across with a hive tool to release some honey so the bees can sense it. Later in the month, food supplements can be mixed into this, giving bees an extra boost as they start to build up. Pollen substitutes or patties can also be added to fondant containers.

Heavy snow and high winds can cause disturbance to your hives. Check on your hives and strap them down. The wind does not just blow hives over, it causes the boxes to separate and the gap between the boxes allows the rain to get in and the warm air in the nest will escape. It's the damp that kills your bees, not the cold.

While you are there, have a check on your mouse guards. Older bees die off naturally in the hive during the winter and if the bodies build up around the entrance, they can soon block the holes in the mouse guards and make it difficult for other bees to get out on their cleansing flights.

Wearing a veil, on a cold day, gently prise off the mouse guard and flick out any dead bees with something like a stick to clear away the bodies. Try not knock the hive as you clear the entrance as do not want to alert the cluster. Then gently, replace the mouse guard.



It may seem a long way off but making plans for your apiary, when the bees start flying in earnest can be done in the winter months.

- Do you have enough space in the apiary for what you want to achieve? If not, now is the time to start looking for an extra apiary
- Are you going to rear your own queens and if so from which stock?

- Do you have enough hive parts and frames? Hive parts can be cleaned up and made ready for use. Frames can be made up now and the foundation added when needed. We all know the feeling of not being prepared and rushing to build hives and frames at the last minute. A few of the equipment suppliers will be having winter sales, so it is always worth having a look around on the internet for a few bargains.

As we cannot meet in person, our club meetings will continue over 'ZOOM' and we have a couple of speakers booked already, so keep an eye on the website. We would love for you to come and join us but if you can't then please remember, if you need anything then please email us and we will do our best to help.