BeeTalk

Febrary 2015
Issue 133

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

Branch Web Site

Have you visited the Branch Web Site yet ? All the information about the Branch is on it we now have a Members Area to access this the password currently is: mandible.

You will need this for access to all Coop purchases

Annual General Meeting – 12 February

Members are invited to our AGM of which the formal notice follows. The AGM will be followed by a talk "Protecting British Flora and Fauna" by Paul Wilkinson of the Canal & Rivers Trust
(Please note – whilst wanting to ensure proper democratic process, we do try to keep our AGM brief as AGM's in general are not generally regarded as very exciting! We would really value a good turnout please, not least to hear our Chair's report on what has been a very busy year for the Branch)

Warwick & Leamington Beekeepers

Notice of Annual General Meeting

We are pleased to invite you to the Branch AGM on 12 February at BBKA HQ Stoneleigh commencing at 7.30pm

AGENDA

1	Apologies for Absence
2	*Approval* of minutes of the previous AGM – (to be tabled)
3	Chair's Report
4	Treasurers' Report
5	*Approval* of the 2014 Accounts (to be tabled)
6	Branch Reserves Policy 2015 & Annual Subscription for 2016

Proposed – Members are invited to agree an increase in Branch subscriptions for 2016 of up to £2.00

£14.50 in 2015 for Full Members and pro-rata for Partner, Junior and Associate Members (2015 Partner Members £4.80, Junior Members £4.00 and Associate Members£5.00.) Flexibility is requested as a decision about future subscriptions is required some 9 months before it is to be applied. Members are advised that any increase in Branch subscriptions will only be applied if considered absolutely necessary.

7	*Appointment* of the Independent Examiner
8	Election of Officers and Committee Members for 2015/6 *Proposed* as tabled
9	Confirmation of Branch Honorary Life Members Brian Milward, Norman Jones, David Stott, Mike Townsend & Clive Joyce
10	Any Other Business
11	Next AGM – Thursday 11 February 2016

“Colony Carers” Wanted for DHL Training Apiary

Some, but not all of you will be aware that after a fantastic stint and having successfully re-located the apiary to DHL from Bubbenhall, Roger Wilkes has decided to hang up his hive tool with regard to the Branch training apiary. Many will be grateful for all the instruction Roger has given.

The role he fulfilled included looking after the colonies and equipment, organising and providing some of the training and grounds maintenance.

We have addressed these three elements of which the priority is ensuring the colonies are looked after, which Roger will continue to do until we have alternative arrangements in place. Clearly anyone contributing to this role will have a great opportunity to enhance their beekeeping experience.

There are presently 8 hives in the training apiary, and we are looking for a small team of volunteers, both relatively new to beekeeping and with experience, to share this husbandry responsibility. There will be scope to establish how the team will function in due course.

We would be very pleased to hear from any members who would like to contribute to this task. Please email or telephone Mary Pemberton to express an interest: mary.pemberton@hotmail.co.uk 02476412801

Mary Pemberton
Branch Chair

Membership renewal 2015

Membership runs from 1st January until 31st December.
Would those members who have not yet renewed for 2015 please do so as soon as possible using the Google form on the front page of our new website www.warleambees.org.uk . Sadly only 2/3 of our members have renewed so far. If you do not plan to renew your membership would you please let me know - val.dillon@outlook.com to ensure I don't contact you again. Many thanks to all those who have already renewed their membership.

Val Dillon

Bee Health Initiative

As encouraged by the County Education Co-ordinator’s Group, our Branch would like to enhance our general consciousness of maintaining our colonies in a healthy condition.

To this end we will be carrying out the following initiatives:

Lecture about Bee Diseases – Speaker Dave Bonner – seasonal bee inspector – 7.30 pm BBKA Offices – 26 March
(My colleagues and I, in our bee diseases module group, are priviledged to have heard this lecture and it is the benefits which we gained that lead us to invite Dave to give this lecture to all Members – it is enlightening and highly recommended!!!)

Lecture about How to carry out Disease Inspections – Dave Bonner again - 7.30 BBKA Offices – 22 April

Nosema Clinic – Saturday 25 April – All members will be invited to bring samples of their bees to BBKA to be examined under a microscope for Nosema (more detail will follow)

May – All Members will be encouraged to give their colonies a thorough disease inspection.

Tim Foden

Calling Potential Swarm Collectors!

We desperately need some extra volunteers to help collect swarms over the summer. It is not difficult (full training is offered - there is no reason why even novice beekeepers should not get involved), does not require any expensive extra equipment and can take up as little or as much time as you can spare. Collecting swarms is an excellent way to improve your beekeeping skills, and never fails to gain admiration from the public! If you would like to expand your own stocks, or help meet the needs of other members requiring colonies, please contact Barney Ward (barney@barneyward.co.uk) for further info - no commitment implied!

Barney Ward

Nosema for the Non-Expert

As I have gradually learned more about honey bees, I have come to realise how many different sciences impinge on our craft. We have for example physics (eg polarised light and light wavelengths), chemistry (eg pheromones, conversion of nectar to honey), botany (eg pollination & fertilization) and mellissopalnynology (pollen analysis). Many of us do not have a science background and if we do we are most likely to be a specialist in a limited sphere.. Us non-experts cannot hope to rival the specialists, but at least we can try to understand matters that are important to beekeeping. What follows is my attempt to explain Nosema in lay terms

We now come to another science – microbiology, which when applied to beekeeping, mainly concerns bee diseases arising from viruses, bacteria, fungi and other pathogens.

Among "other pathogens" we have protozoans or single celled animals – the origin of the word is "first animals"- of which one is Nosema.

Beekeepers need to be concerned about Nosema. It is a parasite that is nourished by the contents of a bee's stomach ie it competes for the same food as the bee itself. In consequence and when a Nosema infection is severe, it weakens bees, impinges upon important services house bees provide, reduces their foraging ability and generally shortens bees' lives. If a small number of bees in a colony are infected the consequences are minimal, but if the infection is extensive, it will weaken a colony making it prone to other diseases and robbing, it will cause Winter losses and Spring dwindling when the number of Winter bees dying off exceeds the birth-rate of new bees. A queen that becomes infected will have reduced laying capability and is likely to be superseded with the loss of productivity that entails..

Nosema spores are classed as microsporidia by experts. These spores are fungal in nature and may be likened to a very tiny seed. That seed has a dormant stage and a growing or vegetative stage. Like any seed, it commences its vegetative stage when conditions of nutrition, temperature and moisture are right. The vast majority of honey bees have some dormant Nosema spores in their gut, which are the shape of tiny rice grains. Fungal spores in their dormant phase are physically very resistant. They can withstand freezing, heating to below 49 degrees C and they will remain viable in faeces and combs for at least a year.

Vegetative Nosema spores have a very strange behaviour. Inside the dormant spore is a coil or filament, which upon germination, shoots out rather like a root. The filament penetrates living cells, which in the case of the bee are the epithelial cells lining the gut, and empties the spore contents into them. The contents go through various phases of development and eventually the cell bursts open and many thousands of new Nosema spores emerge into the gut. In the right conditions these new spores germinate, but this time the damage they do is far more extensive as there are many more of them. It is also thought that spores can by-pass this process and directly infect adjacent cells to the one they are occupying. Initially the bee is weakened, but eventually it dies as it fails to compete for its own food and starves. To appreciate the scale, under conditions favourable to Nosema, a bee can have 30 to 50 million spores in their gut or more if unable to defecate.

Strictly speaking, there are two well-known forms of Nosema – Nosema apis – our original form of Nosema discovered by a German scientist in 1909, and Nosema ceranae, which originally infected the Asian honeybee, but is now found in ours. The spores of the two forms are similar as is their effect on bee colonies, although it is thought that symptoms from Nosema ceranae are less obvious.

When Nosema is extensive in a colony, the latter will be weak. This is a relative term and is only useful if you have several other colonies to compare it with. What is useful though is that there are very often other bee diseases or conditions present when Nosema is. It is wrong to say one condition actually causes another, but one way to think of it is that when humans are weakened ie run down, we are more prone to be impacted by other threats.

The most common condition associated with Nosema is dysentery – when bees have the "runs". Bees are normally very hygienic in their behaviour and defecate away from the hive. Bees with severe dysentery cannot control their defecation, thus their faeces are noticeable on the tops of frames and up the front of the exterior of the hive. Because bees are so house-proud, they will endeavour to clean up faeces and in so doing, will ingest Nosema spores, if they are present, thus spreading the disease within the colony. Given that bees with Nosemosis (the name of the disease caused by Nosema spores) are weakened it is not unusual to find that they have chalk brood. Very importantly, just because bees have dysentery, it does not necessarily mean they have Nosema.

In terms of evidence of the presence of Nosema, crawling bees, piles of dead bees in front of a hive and dysentery all provide strong clues, but the condition is readily identified using a X400 compound microscope. Also as Nosema is more likely to spread when bees are confined, symptoms are more likely to be evident during colder spells in the early Spring when the bees are unable to forage. Larvae are not affected by Nosema and it is older bees that should be microscopically examined as the spores will have had longer to multiply. Statistically, it has been shown that a sample of 28 bees is required to give a 95% chance of finding an infection affecting 15% of the bees.

There is no chemical treatment available for Nosema. Until 31 December 2011 an anti-fungal product called fumagillin (Fumidil B) was used prophylactically (ie as a general preventative) as an additive to Winter feed. This is no longer legally available, so beekeepers have to depend on their management skills. First and foremost, colonies must be kept strong ie:

- Given space to develop
- Disease must be carefully monitored
- Given syrup and pollen during times of dearth in the active season

- Queens must be of a high standard
- Swarming must be carefully managed and most importantly
- Combs must be regularly replaced

In the event that a serious Nosema infection is diagnosed, transferring to new comb via a shook swarm is vital, it may well be necessary to replace the queen, it will be necessary to feed the bees and they must have adequate space. The beekeeper may have to take the challenging decision to either let a badly infected colony die out rather than uniting it with a healthy colony putting the latter at risk. Because honey bees are generally vulnerable and sometimes hard decisions need to be made, keeping at least two colonies has definite advantages.

Tim Foden
9 December 2015.
References:
Celia Davis – Around and About
Morse and Flottam – Bee Pests, Parasites and Diseases
National Bee Unit website and publications

Swarms Wanted

If you would like to to put your name on the Branch's 'Swarms Wanted' list for 2015, or would like to purchase a nuc, please visit the Branch website at www.warleambees.org and go to the members area (password: mandible).
If you have nucs for sale and would like to attract potential buyers, drop an email to barney@barneyward.co.uk with your name, post code, phone number and email address.

Barney Ward

Bee Diseases.

Member's Meeting 26th March.
As part of the Branch's general programme this Spring to combat bee diseases, we have asked Dave Bonner to come along and give us a presentation on the common and not so common bee diseases that we may come across. He will show us what to look for, and in the unfortunate circumstance of having found something – tell us what to do about it!
Those of you who know Dave, will know that his knowledge on Bee diseases is outstanding and he also gives a very good talk.

Gordon Robbins

Hints and Tips

If you are thinking about a new addition to the garden why not consider a Japanese Quince? Chaenomeles japonica is a shrub that produces deep orange flowers from February, providing vital early pollen and nectar. It can be trained against a wall, used as hedging or ground cover and later on produces edible fruit ideal for jam making.

Get ahead of that rush of jobs by making up some fresh frames with foundation, so when you make your first spring colony inspections, you have them ready to change whilst the brood nest is still small.

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to h.essex@virgin.net...

Thank you Helen Essex

Editor Roger Wilkes, email address is roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk or hard copy can be posted to her at: 12 Mercia Avenue, Kenilworth, CV8 1EU. **Content to her for next month by February 27th, latest!**

Please send in plain text, unformatted, using Microsoft Word or another common program.

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