

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No.160 MAY 2011

NEXT EVENING MEETING THURSDAY 26 MAY 7.15 pm. RHU CHURCH HALL
“THE ASSOCIATION APIARY: ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES”
AND A FOLLOW UP REPORT ON THE SIMPLE QUEEN REARING DAY PLUS FEEDBACK AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS.

As a follow up to the simple queen rearing event last Saturday Neil Sandison, the apiary manager, will explain the purpose behind the apiary and what it offers members. Jim McCulloch will also review what happened on Saturday and any subsequent developments. This will also provide the opportunity for any points to be clarified by those attending and inform those who were not able to make the event. There will be a feed back/questions session from members on the season so far, after tea and coffee.

APIVAR

Apivar is an alternative treatment to Bayverol and Apistan and can be used where there is a concern that varroa mites have become resistant to treatments from these two products. Last year I put in Apistan strips in 3 hives for 3 weeks and then changed to Apivar for 3 weeks. There was no significant mite fall from the Apivar which suggested that the Apistan was still effective. There is a testing method for pyrethroid resistance on page 28 of the fera document “Managing Varroa” a copy of which has been made available to most members.

Apivar is not an approved treatment that can be bought over the counter. However Apivar may be prescribed by a vet. Last year I went through the process with my own vet who has agreed to supply Apivar to members of the Association through myself as Secretary. Last year a packet of ten strips of Apistan cost £32 compared with £19.41 (excluding postage) for a packet of ten Apistan strips from Thornes. The vet completed the paper work and obtained the Apivar from France at cost ie making no charge for her time.

Please note that I cannot provide any more details on costs other than those quoted above. The actual cost will depend on the size of the order, exchange rates and national administration charges. There will be a need to divide packets and I am required to calculate and record this exactly. If members wish to obtain Apivar, please confirm this by email or in writing stating the number of colonies to be treated and let me have these details not later than our meeting on the 26 May so that the order can be placed to ensure delivery by the beginning of August.

TESTING FOR VARROA

While on the subject of Varroa I remind members that by now they should have tested for Varroa. Fera recommends tests early in the spring, after the first spring crop, after the main summer crop, and in the early autumn (when treating).

THE INSECT POLLINATOR INITIATIVE

ALASTAIR CAMERON

Jim McCulloch and myself attended a meeting at the beginning of April which was held at Scotlandwell, Fife, to explain the Insect Pollinator Initiative and to seek the support of Scottish beekeepers in this attempt to save all our pollinators and, perhaps most importantly, the bumble and the honey bee.

£10 million in research funds have been provided by the government and by about 10 independent bodies such as the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. There is genuine concern loss of biodiversity and the risk of pollinators going extinct. At least 30% of our food depends on them, not just fruit and vegetables but also indirectly meat.

The three main causes appear to be

1. Habitat loss and fragmentation.
2. Insecticides.
3. Pests and pathogens.

A simple solution appears unlikely. For instance a ban in all insecticides would also result in a 30% drop in food production. So an attempt is being made to measure all the factors concerned and to try to pin point what is actually harming the bees, although there may be a combination of causes. Nine separate projects are being started in the UK:

a) Looking specifically at viruses and Varroa. b) The role of food available for bees, variety and amount. c) Habitat. d) Natural resistance to disease.

d) European Foul Brood. e) Bumble bee forage range. f) Which pollinators pollinate which crops? G) How are pollinators and habitat diversity linked? h) Comparing the effect on bees of urban, farmland and nature reserve habitats and finally i) the £2m project described below that is being supported by the Scottish Beekeepers Association.

Dr Chris Connelly, a scientist from Dundee will be growing bee brain cells in the laboratory and testing the effects of insecticides (including miticides), fungicides, and herbicides and combinations of these. It has already been show in other species that certain of these can cause damage to the memory cells in the brain. This could affect navigation and foraging, as the mechanism action of many of these compounds are designed to interfere with how brain cells work. He will also be carrying out a series of experiments in the lab and in the field to see how bees are affected by various treatments. About 100 hives throughout Scotland will be fitted with monitors linked to satellites that will record foraging activity, number of trips, length of foraging day etc. Temperature inside and outside the hives as well

as the sound waves emanating from the colonies will be recorded and already we know that swarming can be predicted! In fact it is hoped that these devices may become commercially available so that beekeepers can automatically receive an e-mail when their hives are about to swarm, or have been knocked over, or to indicate when robbing is occurring, or a queen is failing etc.

However, there is also a need for widespread information about which miticides are being used, how much honey is produced and how many colonies die out over winter. This is where we can help by registering our hives and agreeing to fill in a small card with the relevant details (once annually, I think, but will involve monitoring mite levels) for at least 3 years. This should tell us which regime of miticide treatment affects our bees the least and is most effective. This has the backing of the Scottish Beekeepers Association and John Durcacz is sending me full information which I will pass on very quickly as they want to get going this season. Alternatively you can contact Dr. Connolly via e-mail at c.n.connolly@dundee.ac.uk

There are lots of potential objections and suggestions that people can make about the study but this seems to be our best chance of achieving something for our bees and perhaps for Scottish beekeepers. We should give it our active support. Further details of the study can be found in an article by Dr. Connolly in the March issue of "The Scottish Beekeeper".

Mike Thornley writes: Sue and I volunteered to take part in the above research project and have had hive monitors fitted in 3 of our hives. They record activity within the hive as well as inside and outside temperatures and rainfall. We also have to keep written record of all the manipulations, amount of brood etc. for 3 years. We will keep the Newsletter posted and would like to hear from other members who are involved in the research in order to share information and experiences. Having wires and a monitor make manipulations that bit more interesting especially when carrying out swarm control procedures and the like!

GLENARN OPEN DAY

A big thanks to all of you who supported the Glenarn Open Day. The weather was fantastic and we had a good crowd of people. £2537 was raised for the Scotland's Garden Schemes charities with just over £1000 going to our nominated charity Bees for Development. I am very sorry if I did not get a chance to speak to you but I was run ragged by the parking.

Mike Thornley

Secretary