

The year starts here...

I know summer is not over yet, but here we are already almost at the end of the beekeeper's year. Strange I know that our year ends after extracting the honey, but now is the time to begin to make sure your bees are strong enough going in to winter and ready for next year!

Now is when the queens start laying eggs for winter brood. These are the larger, strong bees that take us through until next spring. They need to be able to live for approximately six months, so it makes sense to ensure that they are fed properly, are disease free and that they are strong enough going into winter.

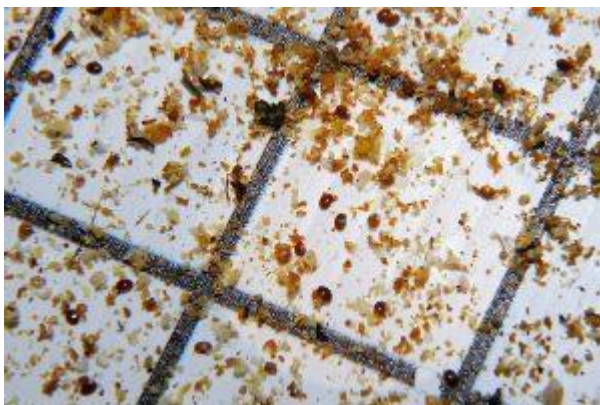
We normally associate the bringing of pollen into the hive is to feed larvae but this time of year the bees need it to help build up their fat bodies. These are cells just under the hard casing of the bees. Pollen is a protein source enabling the bees to grow large and strong and protecting them from the cold. If needed, I will place a pollen substitute directly on the frames and see if the bees take it.



I have already united two colonies using the newspaper method. One was quite a late artificial swarm and although the queen, last years was laying well again, I don't think they would have built up enough to get through winter. Fortunately, the queen went to another member who was after a one to rescue one of their colonies.

I do have two other colonies that I am about to unite, and this will be done shortly. I also have a new queen that I am going to move into a poly nuc. With the great insulation properties these nucs have I am hoping this small colony will overwinter successfully. A note about uniting - all these colonies I am uniting are healthy, you don't want to be uniting unhealthy colonies with your healthy ones.

I will be putting varroa monitoring boards in very shortly and if needed I will need to think about which treatment to use. There are quite a few treatments that require the honey supers to be removed whilst treating as they will taint the honey.



We tend to take our supers off a little later over this side of the county so it may be a case of not treating until you have taken honey off but then some treatments work better at warm temperatures, so it is a balancing act of what you choose to do. Some treatments such as Apivar have no temperature constraints, so that could be a way forward if required.

These last few weeks I have started noticing a lot more wasps around. Having lost hives to wasps in the past my wasp traps are now out, placed away from the hives. They don't need a second invitation to start hanging around my hives. My hives are always on small entrances but if you have small colonies reduce the entrance so they can protect themselves better. Strong hives are unlikely to be bothered much as the wasps are soon put off by a lot of activity outside a hive.

Remember it is not only wasps that rob hives, but other bees will also target weak colonies. Watch out for zig-zag flying at the entrance and bees fighting at the door. There are a few options to combat an attack such as reducing the entrance, blocking the entrance with grass for a few days or if too severe then moving the hive.

This also goes for when we take honey supers off the hive. Make sure all supers, empty or full, are beeproof. It's amazing how bees can smell honey and will quickly source an unprotected super which can create a frenzied robbing situation that may move to smaller colonies.

It is always nice to take some honey off but remember an average hive will require approx 40lbs of supplies to go through winter. When you get to this stage, check the amount of stores in the brood chamber and in the supers. I always try to leave a full super of honey for the bees, it's much better for them than sugar syrup, and if that means we don't get to take honey off then so be it.

If the weight is low and there is not enough natural forage coming in then feed, feed feed! An autumn feed of a thicker 2:1, sugar to water ratio is required. This is for storing not eating now. Bees need time to invert this sugar syrup and store it.

There is ready made bee syrup, such as Ambrosia or Invertbee, which can be bought and this is already inverted. You need to weigh up the pro's and con's to buying or making your own, but because ready made bee syrup is already inverted you can feed a little later in the season. This can be useful if you are waiting for a late crop, such as Himalayan Balsam, to mature before extracting honey.

After honey extraction, wet frames can be given back to the bees to clean up, preferably returning the same super to the same hive to prevent potential transfer of disease. There will still be enough forage for them to fill again before we close them up for winter.



The club Honey Show, 26th September, is still a month off but you do need to think thing about preparing for it. If you are using this year's honey to show, then you need to allow it time to settle and jar.

We will be going into this on our next club zoom meeting 'In it to win it' on the 25th August @8pm. With the help of Chris Carey from Preston BKA, a very experienced honey show exhibitor, we hope to pass on some hints and

tips about preparing for honey show.

There are lots of different classes to enter, from honey to cake making, candle making and photographing, so we hope this meeting will encourage you to give it a go.