

Well the season is nearly here...

The bees are taking every opportunity to get out when the weather allows. The bees would put Chinook helicopters to shame with the massive heavy loads of bright yellow and orange pollen being airlifted in. It is such a great sight to see. The orange pollen is crocus and I am leaning towards Willow with the bright yellow pollen, could be Hazel but we do have quite a few Willow trees in our locality.



Well we have had a really nice couple days in this last week allowing me to have a quick sneaky peak in on the girls. There was no need to do a full inspection but it allowed to a little glimpse to see how they are getting on. There were no brown streaks over the tops of the frames or up the entrance to the hive which could indicate dysentery. I just gently lifted out a brood frame near the centre of most

activity, not fully, but just enough to peak down and see what the brood pattern was like either side of the frames and happy to report that all of the hives starting to lay nicely.

It is not weather dependant, but I took this opportunity on a lovely day to change the floors to nice clean ones and take the mouse guards off. It is just a case of quickly lifting the boxes to one side or straight up if you are lucky enough to have a second pair of hands to help.

Looking at your hives from the outside and seeing plenty of pollen going in, plenty of flying bees, no brown stains/streaks up the front of the hive or piles of dead bees outside on the floor are all good signs to see.

But, whilst we wait for the temperatures to rise enough to open the bees for a full inspection for the first time this year and finally see what is going on in there, it's a good time to think about what we will be looking for and the reason why we are opening up the hive.

- Is there brood at all stages? If yes, then you have a queen who is laying
- If no or little brood is the queen present? Check what type of brood, is it worker or drone? Check the laying pattern, is it regular or patchy?
- Are there enough stores to last to the next opening? The weather can be very hit and miss in April so there will periods where the bees cannot get out to forage. What type of supplementary feed is necessary if at all? Ambrosia or sugar syrup with a 1:1 ratio of sugar to water.
- Are there any signs of disease? Nosema, chalkbrood, large numbers of dead bees, pepperpot brood pattern, greasy sunken cappings, to name but a few? All need investigating thoroughly and treatments given as soon as can be done.
- Is there enough laying space for the queen?



- Are there any swarm cells? It is still a little too early here for swarming but you never know what the bees are plotting, so it is time to have your swarm prevention/control plan in place! Use one that you are comfortable and familiar with.



We recovered a colony from a house clearance in Blackburn last year, before the house was demolished and we quarantined it over winter and it looks like it has come through winter really well and thriving. But, it was a mish-mash of frames so I really need to think about how I am going to change the combs in this one. I will wait for the weather to warm up and the colony to strengthen

but do I just slowly add new frames to the outside of the brood cluster for them to draw or do I complete a Bailey comb change. I think I am leaning towards the Bailey comb change if they get strong enough as I really don't know how old these combs are but we shall see. Just another thing to think about along with queen rearing, swarm control and putting out bait hives!

The warmer weather will hopefully soon be upon us and we can look forward to a good and productive season. As with most questions asked in beekeeping there will always be a multitude of answers, opinions and ways of doing things but these are just my thoughts 😊