

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter
Hot off the 'press'

October

Issue No: 7/09

THIS ISSUE SPONSORED ANONYMOUSLY BY AN M.B.A. MEMBER – THANK YOU!

'M.B.A. HONEY SHOW'

The M.B.A. Honey Show, as part of the Forres Show, held on Saturday 5th September, was in danger of being a wash out after heavy and prolonged rain caused many rivers in Moray to burst their banks. With many roads flooded and closed it was pleasing to see that a number of stalwarts battled through the flood water to ensure that the Show was a success. Viv Hill, our new Show Secretary, was in attendance on Friday evening and all day Saturday ably assisted by retiring Show Secretary, Roger Allardes.



From left to right, Viv Hill, Tony Harris and Barbara Westie at the Honey Show

The standard was high and judge Roger Allardes had a tough job in picking the best entries. But he did just that and the winners are shown below,

Peter Stuart Trophy
Highest overall points in classes 1 - 14
Ed Bain - Keith

Steele Cup
The best entry in class 1 - 6
Tony Harris - Fochabers

Morayshire Cup
Best Novice Entry
*Mike Reid - Dunphail *

The 'Emslie Cup
The best frame for class 10
Ed Bain - Keith

Best overall Exhibit
Tony Harris - Fochabers

Many thanks to Show secretary, Viv Hill, Judge, Roger Allardes, and those exhibitors and visitors who helped to make this year's Honey Show another success.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE HONEYBEE by John Salt

I will often sit between a couple of my hives for hours on end, just watching the bees coming and going, bringing in pollen and nectar. Bees at the entrance asking those returning to show their ID's and all working with one aim, to ensure colony prosperity.

Yet I despair and sometimes feel like crying, but why? We place our bees in environments where we ask them to perform miraculous wonders. We're now finding some of the side effects, the consequences and the ramification of our actions.

The field next to my bees is 'dead'. The farmer has grow barley in it for the last 17 years continuously, where he dumps all kinds of chemicals (fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides) and the soil is dead, it has become nothing but a medium in which to grow the seed. The soil microbes are dead, the earth worms are dead and the last spraying of the season is 'roundup', this ensures the barley is also dead and dried out. All the bee food in the way of flowers within that field, are dead.

Did you know that in 1918 you could eat one apple and get your daily iron requirement? Now you have to eat 22 apples to get the same amount of iron. Why? Because we have killed all the soil microbes that release the minerals from the soil.



Honey bee collecting pollen



Apples devoid of iron



OSR with minimal nectar?



What future for the honey bee?

The field next to my bees is not alone. Almost everywhere you look is the same. We even spray high levels of sulphuric acid onto potatoes to kill the shaws, makes harvesting easier. Bye the bye, none of these chemicals gets into the food chain, we are told, but peel your fruit and veg before eating, comes back the message.

The majority of Oil Seed Rape (OSR) grown in Moray this year had the seed dressing Chinook (imidacloprid, a systemic insecticide). Any insect feeding on these plants is also dead. Now I learn that five out of the top six varieties of OSR have been hybridised to produce minimal nectar, the farmers and seed producers seem to have decided that better yields will be achieved if the honeybees do not steal part of the plant.

I spoke to a young lad from Poland, 'it's not like this at home', says he. 'There are flowers in and around the fields. There are insects and birds. Where have all yours gone?'

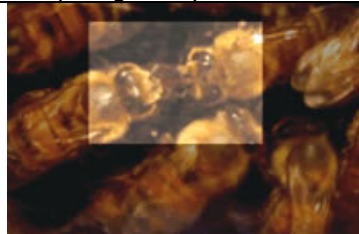
We're on this treadmill to squeeze every last kernel from every last acre to feed a growing demand and in the process, have absolutely no regard for the environment in which we and/or our bees live. Oh dear!

Lastly ... if you have just treated your bees for varroa, I would suggest you think about repeat treatment later in the year (November/December) when you will have nil to minimum brood and the bees have stopped flying.

Also you are required by law to fill out and keep for 5 years the 'Veterinary Medicine Administration record card' which can be downloaded from our web site at ... <http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk/downloads.htm>

TROPHALLAXIS

Food exchange (trophallaxis) is one of the most frequently observed behaviour patterns in a honeybee colony, taking place virtually 24 hours every day. Nectar or honey is passed from one bee to one or more receiving bees and this is the prime mechanism for the exchange of pheromones within the colony. If you spend a while watching your bees you will easily observe the food transfer taking place. It starts by one bee 'begging' or 'offering' food. A begging bee extends its proboscis and an offering bee folds back its proboscis and opens the mandibles exposing a droplet of food. During the food transfer continual antennal contact takes place.



Trophallaxis is a vital means of communication within the honeybee colony. As well as exchanging and distributing pheromones with their chemical messages, the actual food transferred provides information concerning the availability of food and water within the hive. The food transfer process is very rapid. A single transfer between two bees takes about half a minute. If these two bees feed two others, and then the four feed four others and so on, a series 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, c. 125, 250, 500, 1K, 2K, 4K, 8K, 16K, 32K, 64K is evolved. This means 15-16 transfers each lasting about half a minute which means the whole colony is aware of conditions in the hive within 7 or 8 minutes (usually earlier). This can be demonstrated by removing a queen from a colony. In about 5 minutes bees will be busily searching the entrance area for her. An hour or two later emergency queen cells are likely to be started demonstrating the effect of the shortage of queen substance.

Other information provided by food transfer include the type of nectar and pollen by taste and smell, water requirements for cooling; the house bees refuse to accept incoming nectar and the presence or absence of the queen. Older bees (foragers) are usually the ones offering food; this income stimulates queen feeding and increased brood rearing.

THE HONEY HARVEST

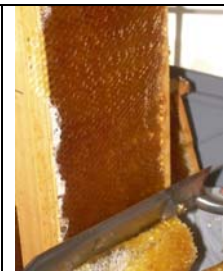
After a long hard summer looking after your bees, stopping them swarming and checking them every week, you may be fortunate enough to have a super or two of honey to extract. YUM, YUM!

The warmer honey is, the more easily it runs so after you have taken the honey from the bees it is best to extract it straight away. If you are unable to do this then the next best thing is to store the supers in a warm room until you can.

Your honey handling room (usually the kitchen) should be spotlessly clean with toilet and washing facilities available. Where honey is extracted for your own and family consumption, and not sold, the odd bee wing in it is not a disaster, whereas honey for sale, if unsatisfactory in any way can theoretically bring a visit from a Trading Standards officer to scrutinise every part of the business. The honey room layout should be planned so that there is a rational easy flow from one task to the next. Honey and wax will inevitably reach every corner of the room, floor, door handles, taps - and anything else touched by hand or foot. A good tip is to keep a bucket of warm soapy water handy for washing surfaces as you go along, plus another container with water for washing hands and utensils,



A frame ready for extraction



Uncapping with a warm knife



Then into the extractor



One way of filtering the honey



After ripening, ready for jarring



The finished article - Liquid Gold

Once you have everything ready you will first of all have to uncap the honey. Cappings are removed from comb in a number of ways. They can be cut off using a warmed knife, scratched off using a multi tined fork, the cappings can be melted open by using a hot air gun (this gently peels back the capping to expose the honey) or they can be taken off using a special uncapping machine.

This is how I do it. Lift each frame from the super and then cut through the wax cappings in a downward direction so that the hand holding the frame cannot be struck by the knife. I rest the frame on a nail which is hammered through a wooden batten which sits on top of a plastic washing up bowl.

Once the cappings are removed the frame of honeycomb containing up to three pounds of honey is placed in the extractor with others. They are arranged around the centre like spokes on a wheel. (Editor's note: Don't forget you can borrow a manual extractor from the Association - see back page)

Frames of honeycomb are valuable and we want to keep them undamaged. They can be put back on top of a hive either this season or the next and the bees will fill it again. Extracting properly keeps the frame in good condition.

When the extractor is full, if it is electric, the motor is switched on, increasing the speed slowly so as not to damage the comb. The same principle applies if it is a manual extractor as the handle is turned slowly at first gradually building up the speed until you can hear the honey hitting the sides of the extractor, before running down and gathering at the bottom of the tank.

When you have finished extracting the honey from the frames it needs to be run through the honey tap and filtered as it runs into your storage bucket (with a honey tap preferably fitted if jarring the next day). Special filters can be bought that fit on top of the bucket, coarse filtering at first and then fine filtering. Another good tip is to purchase stainless steel equipment if you can afford it. The plastic equipment just doesn't last and it is worth spending a few pounds more for quality that will last.

When you have run your honey through the filters and into the storage bucket you now need to leave it for about 24 hours in a warm room so that ripening can take place. This means that bubbles and any bits that managed to get through the filter can either rise to the top or fall to the bottom.

The next day you should have your clean jars ready and it is a simple operation to run the honey from the bucket into the jar. Put a lid on each jar and that's it. If you are going to be selling the honey you need proper legal labels but if for your own consumption, simply enjoy as it is.

Unlike running water, running honey makes no noise so double check that all honey taps etc are closed properly, otherwise, like my first attempt, you may end up with honey all over the kitchen floor!

The Vanishing of the Bees – A New Film

Imagine half a million adults skipping town and leaving their children behind. Picture an opened suitcase filled with bundles of cash at a bus stop and yet no robber wants to snatch it. The apiary science mystery known as "Colony Collapse Disorder" displays these very symptoms. Not only do the bees abandon their hive, but the queen and the brood as well. Unnatural! Unheard of? Even the predators that usually raid the hive for honey stay far away. At first, this occurrence sounds like an urban legend or an exaggerated tale. Except it's not!

The situation is both dire and all too real. Bees are disappearing all over the planet and no one knows why.

As part of the Co op Bee Plan a new film has been produced. This is said to be the very first time that a feature film centred on bees has ever been shown to the general public as a nationally distributed cinema film in the UK - so it is a unique opportunity.

'The Vanishing of the Bees' can be seen in Inverness (Eden Court) and Aberdeen (Belmont Picture House) ... for dates and times go to ...:
<http://vanishingbees.co.uk/screenings/>

NEXT MEETING DATE

Sunday 18th October, 1pm at Main Farm Apiary (directions to follow), Working party followed by 'Soup and Tatties' at Riach Cottage, Longmorn (Kev & Sheila West's place, 4.30 pm). Please bring spades, rakes, forks, strimmers, hammers, saws, nails, screws, etc. so we can finally prepare the site for the hives and bees. We have acquired a load of free fencing rails from Jones Sawmill, Mosstodloch (thanks to John Falconer for that) and we intend to erect a fence around the apiary and also a wind break. If you have any fence posts please bring them along and we are still looking out for a shed.

If you can't make the working party then please come along to the 'Soup and Tatties' afterwards.

MBA HONEY EXTRACTORS



If you don't have your own honey extractor you can borrow one of the Associations. The one on the left is a heather honey press and the one on the right is a manual radial extractor for liquid honey



You can borrow them for free (although you may wish to make a small donation to club funds) by contacting either:
Andrew Tassell (Keith area) Tel 01466 771243
or
John Salt (Rafford area) Tel 01309 673703

BOOKERS CASH & CARRY SUGAR OFFER

Booker Cash and Carry (there's one in Elgin) will issue a "trade" card to any bona fide beekeeper to enable them to benefit from the relatively low price of their sugar. They sell Silver Spoon sugar at about 60p a kilogramme and all that is required when registering is a letter from your local BKA secretary (contact Tony Harris if you wish to take advantage of this offer) or your Scottish Beekeepers membership card

There are some however, our own John Salt, for one, who warn against using sugar beet to feed your bees as British Sugar dress their beet seeds with the systemic insecticide imidacloprid. John said, *'This insecticide not only permeates into all parts of the plant but also leaches into the ground where it stays and has a half life up to two years. Any crop planted in the same field in subsequent years now absorbs this insecticide. British Sugar told me there was no problem as ... (quote) Sugar beet does not produce a flower and does therefore not attract honeybees. There is no residue of imidacloprid in the refined sugar and output is carefully monitored. (/quote) I subsequently asked them how they managed to produced seed for the following year ? I am still waiting on this one'*.

It is a controversial subject though and others disagree arguing that those who buy the alternative cane sugar from other producers should be aware that all of this is imported, the main producing area's being the Carribean, Central and South America, Africa and Asia. The Question you have to ask yourselves is how regulated are the applications or usage of treatments in these far away sugar producing places?

BEE BOOK WEBSITE

Northern Bee Books have a wide and varied selection of books on beekeeping many of which cannot be purchased elsewhere. They now have a new site where you can view and purchase the books and the address is shown below www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 19th November, 7pm - Film Night
Thursday 21st January, 7pm - A.G.M.
Both taking place at Elgin Library

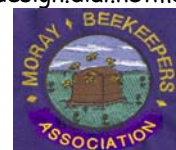
BEE SUITS/GLOVES /SMOCKS

Quality bee suits and clothing from BB Wear, for MBA members who receive a 15% discount (please order via the MBA Secretary)

BB1 Full suit £78.63, BB3 Smock £58.61
BB10 Washable leather Gloves £17.00

www.bbwear.co.uk/

Baseball caps, T-shirts, sweat shirts and fleeces are available with the Moray Beekeepers logo embroidered on from:
EMBROIDERY DESIGNS, Easter Lochend, Balcroy, Nairn IV12 5NY
Tel:01667 404635
E-mail: user@embroiderydesign.dial.netmedia.co.uk



The Association website is packed with lots of useful information on beekeeping and bees and has links to national associations, suppliers and other bee sites around the world. It is well worth a visit - the address is shown below.

www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk

Items for inclusion in the Newsletter to be sent to the Editor: Tony Harris, Cowiemuir, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7PS or you can e mail: tonyharris316@btinternet.com

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS!