



Bath BEEkeepers NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3
MARCH 2024



HELLO AND WELCOME



I can't believe that we're in March already and everything is starting to grow and we are seeing flowers poking their heads up out of the ground. The bees are flying and we must all start to think about how our hives are starting to hopefully build up after the winter. We need to check our equipment and hives as before we know it the swarming season will be upon us, so its best to be prepared .

CLUB NEWS-SWARMING

Swarm prevention is probably one of the most demanding skills of the beekeeper and most of us feel we could do better.



Swarming is a natural process which can take place any time between April to September, but most commonly between May, June and July on a warm, sunny day between 1100 – 1600hrs. It is the colony reproducing by the old queen leaving the hive with some of the bees, finding somewhere to hang in a cluster until the

scout bees decide on their new home.

When a swarm happens, it means the loss of half of the beekeepers work force, a loss of the honey the bees carry away with them, plus a break in brood production while the colony waits for a new queen to emerge, mate and start laying. This will usually affect the honey production from the hive and may result in a reduced amount or no honey at all. So, swarm management is most definitely in the interest of the beekeeper to manage.

What can be done to manage this natural occurrence?

There is no single reason, but

a number of conditions which leads the bees to swarm.

First, it's a natural impulse but there are other factors involved and probably the most important is congestion in the brood area. When the hive becomes overcrowded it makes it difficult for the bees to carry out their respective duties. Plus, young bees are secreting wax but there is no space to build new comb. Along with this the queen's egg laying capacity is increasing but the space in which she can lay eggs has become restricted with the influx of nectar and pollen. This increase of egg laying gives an imbalance on the ratio of young, house bees to older foragers which adds to the overall con-

gestion in the hive providing ideal conditions for the swarming impulse.

Other contributing factors can be the age of the queen and if she is still producing enough pheromones as this diminishes with age. The pheromones are taken by the workers during grooming and feeding the queen and passed around the hive and discourages the bees to build queen cells.

So two major areas to consider regarding swarming are; insufficient queen pheromones and congestion. See [BBKA Swarming](#)



ACTIVITIES-SWARMING ACTION



Make sure you know the age of your queen and that she is still laying well

(usually up to 3 years old), otherwise replace.

Congestion requires regular inspections of your hives and good records to look back on. The swarming impulse usually starts early in the season and preventative measures must be taken otherwise its hard to stop once started. During inspections if

you have lots of bees and space is required, replace the two outer frames in the brood box with new foundation, this gives the bees some comb to build and the queen more space to lay.

Overcrowding can also be prevented by adding a queen excluder and adding a honey super box. While this doesn't give the queen more laying room the nectar can be placed in the super rather than stored in the brood chamber. Also, bees will be

maintaining the super helping to reduce congestion in the brood area, you can add more supers as the colony continues to build. However, with all this the swarming impulse may still be there and sometimes nature will win out so weekly – 9 day inspections should be carried out during the swarming season to watch for the building of queen cells. If queen cells are found the prevention has failed and you will need to take [swarm control action](#) and [split the hive](#).

Dates for Diaries:

Now	Renew Membership
23 March	Swarm Talk @ TA 2pm
6 April	Avon Spring Study Day
7 April	Bees Abroad talk @ TA (2pm)
April 9; 16;25&30	Basic (Improvers) course.
12-14	BBKA Spring Conven-
May 24	Basic (Improvers) Practical TBC
15 June	BBKA Queen Rearing

CLUB ACTIVITIES - SWARM COLLECTORS

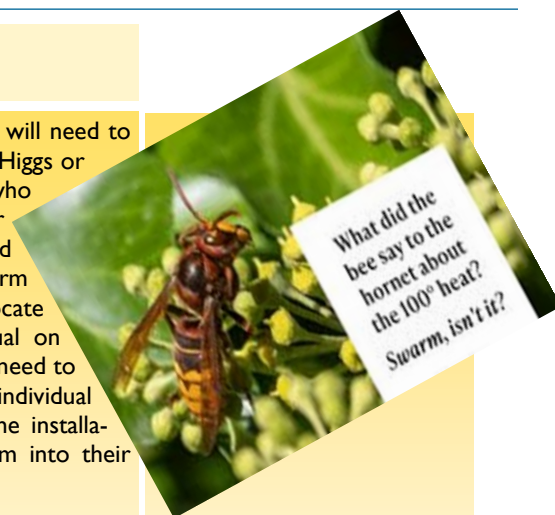
The BBKA will shortly be collating its Swarm Collectors' List for the coming season. So if you believe you have the necessary experience, are able to take swarms within a 10 mile radius of your postcode and are prepared to remain on the list for the season please speak to your Division's committee members. Your Local Bee Club must endorse your application, and will provide a list of its approved members to the BBKA. Your details will then be entered onto the Association's website for the swarm collecting season. www.bbka.org.uk/find-a-local-swarm-collector

Please note that you may not accept payment for this service other than out-of-pocket expenses, or sell on the swarm to a third party. To do so will invalidate your BBKA insurance.

A copy of the [BBKA Swarm Collectors' Protocol](#) is available to download from the [BBKA website](#):



For our club you will need to liaise with Carey Higgs or Monica Davis who endorse your application and manage the swarm list and will allocate the next individual on our list. You will need to liaise with that individual and assist with the installation of the swarm into their new home.



Don't forget at the TA on the 23rd March @ 14:00 there is a Swarm Talk for new beekeepers or those wishing to refresh their knowledge.

CLUB ACTIVITIES - BATH BKA BASICS COURSE

How will you prepare for the new beekeeping season?



Places are currently available on the Bath BKA Basics Course, running in April.

It's a great short course to improve your skills and develop your knowledge in beekeeping.

This course is suitable for those who have kept bees for over a year and already have a good range of practical experience to draw upon and for those who would like to study and refresh their knowledge. Beekeepers love to talk about beekeeping with their peers and to learn how best to look after their bees.

Course completion is usually followed by a practical/oral assessment, taken early Summer, which you will be well prepared for. Bath BKA

will refund the assessment fee to members who pass.

Venue: Teaching Apiary, Bath Beekeepers Association, Park Farm, Newton St Loe, BA2 9JA

Further information, dates and the BBKA syllabus can be found by clicking on this link: <https://bathbeekeepers.com/courses-education-basic-course/>

Places on this course are limited. If interested please get in touch to book your place and/or if further information is required, by 1st April.



THIS MONTH IN THE HIVE—MARCH 2024



In March you need to pay close attention to the weight of the hive. If weather is warming up the colony should be growing quickly and food consumption will increase considerably, you may need to replace fondant block if consumed, there is still a chance of starvation. Ensure your floor tray is sterilised or replaced.

During March:

- ◆ Observe hive entrance

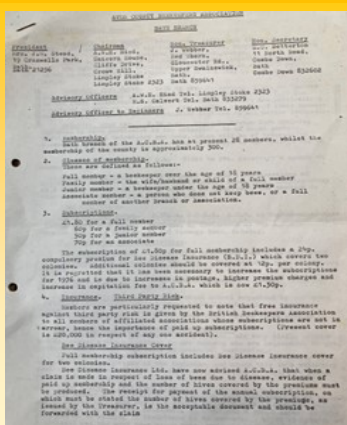
for flying bees bringing in pollen

- ◆ If the weather turns cold in March colonies can die of starvation.
- ◆ Weigh hives, feed if necessary (Read: [Feeding Bees](#))
- ◆ If weather has warmed up and the bees are no longer in a cosy cluster remove mouseguards as they can knock off the pollen when the foraging bees return to

the hive.

- ◆ Insulation can be left on the top of the hive as this can help the hive from getting over hot during the summer and can save the bees lots of effort trying to cool the hive.
- ◆ Start new [Hive Record Cards](#) for the coming season.

A 1976 BLAST FROM THE PAST



A long standing member David Robertson died over a year ago and his wife found a copy of a Bath BKA Newsletter from 1976.

So no internet then, newsletters were typed and posted out to the members .

Times have certainly changed financially too with membership being £1.80 and 15p to borrow the branch honey extractor. 1976 was also the time before we had a branch teaching apiary.

The meetings held then were rotated around the member's apiaries (with a certain amount of competition as to who provided the best tea and cake!). For those interested in reading I've attached copies of the actual newsletter to the email sending this out.

QUESTION & ANSWERS



Q: Can you make your own fondant?

A: Yes you can make your own fondant. Steve Fletcher came up with this recipe.

To make 2 blocks you'll need:

- ♦ **1 kilo of granulated white sugar** (don't use brown sugar as it gives the bees diahorra)
- ♦ **200ml water**
- ♦ **1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar** (found in bakery section of all supermarkets)
- ♦ **2 x plastic containers** (margarine/takeaway types)
- ♦ Stir and bring to just simmering at which point it becomes more or less clear

Method:

- ♦ Put all ingredient's in a large saucepan(preferably with pouring lip)
- ♦ Remove from heat and continue to stir
- ♦ As liquid cools it thickens and turns white
- ♦ Pour into containers once white but before it thickens too much
- ♦ If you line your containers with either tin foil or cling film before it will make lifting out container easier)

Note: The addition of the cream of tartar inverts the sugar and does not require the bees to invert therefore allowing the bees to use straight away .

Don't forget you can always obtain from [Pete Davis](#)



RECIPE OF THE MONTH -RASPBERRY & HONEY FLAPJACKS

Ingredients:

150g Butter
150g soft brown sugar
4 tbsp Honey
300g Porridge Oats
100g Frozen Raspberries



Method:

Step 1

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6

Line a 20 x 20cm baking tin with parchment.

Melt the butter, sugar, honey and a pinch of salt in a pan.

Once the mixture is bubbling and combined, stir in the oats.

Step 2

Tip the oat mixture into the lined baking tin and press down with the back of a spoon.

Scatter over the raspberries, then lightly press them into the oat mixture.

Bake for 25-30 mins until golden brown.

Leave to cool, then cut into 9 or 12 flapjacks.

If you have any stories, photos, info that you'd like included please email to:

alison.hillman@btinternet.com

By 20th each month