

Disease Recognition Comb Workshops Wales 2016

Last year, National Bee Unit (NBU) Inspectors saw an increase in cases of European Foulbrood (EFB) in Wales. This should serve as a wake up call for all beekeepers to be vigilant and, just as livestock keepers on farms, be prepared to monitor their stock for disease and recognise when things are not right in their hives.

We have enjoyed relatively low levels of EFB in the past as compared with England. American Foulbrood (AFB) levels have also come down in recent times, rumbling on now at just a few cases a year. Last year's rise is a prompt to us resisting the temptation to be complacent. None of us want disease levels to rise any further, risking our bees and honey production in the process.

Forthcoming Disease Workshops

The NBU's Disease Recognition Comb Workshops in Wales are designed to help beekeepers know what to look for. It enables them to know when all is well and, conversely, when there are problems in the colony. 90 percent of disease is found by inspectors – in part because we target our inspections to areas of disease and follow the movement of infected stock. It may also be a case of beekeepers not looking and, therefore, not finding themselves. These workshops aim boost knowledge, skills and confidence.

The workshops comprise a presentation outlining the disease situation in Wales, what you can expect to see in healthy brood, common brood disorders and the visual identifiers of notifiable disease (AFB and EFB). We are licensed to display diseased combs and, in conjunction with local beekeeping associations, are able to make these available to be viewed by all –hopefully, this will be the only time that most beekeepers will actually see these diseases in practice. The session rounds off by considering how you can minimise the risk of your bees becoming infected.

Disease Recognition Comb Workshops Wales 2016 Saturdays 2 – 5pm	
June 4th	Meirionydd BKA & Lleyrn & Eifionydd BKA, Llanelltyd Hall, Dolgellau LL40 2SU
June 18th	Lampeter BKA, Cellan Millenium Hall SA48 8HU
July 2nd	East Carmarthenshire BKA, Community Hall, Llangadog SA19 9BR
July 9th	West Glamorgan BKA Chapel Hall, Old Swansea Road, Penllergaer SA4 9AQ

Disease recognition reminder

The most common means by which foulbrood, whether AFB or EFB, is transmitted from infected colony to healthy colony is the beekeeper. This can occur when frames of honey

or brood are moved between colonies or if other contaminated equipment is used. Make sure you follow basic biosecurity principles, especially if you have more than one apiary site. (You'll find more practical advice on this in Welsh Beekeeper Magazine Spring 2014 – Biosecurity, An Introduction to Barrier Management)

Adult bees, robbing out dead or dying infected colonies, are also an important mode of transmission. This is one of the reasons for cleaning out and disinfecting any hives in which a colony has died out. Swarms from infected colonies may also be carrying infection as they move into their new hive. This is why it is important to hive swarms on foundation and not feed them for 3 days, while they purge themselves of any potentially infected honey. They should continue to be treated in isolation, monitored for at least two brood cycles and only incorporated into the main apiary when you are confident that they are disease free.

Specific disease inspections should be done at least twice a year, shaking the bees off the brood frames when withdrawing them from the brood box, in order to carefully examine the brood cells. If you think you have a notifiable disease you should contact your local bee inspector, details on Beebase.

A quick reminder of the signs that an EFB infected colony may show:

- Erratic or uneven brood pattern;
- Twisted larvae with creamy-white guts visible through the body wall;
- Melted down, yellowy white larvae;
- Loosely-attached brown scales.

To see the signs in the flesh, come to a workshop! The details are above and, to attend, you should contact the host Beekeeping Association via the WBKA website or your RBI. The workshops are open to all beekeepers, whether members of the local association or not. We look forward to seeing you there.

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