

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DEVON BRANCH  
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2011 [www.northdevonbees.org](http://www.northdevonbees.org)



## Chair Chat

Let's start with a big Thank You to Martin Pollock who negotiated with Asda to provide such a good winter sugar deal for members including a 50kg donation of sugar for the apiary. This is most welcome particularly as sugar prices have risen significantly over the past year.

As you may know, this is my last year as Chairman. The nature of my work means that I simply don't have the time to do justice to the post so I've decided not to stand again. I've been involved with NDBK for many years in one capacity or another so now it's time for someone else to step up. I hope some of you will consider standing for election in some capacity at the next AGM in November.

There's much to be done in the Club so I hope you will find some way in which your abilities and skills can support the excellent work of our Branch.

One way in which you can definitely support the club is to participate in the Honey Show on 22nd and 23rd October organised again with such enthusiasm by Barbara - please read her article below.

Best wishes

## Events coordinator

Our AGM is in November, and I will be standing down as Events Coordinator.

The job needs new thoughts and ideas, and a lot of new energy; two years is long enough, now it needs to be handed over to someone new.

We have one more show for this year; it is the North Devon Honey Show at St Johns Garden Centre on 22nd/23<sup>rd</sup> October. Your show and therefore up to all of you to make it a good one.

All the details are in the Show Schedule which should arrive with your Northern Lights. So read, choose your categories and get your very best honey, wax, photos and cooking ready.

Help will be needed so please put your name on the list for Friday set up, Saturday or Sunday -email me your availability on [baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk). Thank you.

I would like to thank everyone, who in the last two years, gave me their information and ideas; all those gems of knowledge that never get put down anywhere, but make the job so much easier.

I also give a big 'thank you' to that band of willing helpers, who gave their time to help get the shows up and running and made my job a pleasure to do .

*Barbara*

## Horestone Notes

For many of our members this is the first time they have had to prepare colonies for winter. We are all told how important the autumn work in the apiary is—as the work now determines what happens next Spring.

At our Tuesday meeting, Julie supplied us with a copy of her "August/September preparing for Winter leaflet" which we discussed and added our own advice and contributions before we trooped out into the Apiary to work with the bees.

We are well ahead with our preparations - all the colonies have the 2nd Apiguard on and we are monitoring the varroa drop. Next week we will make up the sugar syrup and start feeding. We aim to have completed all feeding before the end of September so that the bees have time to evaporate and ripen the syrup before the weather turns chilly. Once again we have a problem with wasps and feeding will be carried out with care. Unfortunately we cannot feed in the evening but wasp traps are out - entrances have been reduced, and feeding will be done as cleanly and quickly as possible.

*Sylvie*

## Nosema Day

We took over the Barnstaple Castle Centre on 15th August and 26 branch members brought in 131 samples of bees. The reception was run by Chris Utting and Cathy Backway who passed the samples to Peter Auger's team of technicians with Jeff Orr and Jenny Ingram to prepare the slides and our three microscopists Kay Thomas, Julie Elkin and Brian Marchant scanned the slides at a magnification of 400 to search for the Nosema spores.

### The Results

The microscopists identified that 32 (24%) samples had Nosema - 16 (12%) low infection / 5 (4%) medium infection / 11 (8%) high infection.

12 (46%) members had all samples clear of infection, 14 members (54%) had at least one sample infected and 8 members had samples with a high infection. One member submitted three samples and all were found to have a high infection.

### Treatment

All have been advised of the results and of the options available for treatment. Derek Hunter was kept busy on behalf of *Bitz4Bees* selling Fumidil B treatment. Meanwhile Chrissie Preece and Mave Dowling kept us all supplied with tea and cakes and Angus Basil supplied a further willing pair of hands.

### Conclusions

These results compare favourably to the two DBKA Nosema Days held at Plymouth and Tiverton in April (see May edition of *BEEKEEPING*) where the overall infection was 38%. However, it is still alarming to find that Nosema is so common in our colonies and yet so easy to control. It was generally agreed that the day will be repeated next year.

Three treatments are available depending on the time of the year. *Fumidil B* (fumagillin) is an antibiotic that is applied in a sugar syrup feed and controls the live protozoa in the bees gut. VitaGold is also applied in a syrup and controls the spore stage of Nosema. The Shook Swarm procedure replaces the contaminated brood comb with clean comb.

A thank you for the members who made donations totalling £109 towards the branch expenses.

Chris Utting

### The library.

We have a number of recent additions to the library, all worth a read when you have the time.

Why is it that new books don't seem to be proof read now and have annoying errors of grammar or typing?

Mel has kindly donated a copy of Bill Turnbull's **The Bad Beekeeper** an entertaining romp through the mistakes we have all made with some good advice too.

2 small booklets but packed with facts are Ron Brown's **Managing Mininucs** & Ben Harden's **A Simple Method of raising Queen Cells**.

More controversial is Paul Mann's **How to keep Bees Without Finding the Queen**. a book that doesn't entirely answer his own question. The author is very keen on Shook Swarms with various permutations depending on the intended outcome ie. Disease control or increase. He is also keen to encourage us all to do more Queen culling ( need to find her!) and rearing to improve stocks. He has some interesting ideas on bee houses.

**The Bee Garden** by Maureen Little a beekeeper and professional gardener is a beautiful book with good plant descriptions and planting plans, all very well indexed and cross referenced.

I know you have to come to Horestone to borrow books or ask someone who does come to bring books home for you but they can be returned via the Community of Beekeepers Shop.

A list of library books is available on our Website.

Julie

## **AUGUST / SEPTEMBER PREPARING FOR WINTER**

i.e. after taking off supers for extraction at end of July/ early Aug.

- ◆ Reduce entrances to help avoid robbing
- ◆ Set out wasp traps
- ◆ Assess colony strength & Queen quality / age – do colonies/nucs need uniting?
- ◆ Unite using newspaper method. Remove old Q. put in cage + few workers + fondant and keep in case new Q is rejected.
- ◆ When colonies have united, ( chewed paper at the front of hive & on floor ) check and rearrange frames, removing any not needed for wintering. ( surplus brood frames with stores can be wrapped in plastic, labelled with colony No. and stored in freezer in case they are needed for stores in early spring)
- ◆ Rearrange boxes i.e. put ½ brood on bottom in colonies wintering on a brood & a ½ . Remove the Q. excluder.
- ◆ If possible change boxes and crown boards for clean ones – good IPM.

### **NOSEMA**

- ◆ Take samples (30 bees) from each colony and test for Nosema spores. Nosema tends to build up over the winter so treat infected colonies with Fumidil B (antibiotic) mixed in with 4.5litres of tepid heavy syrup.
- ◆ Do NOT treat if no spores are present.

### **VARROA**

- ◆ Wash inserts and count the drop of mites before starting treatment.
- ◆ Put a narrow eke on top of the brood box and put on 1<sup>st</sup> Apiguard in early August for 10 -14 days replacing with the 2<sup>nd</sup> treatment for another 10 -14 days.
- ◆ Apiguard treatment needs an ambient temperature of not less than 15C for the Thymol to vaporise so put floor inserts in and cover crown board holes.
- ◆ Monitor the drop during treatment.

### **FEEDING**

- ◆ Assess the amount of stores present ( 5lbs full Nat brood comb & 3lbs Super comb ) & calculate the amount of sugar needed to make the stores up to between 40 -50 lbs.
- ◆ Use only pure white refined sugar ( cane or beet ) made up into heavy syrup i.e. 2lbs sugar to 1pt water ( 61.5% ). Bees are able to store this rapidly.
- ◆ Clean feeders before use and check for leaks. Keep one feeder for each colony.
- ◆ .Feed only at dusk to avoid excitement &/or robbing.
- ◆ Feed all colonies simultaneously
- ◆ Aim to finish feeding **before the end of September**, when night temps drop bees cannot produce wax to cap stores properly. Uncapped stores may ferment and cause dysentery.
- ◆ **Do not overfeed**, it creates unnecessary work and bees need some empty comb in which to cluster.
- ◆ Fondant can be used for emergency late winter/early spring feeding but it is not a substitute for good autumn preparation.

*Julie*

### **How to calculate the amount of stores needed - aiming at a need of 40lb—50 lbs for a strong colony (as above) and for nuclei at least 25 lbs.**

Calculate the amount of stores in the colony/nucleus box. A full British Standard brood frame holds 5lbs therefore one side 80% full will hold 2lbs. As an example - if it adds up to around 25lbs of stores the bees will require about another 20lbs of honey or additional stores.

Calculate the amount of sugar needed. How much sugar must be fed in syrup form to provide the equivalent of 20 lb of honey. 1lb of honey contains c 0.8 lb of sugar (due to its water content) therefore , 8lb of sugar should be fed in syrup form if 10 lbs of honey stores are required. For 20 lb of required stores this will be doubled and 16lbs of sugar is required. With a 2:1 dilution this would be 16 lbs of sugar dissolved in 8 pints of warm water. Basically though, heft the colony and if it is so heavy you can hardly lift it, it has plenty of stores!

*Sylvie*

## Obituary.

### Pam Yeo-Jenn

Pam and her husband Yeo had been members of North Devon Branch for over half a century. Pam succeeded her husband and sadly passed away at the Kenwith Castle Residential Home, Abbotsham on 21st July aged 87. They had lived at The Homelet, in the Yeo Valley, Bideford all their married life where they kept their bees. Their apiary on the south facing steep valley sides had a perfect micro-climate and they were always producing large crops of honey. They also used the 'no queen excluder', method of colony management that gave the queen the right to roam but it was not easy to find her. Yeo was an expert mead maker and wine judge and they presented the 'Yeo Jenn Trophy for Mead' in 1960 to the North Devon Branch and it has been awarded 48 times to 49 winners ( there was a draw in 2000 ). They were also recognised nationally for their hunt for bee boles and also for a magnificent collection of honey labels.

*Chris Utting.*

## DIARY DATES

SUNDAY 4TH September - Horestone taster session—  
13.00 - 16.00 hours.

**BRANCH HONEY SHOW - 22—23rd October - St Johns Garden Centre, Barnstaple.**

National Honey Show: Weybridge, Surrey 27—29 October.

## HAIR SHINE *from The Book of Honey by M. Briggs.*

You will need For normal hair

120 ml (4 fluid oz) honey

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 drops essential oil of rosemary

Method: Mix all the ingredients thoroughly. Pour into a clean plastic bottle with a lid. Apply a small amount at a time to slightly dampened hair before washing. Massage the scalp and work the mixture through the hair. Cover with a warm towel and leave for 30 mins while you have a relaxing bath. Shampoo lightly and rinse with cool water.

## SHOWTIME

Just a reminder that our Honey Show is nearly upon us—  
Show Schedule's attached.

This is your chance to show of : and should your honey become “prizewinning” - brilliant. But it isn't really about winning - it's just a good way of practicing your “manufacturing” process and learning by talking to others and looking at the various exhibits.

There are classes for everyone. So read the schedule carefully, and enter as many classes as you can. A simple list of the numbers of classes you wish to enter (use the entry form on page 6) and post/give to Barbara Carlyle (Show Secretary), or phone or email her on 01271 882303 [baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk).

And even if you don't enter anything, come along and support us. Better still—come along and help—even if its only for a couple of hours. Volunteers to help with answering questions and selling produce will help to make it another good show.

**HAVE FUN AND ENTER ALL YOU CAN.**

**The March of the Ragwort Ravers:** *part of an article in the Telegraph, August 13th by Robin Page.*

The march of this highly noxious weed is so rapid that it will take more than me to stop it.

Speeding the march are the “ragwort worshippers” who say the poisonous plant is crucial to conservation, and describe its proven toxicity as “myth” and “scaremongering”.

No doubt these ragwort groupies would lambast the practice of cutting back every bit of spare vegetation in sight from March to November to make silage, wiping out all the wildlife that would find a home in the lost plants over the summer.

Yet those of us who try to farm responsibly and make hay, which gives flowers, insects, birds and several mammals a decent start in life, are criticised for pulling out ragwort so it doesn't end up in our haystacks.

I expect it wont be long before the usual suspects join the crusade. And perhaps Countryfile will jump on to the bandwagon and make ragwort the programmes logo—so joining the Isle of Man, where the national flower is, unbelievably, “cushhag” (ragwort).

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