



Mid Bucks Beekeepers Association March 2014 Newsletter



Apis mellifera ligustica
(Italian bee)

The Spring Seminar

There were 85 attendees at the County Spring Seminar. The whole day was extremely well organised and seemed to pass quicker than in previous years. Thank you to the MBBKA members who manned the teas and coffees.

The speakers were excellent, presenting three diverse but in ways related views on topics that can influence beekeeping.

Dr Steve Martin gave an enthralling talk on the Asian Hornet. Which as well as detailing the life cycle of the hornet enlightened us as to how the spread of the insect is likely to occur in the UK. Based upon Korean studies, urban areas are more likely to be affected than rural areas where the hornet will have to compete for territory. A couple of key points were that the hornet traps promoted by BBKA/Fera are unlikely to be effective plus a key sign of the Asian Hornet is it "Hawking" in front of the hive. That is, hovering facing away from the hive in order to capture returning foragers, the hornet is not really interested in entering the hive. A good article on the hornet can be found [here](#) on the Fera website.

Pam Hunter gave a talk on Natural Is Not Always Nice, this was an updated version of the one that she gave to MBBKA last year and no less contentious. Pam is returning to the MBBKA to give a talk on Toxic Honey on 19th March.

Steve Alton presented an insight into some of the foraging studies being carried out by Sussex University. Steve's company have developed seed mixes which can produce flowers specifically to attract pollinators over an extended flowering season. A key point I took from this talk was that Pelargoniums (geraniums) will no longer be found in my garden, not one pollinator visited the Pelargoniums in the Sussex trial.



Apiary Opening

The formal opening of the Association Apiary for the season will be on 13th April. So far all the colonies have made it through the winter and if the weather continues as it is they should be thriving by the time we open. Starting at 10.30am there will be a few house keeping jobs as well as disease inspections of all colonies to be carried out followed by a BBQ. Andrew Smith is coordinating the day and can be contacted at apiary@mbbka.org.uk. Could those attending please bring along a contribution to the BBQ.

Woodwork Day

Primarily for our new members, the Woodwork Day on 5th April from 10:00am till 1:00pm introduces the assembly of hives and frames. Assistance from our experienced members on the day would be appreciated. If you wish to attend please contact myself at: chairman@mbbka.org.uk.

Programme of Events

Wednesday 19th March

Toxic Honey

Pam Hunter

7:30pm Church of the Good Shepherd

5th April

Woodwork Day

Organiser Sean Stephenson

4th-6th April

BBKA Spring Convention

Harper Adams

13th April

Apiary Opening

Organiser Adrew Smith

Wednesday 16th April

Honeybee Communication

John Hendrie

7:30pm Church of the Good Shepherd

26th April

Wendover Spring Market

Organiser Sean Stephenson

21st May

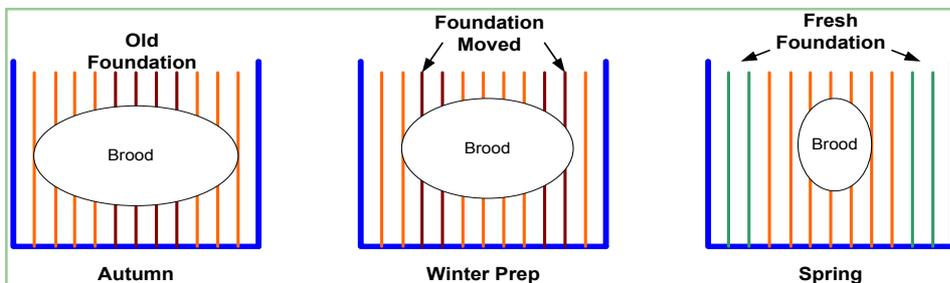
Summer Apiary Meeting

Association Apiary

Comb Change

With the advent of warmer weather and evidence of activity in our colonies, several beekeepers have spoken to me about when and how they should carry out their comb change and specifically about a Bailey comb change. In an ideal world all the frames in the brood box should be changed over a 2-3 year period, this not only helps in the management of disease it also promotes stronger colony expansion. A rule of thumb is that if the comb on a brood frame is a dark tarry brown it should not be there. There is very little wax to be recovered from these frames, personally I put the whole frame on the garden fire.

To a certain extent changing 3-4 frames in the brood box each season is the simplest and least disruptive approach, however the beekeeper needs to plan the process. It starts with the winter preparation through moving the frames that need to be changed to the outer edges of the nest. In the spring before the brood nest expands beyond 4 frames the desired frames are removed, the outer frames of drawn comb closed up and the space filled with fresh foundation. Care must be taken at all times not to split the brood with undrawn comb as that will have the same effect as introducing a dummy board and brood on one side of the frame will be abandoned.

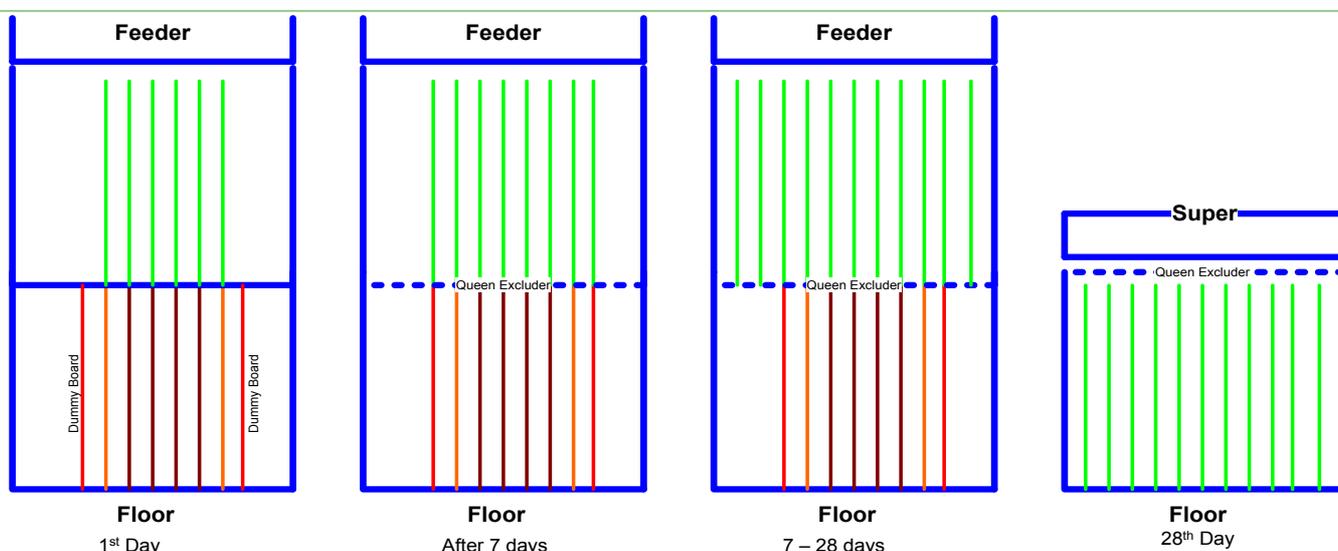


Bailey comb change is a completely different approach, it facilitates the complete change of brood frames in a single season. There are several pre-requisites; strong colony (at least 5 frames of bees and 4 frames of brood), warm weather (the bees need to generate heat to produce fresh comb) and a strong nectar/pollen flow as well being fed copious amounts of sugar syrup (1:1 mix).

In the Spring after confirming that the colony is strong enough and is queen right reduce the number of frames in the brood box to approximately 6 frames within two dummy boards, this is to encourage the bees to move upwards. Place a brood box with the same number of frames with fresh foundation above the original brood box. Crown board and rapid feeder of choice above.

After 7 days check that the bees have drawn out the comb in the top box and the queen is laying on the comb. Isolate the queen within the top box by placing a queen excluder between the two brood boxes. If no eggs check again after a few days. Allow 21 days to pass before removing the bottom brood box. During this time additional frames should be added to the top brood box.

Remember that if the colony is not ready for a Bailey in the Spring an Artificial Swarm later in the season can produce the same result of moving the colony onto fresh comb.



Good Luck

Wishing Liz Tice, Helen Palmer, Jonathan Matthews, Andrew Smith and Karen Smith, good luck with their module exams on 22nd March.