

September 2012



# BEELINE

Looking at alternative techniques  
for winter feeding

Save your wildflower seeds appeal

Mainly for beginners



All photos by Awo Subris

# BEELINE

## Mainly for beginners: Autumn jobs

Here we are at the end of September, by now you should have treated your bees against varroa, but if you haven't all is not lost, you can leave it until there is a really hard frost and the bees are in cluster, probably in December, and give them a dose of Oxalic Acid via the trickle method, just squirt a medicine spoonful (5ml) onto each "seam" of bees. They will share it around and you should see a significant mite drop as the little beasties will be clinging onto the bees themselves and not be hiding in the cells because there is no brood there.

The bees will need to be heavily fed now, the recent wet weather will have made them eat into their stores. You should be feeding "thick" syrup i.e. 2lb white sugar to 1 pint water (or 2kg to a litre if you are working in metric). This amount of sugar does not readily dissolve so you will need to apply heat, but do not bring it to the boil. All feeding **MUST** be finished by the end of October as the atmosphere is too damp for them to evaporate the water off after that.

If you are concerned that they do not have enough stores after that you can put some fondant on the hive around Christmas. If they don't need it they will ignore it but it's there as a safety measure.

Sue Chatfield



## Save your seeds

ABKA hope to be planting a wildflower area in the spring and to keep expenditure low we're asking for all you wildlife gardeners out there to save some of you wildflower seeds for us. All contributions gratefully accepted.

## Feeding bees in winter: baggy feeders, sugar cake and dry feeding

For me, going into winter this year will be just like all of the previous years; there are no super stores of honey due this time to the utterly hopeless summer we've endured. I want to keep the three strong colonies in good nick, I have a bit of varroa and I'm a thrifty beekeeper whose preference is for homemade solutions if at all possible and plausible.

This year I'm exploring three new (to me) feeding options all based on Internet research: reading and video.

### Baggy feeders

I don't have any large feeder for two of my hives so I'm exploring this idea. A baggy feeder is a zip lock plastic which is placed in an eke (think of a very basic three-inch deep frame) over your brood box that gives you a place to lay a plastic zip lock bag filled with syrup. You would lay this on top of a queen excluder. Once the bag is in place, you put small slits in the top very carefully (don't go through the bottom) with a utility knife and the bees drink the liquid through the slits from the top. You can get baggy's that will hold a gallon of syrup at a time. Often these are completely sucked dry with no dead bees. Sometimes 3 or 4 crawl in under the plastic and die but, overall, the bees do well with these. Heat from the cluster keeps the syrup from freezing, even in fairly cold weather. Ekes provide a place to put pollen patties, grease patties, or even mite treatments in addition to the syrup. You could also use the space to add sugar cakes in the winter. The downsides: The bees have to break from their cluster to feed. Once a syrup bag is slit open it is impossible to move, and the plastic bag is a one use throwaway item which is expensive and environmentally unfriendly. Again finish this type of feeding by the end of October. Excerpt from <http://www.honeybeesuite.com/what-type-of-honey-bee-feeder-is-best/>

Chalfont beekeepers have this to say about baggy (or baggie) feeders. *'You take a baggie—say a gallon size—and measure into it 9 parts of sugar and 1 part of water by either weight or volume. You close up the bag and knead the mixture with your hands until it is thoroughly combined. You place the bag on the top bars inside an eke or spacer rim, then you slit the bag with a knife. The moisture content is almost ideal for winter feed. It is not so dry that it needs additional moisture, and it is not so wet that the bees refuse to eat it.'*

*The 9:1 proportion yields a solution with roughly 10% water. This is drier than honey but wetter than fondant. Some beekeepers like to get closer to 12% water, which can be achieved by measuring 8 parts of sugar to 1.1 parts water.'*

Excerpt from: <http://www.chalfontsbeekeepers.co.uk/category/baggy-feeders/>



# BEELINE

Winter feeding (continued)

## Sugar cake and dry feed

Another alternative to candy and wet feeds like syrup, is to make sugar cake. This can roughly be described as damp sugar and goes on top of the brood during the winter. The advantages of this type of feeding is that a lot of feed can be provided, the bees aren't disturbed by having the lid removed and a therefore a lot of heat lost. Recipe: 5lbs of sugar to 7.5 oz of water –all by weight not volume. You can weigh water on your scales. This is then placed in your eke with the queen excluder underneath, over the brood body. Put a piece of paper on top of the excluder and place your cake on top of that.

An alternative is to pour dry granulated sugar on top of the excluder which has a piece of paper on top (again placed under the eke as before). Pour the sugar VERY slowly so as to give the bees a chance to get out from under what will be 5kg of sugar. Spray this with water as you are pouring it to dampen it a little. Moisture from the brood body will continue to keep it moist and useable for the bees in the cold. This layer will also slightly help to insulate the bees and you can check it without disturbing them.

See <http://www.gardenfork.tv/sugar-cake-recipe-for-honeybees>

If you dont have an eke it's a simple enough thing to make. Just make a frame the same width as your brood box but only 2 or 3 inches deep. Glue and nail the sides together it doesn't need jointing or mitering. They're quite handy pieces of kit to have if you've someplace to store them too.

Chris Hardy



# Receipts

## Lip balm - it really works

One thing I do have from my bees is wax. So I've experimented with lip balm and it's great. I've had mine on the go now for 3 months and it's still good to use. Friends and family love it.

Ingredients: 33g clean beeswax grated

65ml of oil - coconut oil or olive oil or sweet almond oil (I used olive oil) Optional extra: add a drop of wheatgerm oil if you have it or squeeze in a vit E capsule this is a natural preservative -wheatgerm has vit. E in it.

10 drops essential oil - rose, lavender, ylang ylang etc

Method: Melt the beeswax either in the microwave or in a small pot over a pan of boiling water. Add the vegetable oil and mix thoroughly with a stick blender. Then add your favourite essential oil and place into small pots. Keep some in the fridge to refill your lip balm pot. makes a nice present and it's a great lip protector and moisturiser. Much cheaper than paying £3 - 4 a pot from the shops, the quality is great and it contains simple ingredients with no horrible petro chemicals.

## Banana spelt bread

225g whole spelt flour(you can use ordinary flour instead)

225g white spelt flour

155g brown sugar

3 tsp baking powder

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

2 tsp ground cinnamon

100g walnuts, coarsely chopped

150g dried pitted dates, coarsely chopped

2 mashed banana

185ml vegetable oil

3 eggs lightly beaten

80ml honey

Method:

Preheat oven to 180°C. Prepare cake tin your usual way. Combine the flours, sugar, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and cinnamon in a large bowl. Add the walnuts and dates and stir to combine.

Combine the banana, oil, eggs and honey in a small bowl. Add to the flour mixture and stir with a wooden spoon until just combined. Pour into the prepared tin.

Bake in preheated oven for 35-40 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove from oven.

Transfer the loaves to a wire rack and set aside to cool. Cut into slices. Serve it warm, at room temperature or toasted and buttered.

# BEELINE

## Dates for your diary

AGM WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER at 7.15 at Keighley rugby club.

AGM will be followed by a raffle then pea and pie supper (£4 per head pre-booked)

6<sup>th</sup> November 2012 7.15pm ABKA talk with invited speaker at Central Hall in Keighley -all welcome

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at 10am Open Day and sale of seconds at Thornes in Rand, Lincolnshire

5<sup>th</sup> February 2013 ABKA talk for at East Riddlesden Hall -all welcome

5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 ABKA honey show with judging at East Riddlesden Hall - all welcome

---

### ABKA Agenda

Wednesday 3rd October 2012

7.15pm at Keighley Golf Club

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2011
- 3 Matters arising from the minutes
- 4 Secretary's Report
- 5 Treasurer's Report
- 6 Chairman's Report
- 7 Election of Officers to General Purposes Committee
  - a) 4 Officers
  - b) 6 other members
- 8 Any Other business
  - a) Relocation of Association Apiary
- 9 Date of 2013 AGM

---

### Wanted

ABKA will be asking for someone to become our voluntary Equipment officer at the AGM. That person would be responsible for the cataloguing and upkeep of Association equipment. Any volunteers?

---

### Ambrosia from Bradford Beekeepers Association

Bradford BKA also have an equipment page on their website and are more than happy to supply ABKA members.

Contact Paul Winder [jpawinder@hotmail.com](mailto:jpawinder@hotmail.com)

---

### Honey for sale at the AGM

We'll be selling some honey from our East Morton apiary to anyone who's interested on the night of the AGM. You could take some home and always pretend it'd come from your own bees!!!

---

Julie's return. ABKA's own brood body would not be complete without Julie. She's not be well and has had long stay with hotel NHS. But now she's back thanks to her amazing stamina, the care of the NHS and the solid efforts of some of her very close bee-keeping buddies.

---

### Is it just me...

I've joined a weak hive with a stronger one so they can face the winter as a larger entity and hopefully survive. So now I have 3 colonies. If the colonies are too small they won't make it. Some beekeepers have managed to get honey but most I've spoken to haven't. I'm not alone then - well I got three and a half jars. Woooopee! It truly has been a terrible year for the poor little blighters. I imagine most wild things have been wet, cold and hungry for most of the summer. Summer? Pah!! It's not just because I'm a rubbish beekeeper this year! Hope, that's what a beekeeper needs; in bucket loads. Cheers Ed  
[oldsalmon@gmail.com](mailto:oldsalmon@gmail.com)