

# Apiary and Hive Hygiene

Every beekeeper should be aware of how to handle and inspect colonies so that any risk of disease transmission is minimised. The National Bee Unit have prepared the following information to help us understand and put into practice good apiary and hive hygiene. Help yourselves and your bees by using hygienic techniques.

While many diseases can be introduced to your hives by bees themselves, good apiary and hive hygiene can reduce the impact of disease and will help to minimise the risk of disease transmission between colonies and apiaries. Hygienic practices should extend to cover hives and frames, equipment and clothing as well as the apiary itself.

## Equipment

- ❑ Equipment such as hive tools, uncapping forks, forceps, etc. can be very effectively cleaned in a solution of washing soda dissolved at the ratio of 1kg of washing soda to five litres of water. Avoid splashing this solution on hands or into eyes as it is an irritant.
- ❑ Hive tools can either be soaked in the washing soda solution or can be cleaned using a scouring pad or stainless steel scourer.
- ❑ Smokers should be regularly cleaned paying particular attention to the bellows. Any accumulation of wax or propolis should be scraped off and then the residue cleaned using the washing soda solution and a scourer.
- ❑ Brood boxes can be cleaned by scrapping away any accumulations of wax and propolis and then 'flaming' them with a gas torch to minimise the risk of bacteria persisting. This is particularly necessary after a diagnosis of foul brood disease. Other measures will be necessary where brood boxes are not wooden.

## Clothing

- ❑ Try to ensure that all clothing and equipment is clean and free from accumulations of wax, propolis etc. before commencing any inspection of a colony.
- ❑ Bee suits should be regularly washed in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations; a half cup of washing soda added at the start of the wash will help to remove propolis, wax and honey staining; it may be advisable to reduce the amount of washing additive when adding washing soda.
- ❑ Gloves should always be clean at the start of an inspection as any odours from previous stings etc can cause further stinging actions. Disposable gloves are very useful. If you feel that you need the security of traditional thick leather gloves, wear disposables over the thick gloves.
- ❑ Always dispose of disposable gloves in a secure receptacle where bees cannot get at them.
- ❑ If boots become covered in honey, they should be regularly cleaned; again a washing soda solution will be an effective cleansing agent.

## In the Apiary

- ❑ It is useful to have a small sealable container into which brace, burr and other scrap wax can be placed and taken away from site. Old comb discarded in the apiary can set up robbing and

can be a vector for disease transmission.

- ❑ Avoid leaving old combs and other equipment lying about in the apiary.



*RBI Ian Molyneux demonstrating the hygienic examination of a colony at an association practical event. Ian is wearing gloves and can be seen using a variety of equipment boxes, a wash pot, a debris bucket etc. as part of his inspection.*

## In the Hive

- ❑ Regular comb changing can lead to improvement in the health of your bees. Brood combs should be replaced with new foundation at least every three years.
- ❑ When inspecting colonies, avoid crushing or squashing bees; the use of dummy boards can assist in this respect.
- ❑ Avoid using 'inspection or cover cloths' as these can harbour disease which could be spread from one colony to another.
- ❑ Try not to swap frames around in the hive (or between hives); replace them in their original sequence and orientation.

**National Bee Unit,  
Best Practice Guideline**

# compak

Suppliers of Glass and Plastic Containers & Closures

## The Home of our "Quality British made Honey Jar"

Our standard 1lb Honey Jars are made to our own specifications in quality glass.

We specialise in supplying many associations including members of BBKA & Bee Farmers Association. Our prices for large and small orders are very competitive and we can arrange deliveries nationwide.

For further details on our Honey Jars or any of our other products, please get in touch with our Sales Team, we'll be pleased to hear from you.



Compak (South) Ltd  
2, Ashmead Road  
Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1SX

Tel : 01179 863 550

Fax : 01179 869 162

Email : sales@compaksouth.co.uk

Website : www.compaksouth.com