

December 2011

BEE LINE



Mainly for beginners: Winter preparations

By now your bees should be tucked up safely for the winter with their mouseguards on. There is little to do now except check that they have enough food. The unusually warm autumn weather meant that the bees had been flying when normally they would be in cluster and although some of our bees were seen bringing pollen in – probably from a few late Autumn flowers, they are not bringing any – or very little – nectar. This means that the fuel for these flights is from their honey stores and the stores will be much depleted and more than likely will run out well before the Spring.

It is probably a good idea to put some fondant on now just in case your bees need it. You can buy fondant icing in any supermarket, it's usually called either fondant icing or ready to roll icing and usually comes in a box. Certainly around this time of year there is plenty available!

Take it out of the box and work it with your hands a little to soften it. Put it in a plastic bag and flatten it out to a pancake about 2 to 3cm thick. Make a hole in the bag on one side of the pancake and place this, hole side down, over the feed hole of your crown board. The bees will take it if and when they need it and the plastic bag stops it from drying out too much.

If you are going to treat with oxalic acid this winter, wait for a really cold crisp day when the bees are in cluster and trickle 5ml (a medicine spoonful) directly onto each "seam" of bees. The idea of doing this in the winter is so that all the mites will be actually on the bees and not in sealed brood cells as there should be no brood at this time of year, that way you get all of the little blighters!

I hope your bees all make it healthily and happily through the winter for a great new Spring season and I hope you do too!

Sue

Questions regarding Winter answered by Sue Chatfield



Should I take the hive block off before putting the mouseguard on?

SC: Not really necessary as long as there are a few holes open on the mouseguard so that they can get out. But keep an eye out for a backlog of dead bees behind the mouseguard which you may have to deal with.

Should I take the varroa board out for winter?

SC: Not necessary, you can use it to monitor mite drop through the winter

Should I still check for varroa during the winter?

SC: Yes check for varroa every now and then and treat with oxalic on a freezing cold day around Xmas/New Year when there is no brood as the oxalic will only kill mites on the bees themselves, it cannot penetrate into sealed cells so treat when there is no brood

Are there any signs I should be watching out for regarding the health of the hive?

SC: You should lift the hive slightly (heft it) to see how heavy it is, in that way you can guess how much stores are there without opening the hive, if it feels light, give fondant, NEVER liquid feed at this time of year

When should I check to see if fondant is needed?

SC: Check your fondant once a fortnight to see if they are using it

If my hive is in a really exposed site is it OK to move it into a more sheltered position?

SC: Yes, you can move your hives about with impunity in the winter as the bees will have "forgotten" their hive position as they will not have been out much.

How colonies are managed in a Canadian winter

I was wondering how beekeepers coped in extremes of cold in the Northern hemisphere and came across this colony management article. It does pose some interesting solutions especially in light of the previous winter we suffered. Also as a point of interest Alberta's latitude is 54.4 and Keighley's is 53.883333.

'In most regions of the USA and a few warm regions of Canada winter management is a simple affair:

*1) make sure colonies have enough honey and pollen,
2) use bee stock adapted to the area and
3) provide a way for excess moisture to escape the colony.*
In colder areas, colonies benefit from more intensive management. These regions include the rest of Canada, the Northwest states east of the Rocky Mountains, Midwest states north of Kansas and the Northeast states north of Pennsylvania. The best way to vent extra moisture from wintering colonies is with an upper entrance. This entrance is very important! A study from northern Alberta, for example, demonstrated that either a 1 x 1.5 cm top entrance built into the inner cover or a 2.5 cm diameter hole in drilled into the middle of the upper brood box greatly increased colony strength, health and decreased the consumption of honey stores. In colder areas of N. America colonies benefit from protection.

There are two general designs for protecting colonies wintered outside. The first involves wrapping colonies in black-coloured, wind-proof sleeves (solar wraps). The black surfaces of solar wraps passively warm colonies on sunny winter days causing them to break their cluster at lower ambient temperatures than normal. Although wraps were traditionally homemade from tar-paper or roofing felt, industrially produced waxed cardboard sleeves are now becoming more common. The second method involves wrapping the colonies with a layer of insulation (insulated wraps). These wraps help colonies retain heat when temperatures are extremely low, but in turn prevent colonies from warming on sunny days. The kind of wrap that you should use depends on where you live. Solar wraps increase colony productivity in some places with fairly mild winters. A study from Israel, for example, demonstrated that colonies that were enclosed in a black plastic tent achieved brood rearing temperatures a month earlier than colonies painted white and as a consequence, were able to double their honey production during the first honey flow in March. More traditional solar wraps also perform well in relatively colder climates. The best way to winter colonies in Minnesota, for example, is as triple brood nests with solar wraps (tar paper) rather than the insulated double brood nest 4-packs. Solar wraps, however, are not used

under the more extreme conditions found on the Canadian prairies. Although a number of studies in the region have concluded that insulated 4 packs are superior to solar wrapped double brood nest colonies, I am not aware of any comparisons of 4-Packs to solar wrapped triple brood nests. Potentially solar wrapped triples might work well on the prairies, particularly with the trend to warmer winters.

Honey bee colonies are also wintered indoors in temperature controlled buildings. Indoor wintering is only practiced in the Canadian prairies, in Quebec and in the Maritime Provinces. Bees are typically moved indoors when daytime temperatures are below freezing (typically at the end of October on the prairies). Colonies stay indoors for 5 to 6 months. Some beekeepers winter a few thousand colonies in a single building. As I mentioned in the Wintering Biology section, colonies winter most efficiently at 5°C. Keeping wintering buildings at 5°C is tricky because: 1) colonies give off heat and 2) outdoor temperatures fluctuate. In the late fall the heat produced by the bees is greater than the amount required to keep the room temperature at 5°C. The excess heat is removed by exhausting the warm storage air and replacing it with cool outdoor air. The exhaust fans also remove CO2 and excess humidity from building up.'

If you want to read the whole article and take a look at the really interesting diagrams then go to <http://www.capabees.com/main/files/pdf/winteringpdf.pdf>.

Have to say I wouldn't like being about much if these fellas don't get their timings right when it comes to putting the bees outside. No siree!!

Bees don't die from cold, they die from starvation.

White eyed drone

Last season a couple of white eyed drones were spotted by one of our beekeepers. The eyes are properly a creamy white but according to Peter Hewitt this is not all that rare and occasionally you might also spot green eyed drones too.

Great News

ABKA are looking forward to a busy season next year with two new ventures to prepare for. Our breaking news is that we have been invited by the National Trust at East Riddlesden Hall to set up and run an apiary. It will mainly be for educational purposes – summer visits by schools. But they are also hoping to sell a few home grown honey products too. All costs are to be borne by the National Trust which makes it very sustainable for ABKA. We are still in discussion over the finer details of the project but very excited about it. Watch this space.

The second project, which has been instigated by our Chairman James, is a bee rearing project which is to be based at St Ives. Works for this are in progress and we should be ready to go by the start of the 2012 season. We hope that we will be able to sell nuclei to members from this and gain lots of knowledge and experience in the process. Members can still give bees to whomever they please as the St Ives project will be run in parallel to the efforts of all individuals who wish to deal with their bee stocks as they see fit.

We are also recruiting anybody from ABKA who wants to participate in this project whether they know about breeding bees or not. If you would like to join in then contact james.thomson37@btinternet.com.

Receipts

Honey Semifredo (ice cream)

Great on hot mince pies and really easy to make.

1 egg
4 egg yolks
100g best quality honey, plus 3 tablespoons or so for serving
300ml double cream

Method

Serves: 6-8.

Line a 900g/1 litre loaf tin with cling film.

Beat the egg and egg yolks with the honey in a bowl, over a saucepan of gently simmering water, until the mixture is pale and thick. Use a wire balloon whisk or a hand-held electric whisk.

Whip the double cream until thick, and then gently fold in the egg and honey mixture. Pour into the prepared loaf tin, and cover carefully with cling film before putting it in the freezer for about 2-3 hours.

Sit in the fridge 30 minutes before you're ready to serve, turn out the semifredo on to a suitably sized plate and drizzle with honey. It thaws quickly

Lithuanian Krupnikas

Lithuanian spiced honey liqueur. Serve warm as a traditional Eastern European cold remedy - a quick heat-up in the microwave works great.

Ingredients

10 cardamom seeds
1/2 nutmeg
2 teaspoons caraway seed
10 whole cloves
10 whole allspice berries
4 small cinnamon sticks
2 teaspoons whole peppercorns
2 inch piece fresh ginger root
3 large strips of orange zest – no pith
3 large strips of lemon zest – no pith
4 cups water
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 pounds honey
2 pints vodka

Method

Crack the cardamom seeds and nutmeg and toss them into a saucepan with the caraway seed, cloves, allspice berries, cinnamon sticks, peppercorns, ginger, orange zest and lemon zest. Pour in the water and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Strain out the spices and peel and set the liquid aside.

Pour honey into a large pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Skim off any foam from the top. Stir in the strained liquid from the spices and vanilla extract. Slowly stir in the grain alcohol while the mixture is still warm (away from heat source or you'll lose your eyebrows!) and let it stand overnight with the lid on.

The following day pour the liquid into sterile bottles, seal, and allow it to settle for 2 weeks. The longer you let it sit, the clearer it will become and the better it tastes. Serve warm.

Take a look at these Youtube videos

Make a candy board for overwintering honey bees

http://youtu.be/E_WLCc21-Hk

A bit long winded but worth being patient with and it's always useful listening to experienced bee keepers to build up your own library of knowledge.

Winter bee feeding

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5lfrhtYtFU>

Dates for your diary

11th Feb 9.30 - 4.30
contact: bees@al-consulting.co.uk

Lancaster Beekeepers Apiary management course
01524 811978

Saturday 25th February 2012

Mead, honey and wine course

Course Organised by the International Federation of Mead & Honey Wine Judges in conjunction with the Yorkshire Beekeepers' Association at the Normanby Pavilion, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate
£15 call course organisers on 07833 158 565

28th April 2012

YBKA Annual Convention at Bishop Burton College

contact: bill.cadmore@ntlworld.com

01132160482

Oxalic acid recipe

100ml water
7.5gr oxalic acid
100g sugar.

Dissolve sugar in warm water then stir in the acid. Only use 5ml on each seam of bees. max 50ml per hive. This quantity should do three hives. Apply the oxalic syrup on a cold day when the bees are in cluster and dribble one medicine spoonful (5ml) per "seam" directly onto the bees. Treat the bees at the same time as you put fondant on in winter.

If you prefer to get the ready made stuff Sue Chatfield has some of the Thornes Trickle.

Cheaper than botox



Eradicate those unwanted frowns and age-telling smile lines. Go down to Weatherspoons and no one will mess with you. With our special one-bee treatment you'll look like a pro pugilist. Thanks for the photo Louise!

New apiary manager

John Tatham has stepped up to volunteer as apiary manager for the site at Morton. So a massive thanks to him. He has superceded Brian (couldn't resist that one!) but hopefully we will still be seeing him about and benefitting from his huge amount of experience.

Volunteer my dear?

We're always on the look out for volunteers to assist at our site at East Morton - you can be as fair weather as you like, it all helps. It's really a personal win-win situation as you get to pick the brains of the bee maestros. There is always something to learn and you can have a bit of a laugh as well. I know that sounds corny but it's true. You will always be welcome.

Is it just me...

I have a considerable apiary now, after completing what is really a full year of bee keeping. Both hives are winter ready. Now I don't know about you but despite doing all I can to ensure that all of my bees like me, 50% of them hate me with a passion. Luckily that percentage is contained to one hive so I only have to gird my loins for half of the time. You know I got stung three times on the end of my right index finger during one visit. Yeaooow, that hurt! But my pearl of wisdom this time is about gloves. I had been using rubber gloves to work with my bees and was fortunate enough to win a proper pair of beekeeping leather gloves with huge canvas gauntlets - despite trying to pay for my raffle ticket with Turkish currency. Our doughty Treasurer was onto my fraud in a shot and made me cough up with chocolate Christmas money or else! Anyways, since owning these real McCoys it has transformed my bee husbandry. I am more confident, defter and consequently an unstung hero! If you ask for anything from Mother Christmas this year, ask for a pair of beekeeping gloves and confine your rubber to household chores forever.

Ed oldsalmom@gmail.com

Wishing you all merry Christmas, good health and a beetastic 2012