

Healthy Bees Plan

Issue 11 - July 2012

Quarterly Newsletter for all those interested in honey bee health

Remember to Feed Your Bees

During spells of poor weather during the summer, like those we've experienced this year, it is important to check for stores in the colony and if in any doubt feed your bees with thin syrup, fondant or frames of honey stores if available.

Particularly at risk:

- Bee colonies where supers of honey have been removed earlier in the season
- Splits/ artificial swarms and nucleus colonies made up this year
- Newly collected and hived swarms which have not been fed following 24 hours after hiving
- Populous stocks of bees which haven't swarmed this year and weather has precluded them gathering sufficient food

What should beekeepers do?

- Firstly, check all colonies feed levels by 'hefting' the hive – lifting the hive from below the floor sufficiently to see how much it weighs. Where the hive is light liquid feed should be applied directly above the bees. If there are empty supers above the brood box with few or no bees in them, then remove to feed, otherwise the empty super may act as a barrier to the bees getting the food quickly
- Feed can be sugar and water mixed at 2:1 ratio or one of the proprietary ready mixed syrups available from beekeeping equipment suppliers
- Fondant can be used in an emergency if nothing else is available, but liquid feed will be more appropriate at this time of season
- Large starving colonies of bees can take 1 gallon (approx 5 litres) of syrup very quickly. For smaller colonies half this amount may be sufficient. After feeding heft hives again and check weight, if in doubt feed some more in a few days time.



Bee Farmers Association

Skills for Life

The Bee Farmers' Association (BFA) with support from Fera, is working to launch an apprenticeship scheme to attract youngsters into the industry. "Thanks to financial help from the Healthy Bees Plan project we have been able to draw up a proposal for a three-year course," says Margaret Ginman, General Secretary of the BFA. "The project should bring in new blood, improve economic returns in the sector and help raise awareness of bee health."

Plans are now ready to submit to LANTRA, the organisation which designs the scheme and the National Apprenticeship Scheme who will oversee its delivery.

The BFA hopes to be able to offer six apprenticeships in the first year. They are planning a sponsorship event in London later in the year to launch the project and raise support for it from the business community.

RDPE

Defra's Rural Development Delivery Team continue to work with the BFA on the strategic direction of this sector including the BFA's evolving Strategic Business Plan. The BFA's ideas on larger strategic projects could come forward under the Rural Economy Grant (REG) second round (the first round closed on 30th April) although date and details to be confirmed. The REG provides grants to enable a significant 'game-changing' transformational performance in farm, forestry, tourism, agri-food businesses and micro businesses in rural areas in England.

www.rdpnetwork.defra.gov.uk

Medicines for Bees

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) continues to implement its action plan to increase the availability of authorised medicines for honey bees and also to ensure their correct use, which is paramount for food safety. Residues in honey, due to improper use of medicines, could undermine its image as a healthy natural product. Further details are given in the VMD Action Plan. Optimal use of available medicines by beekeepers is also important to sustain their effectiveness in treating pests and diseases.

Working with Others to Raise Awareness about BeeBase and the Importance of Registration

If anyone reading this Newsletter would like to help encourage beekeepers to register on BeeBase, particularly given the benefits to beekeepers and for control of honey bee diseases, the Healthy Bees Project Manager would be delighted to hear from you, contact details below. This may simply involve including the BeeBase address (www.nationalbeeunit.com) on your own websites or publicity material.

2,810 additional beekeepers registered on BeeBase so far during 2012 leading to 27,514 registered in total as of July 2012. If you haven't already registered please do so and join your fellow beekeepers by visiting www.nationalbeeunit.com or by phoning the NBU on 01904 462510. By letting us know that you keep bees and the location of your hives, you will be helping in our ongoing battle against disease and our efforts to sustain honey bee populations.

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City & Guilds 7303 'Train the Trainer' Course

The Healthy Bees Plan continues to offer the City & Guilds 7303 training course with funding in place until end of 2014/15 financial year. If you would like to attend a course please contact beehealthinfo@fera.gsi.gov.uk in the first instance and we'll send you a form and letter explaining what you are able to claim etc. applications should be endorsed by a member of your local association ie. Secretary or Chair or your local Bee Inspector.

BeeBase Co-ordinator

Following a recruitment exercise Kate Parker of the National Bee Unit (NBU) has been appointed as the NBU Office Manager and will also be acting as BeeBase Co-ordinator which is part-funded by the Healthy Bees Plan.

Having a dedicated person to manage and coordinate the development of BeeBase is supported by the Project Management Board who want BeeBase to be more user friendly for beekeepers and their main source of advice of good husbandry, including preventing and managing pest and disease risks. We will provide updates of progress with developments of the BeeBase co-ordination elements of Kate's role in future newsletters.

beehealthinfo@fera.gsi.gov.uk