



Around and about the region

Autumn 2006

I cannot avoid, once again, dwelling on the topic of crop as this season has seen the most dramatic extremes that I can remember. Whilst there are many beekeepers, particularly those in the southern coastal area who are reporting their worst year ever, beekeepers further north in the region have reported bumper crops this year. One, in Oxfordshire has reported 800lbs of honey brought in by just 2 colonies!

A cool spring led to a very late start to the season and, in the main, the crop was brought in during June and July. One beekeeper, identifying that the crop in the coastal area had virtually finished by the middle of July, moved colonies about 80 miles north and succeeded in gaining two full supers per colony by the end of August - perhaps this gives rise to a new definition of migratory beekeeping.

As I write this (October 17th) there is still a very strong ivy flow in this area - a small cast that has arrived in and taken residence in my bee shed has already brought in nearly a super of honey even though it is headed by an unmated virgin queen.

Ian Homer

Current Topics

Varroa Control

Reading the newsletters of various associations, I notice a common theme of beekeepers discovering at the end of the season that their mite populations are larger than they thought or expected. In some cases this follows careful monitoring, either through observation of natural mortality or through drone brood uncapping. Several contributors to these newsletters have also identified that their colonies are now hosts to pyrethroid tolerant (or resistant) mites and are now seeking to adopt alternative control measures.

A number of associations have played host to Integrated Varroa Management workshops during the last three years and many beekeepers are practising the techniques discussed at them. Some areas are still to succumb to resistance whilst others have suffered it for several years. Whether resistance has only just hit your area, or whether you are apparently still free from it, a further workshop may be useful to review the techniques. These workshops can be beneficial to any beekeeper, new or old, so **Please contact me if you would like a workshop for your association.**

Beebase On line

If you are one of the many beekeepers who has been accessing beebase on line (beebase.csl.gov.uk) then apologies if some of the data has looked a little confusing. I am assured that these teething problems have now been resolved and that a visit to the site will now provide satisfactory access to the Bee Health Inspection statistics and a whole host of other information

EFB Research

The Bee Health Inspection team has collected hundreds of adult bee and larva samples during the course of this season. These have all been sent to the lab at Sand Hutton and are currently being analysed, using Taqman molecular analysis, to identify where *Melissococcus plutonius* is present. Initial indications are that some of the samples taken from colonies which were not exhibiting clinical signs of EFB have, under analysis, proved to be carrying it. Sampling will continue at the beginning of next season to allow a more complete analysis of the situation.

Disease Report

Unfortunately, the disease picture in Southern Region during 2006 was the worst we have seen for several years with a three-year high in the number of cases of EFB in Dorset, a four-year high in Berks, a five-year high in Bucks, a six-year high in Wiltshire and a nine-year high in Oxford county. Only in Hampshire does the trend appear to be going in the right direction - downwards.

It is almost impossible to identify clearly why the numbers of cases of disease are so erratic - it is probably not an indication of the incidence of disease but more a measure of our success in finding it. There is little doubt that there are more cases than we find so this would suggest an

even greater need for vigilance by us all when we are routinely inspecting our bees.

In most cases, the disease was identified by a member of the team as a result of a routine inspection, but in several cases identification was as a result of vigilance and careful work by the beekeeper themselves. As the resources of the inspection team become ever more stretched, such vigilance by beekeepers will be of increasing importance. A member of the team will always respond **if you have reason to believe that your bees are suffering from a notifiable condition - please don't hesitate to contact us** as the sooner the diagnosis, the less risk there is of the disease spreading to other colonies.

European Foul Brood											American Foul Brood
	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	2006
Berkshire	8	5	0	6	19	30	31	17	25	6	0
Buckinghamshire	4	2	1	3	1	11	31	29	11	6	0
Dorset	44	25	38	58	70	35	34	18	20	32	0
Hampshire	26	31	44	65	53	83	98	41	56	48	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	4	0
Oxfordshire	28	11	10	5	12	21	3	9	13	31	4
Wiltshire	8	0	3	3	3	1	30	38	0	8	0
Regional Total	118	74	96	141	158	181	230	152	125	135	4
England Total	547	658	666	616	632	761	973	836	826	713	29

Small Hive Beetle

One reason for the delay in publishing this issue of Around and About the Region was the reports, several weeks ago, that Small Hive Beetle had been discovered in Portugal and that, whilst it had yet to be confirmed, it was thought highly likely that a positive confirmation would only be a matter of time.

I am very pleased to be able to report that, though the creature has been confirmed as a beetle, it is not the Small Hive Beetle. It has been confirmed that it is a member of the coleoptera family (of which the SHB is a member) but then so are several hundred thousand other creatures. The initial reports also indicated that there was some damage to the bees themselves consistent with that which has been experienced in areas where SHB has been found. Subsequent reports indicate that there were some dead pupae but the cause has not been discussed.

So, we breathe freely for a little while longer, safe in the knowledge that SHB has yet to be identified in Europe. There is much conjecture as to how (not if) it will reach our shores; some feel that it will get here in a consignment of fruit, others feel it will arrive in a swarm on board a container ship, whilst yet others feel that it will probably be brought in by a beekeeper whilst bringing bees into the country following a holiday in an affected country. However it arrives, we are ready with procedures to find and identify it and to advise beekeepers on appropriate actions from the first identification. With this in mind, somewhere in the Region we will be carrying out a contingency exercise during 2007. This will enable us to test our readiness to respond should SHB be found in the near future.

Extension Work

Well, we have survived yet another year and the team have managed, during the last year, to carry out over 30 talks to associations, more than 2 dozen apiary tours, safaris and apiary meetings as well as carry out a further 6 Disease Recognitions training days. And it looks as though we will be able to continue to carry out this work, at least until the scheduled budget readjustments in 2008.

We offer this service in order to work with, and support, beekeepers in their quest to improve

bee husbandry and disease recognition skills. Perhaps not all associations realise that this service is offered at no cost whatsoever to associations.

In addition to the practical apiary sessions, the team can offer a wide range of talks on various aspects of bee husbandry - there will usually be a talk to meet most needs. Please contact me if you feel that we can make a contribution to your associations' programme.

C&A (changes and alterations)

As many of you will know, Charles Fryett, who covered Wiltshire and Berkshire, left us in the summer to be replaced, towards the end of the season, by Robert Carpenter-Turner. Robert is an experienced beekeeper who has recently moved to the Pewsey area of Wiltshire and will be covering Wiltshire and Berkshire in 2007.

To those of you in the more northerly parts of the region, Maurice Roll will be a familiar name as Maurice has been inspecting in Northamptonshire and adjacent counties for the last 11 seasons. Unfortunately, Maurice feels that the time has now come for him to (professionally) hang up his beesuits and lay down his hive tools, in order that he can spend more time at home with his own bees.

Maurice will be greatly missed by all who know him as his great sense of humour and calm efficiency have always allowed him to keep things in perspective. He will be much missed by his colleagues and I am sure that beekeepers wherever Maurice has inspected will want to join me in thanking him and wishing him a long and happy retirement. Fortunately, it appears that the budget will allow us to fill Maurice's post so **if you, or anyone you know, would be interested in working in the Bee Health inspection team in Southern Region**, and especially if you live in the Bucks area or adjacent counties, **please contact me**.

It is likely, subject to where any new recruits live that there will be some changes to inspectors territory's next year - hopefully these will be fully detailed in the next issue of Around and About the Region (scheduled for issue in February)

Associations Day 2007

Having had to miss holding an Associations Day in 2006, I have been asked a number of times whether there will be one in 2007. The answer is YES and currently it is being planned for **Sunday February 25th 2007**.

Associations Day is your opportunity to meet and talk with National Bee Unit staff and to hear first hand about our research and our priorities and procedures.

It will be held, as before, at Stockcross Village Hall, about 2 miles west of Newbury. And will run from 1030 to around 4pm. Tea and coffee will be provided but delegates are asked to bring their own packed lunch. The programme is not yet complete but it will include more information on surveying for exotic pests, a talk on some unusual

aspects of beekeeping from a commercial beekeeper and discussion on actions to minimise the risk of disease. Speakers will include Richard Ball, The NBU's National Bee Inspector and Robin Dean, a commercial beekeeper from Hampshire.

Once again, Associations Day will be open to all beekeepers from within the Region who may wish to attend and, as the next issue of Around and About the Region will only be issued around that time, I will write to each Association Secretary with further details in the new year. It is always useful, for catering purposes, to know how many delegates will be attending so, if you are interested in attending please either contact your association secretary or contact me directly using the form below.

I would like to attend Southern Region Associations Day on Sunday February 25th 2007

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

e-mail address (if applicable): _____

No of delegates:

*As this issue is rather later than usual, it is timely to wish all
beekeepers in Southern Region a happy and peaceful Christmas and a
prosperous new year*

Ian R. Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,
5, Maltes Cottages, Litton Cheney, DORCHESTER, Dorset, DT2 9AE
Tel/Fax: 01308 482 161 Mobile 07778 846 335 e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk
www.nationalbeeunit.com