

Beekeeping notes for April ~ written by Pat Allen

In most years we should be getting into regular inspections by April, but as I write these notes in March I have yet to open the hives for a proper inspection because the weather is so cold. The Apiguard I put on in March though has yielded a lot of dead varroa on the floor inserts. So if you did not do this, I suggest you check your varroa population. If the varroa are numerous now, they will be overcoming your colonies by June.

Despite the cold weather:

- Have your Swarm Control Plan ready, and the necessary equipment.
- Super ahead of the bees' needs.
- Get your queens clipped this month (ask for help if you cannot do it yourself).
- Watch for swarm preparations (drones first, then queen cups, eggs in queen cups, larvae in queen cells).
- **As soon as** you see larvae and royal jelly in queen cells, implement your Swarm Control Plan.

If a colony is not building up, get a Nosema check done. Be prepared to do a complete comb change if the test proves positive (ask for help if needed).

Romford Division Annual Conference, 2016

Whatever else you have planned, this date **MUST** be in your diary.

5th NOVEMBER-Conference, at Barking and Dagenham College-9:30 to 4:30.

Guest Speakers are:

Celia Davis NDB...Beekeeper versus Bee

Gerry Collins NDB... What's going on in my hive

Robert Smith NDB...The importance of bee space

Don't miss out, set this date aside for our conference.

Helen Kingsford Conference Chair

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April 2016

Romford Division

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Committee Meeting: Monday 9th May, 7.30, Jim's Place, Collier Row

May meeting: Thursday May 5th, 8pm

Topic: The Role of BBKA Link Trustee

Speaker: - Howard Pool

Saturday 21st May, 1.30-4.00pm Beginners hive-building. Venue: The Barn, Thames Chase, Upminster

A BIG THANK YOU

Liz & I would like to thank all the members who took the time to make cakes & sandwiches for the AGM it was a grand spread & impressed all the other divisions with most of them taking a goodie bag home with them.

So thank you all once again

Liz & Jim

Where should I get bees?

Be very careful where you source colonies of bees. Below are some reliable sources.

David Rudland: 381 Godstone Road, Whyteleafe, Surrey CR3 0BF 07798 915480

Terry Thrussell: Westcott, Bromley Lane, Wellpond Green, Standon SG11 1NW 01279 842367

Douglas Pickford: 01371 870609



Granulated or naturally set honey

A question often asked by members prior to our show is 'What is the difference between soft set and granulated honey?' Once we know the answer, then how to produce good natural set honey?

The following has been extracted from article by Mary Hill, one of the BBKA Honey Judges.

The first thing to do is to understand how granulated honey is different from soft set honey. Granulated honey is honey which has been extracted and after filtering is put straight into jars. It is NOT stored in tubs, melted and put into jars or mixed with other honeys before jarring.

The decision to produce good granulated honey must be made before extraction starts. Having made this decision make sure you extract the honey on a warm day straight from the hive. If you have to store it keep the supers in a warm place. Honey which has some rape nectar in it gives a finer grained honey.

After extraction the honey must be filtered through the finest filter you can find. Very fine nylon or a polyester fabric. I use a Strainaway with 100x100 filter. These are not made any more but you might get one secondhand. For smaller amounts Lakeland Strainer Jug is very good, but again this is out of production.

Store the honey in a settling tank overnight. Estimate how much honey you have and decide that the first third is going to be your very good honey. Wash the jars in hot water and let them drain dry. If you use a drying cloth make sure it is not fluffy.

Fill the jars so that there is no gap between the top of the honey and the bottom of the lid. Store the jars on a LEVEL shelf.

After three days remove any scum that has risen to the surface by placing a piece of clingfilm on the surface to pull off the scum. Put the jars back on the shelf and wait for the honey to set. You don't need to do anything else. The quicker it sets the finer the granulation will be.

When it has set do not worry about any frosting that occurs, this is a natural process. In a show the only penalty would be if someone had honey as good as yours but without frosting.

Before entering in show carefully check all over the jar for "foreign bodies", most of them will be on the bottom. Granulated honey that is clean i.e. no black dots, will win a prize because not many people plan ahead. Make sure that the lid is clean inside.

[\(www.farnhambeekeepers.org.uk/index.php/bee/granulated-or-naturally-set-honey/\)](http://www.farnhambeekeepers.org.uk/index.php/bee/granulated-or-naturally-set-honey/)

by Helen Kingsford {Show Sec }

Courses

- Beginners Course begins this month. The six teaching colonies have come through winter.
- Intermediate ('Improvers') Sessions: a list will be available at the meeting or email Pat Allen if you are interested in the topics: Honey Processing; Managing Nucs & Mini-nucs; Integrated Varroa Management.

HONEY EXTRACTION – Jim McNeill 3rd March 2016

Jim advised that if you are extracting honey put clearer boards on hives as early as possible in the morning, especially if you are borrowing the clubs extractor, which you can only have for three days. If the clearer boards are put on hives early enough in the morning, the honey will be ripe and by the evening the supers will be clear of bees.

When removing a super do not put it on the ground as it is a food container, stand it on an upturned roof. Take the supers into the kitchen/honey room to do the uncapping.

Hold frame vertically over the uncapping tray or the type of uncapping tray that you personally use. Remove the wax cappings by using a thin serrated knife or uncapping tool. Use it in an upward movement being sure to take care and not cut your hand if it slips. Some people put the knife in hot water so that it slices through the wax cappings quicker but Jim was not very keen on this as you must not let any water at all go into the uncapping tray where the honey will be. You can use an uncapping fork to remove the cappings that the knife or uncapping tool has left in the frame. Turn the frame over and repeat the process for the other side.

If you leave the honey in the extractor overnight the honey and wax will separate, the honey will drip through into a honey bucket leaving the wax in the uncapping tray.

Jim always writes on each honey bucket the percent of water gauged from the refractometer and which hive and date.

When frames are uncapped put vertically in the extractor/spinner making sure that you balance the frames out to make the spinner more stable, close the extractor lid and do not take off while spinning, start the engine slowly at first or start spinning by hand. The honey spins off from the frames and into the extractor. When the extractor has a visible amount of spun honey, open the valve in the extractor and the honey runs into the bucket underneath which has been lined with a food quality bag. A 30lb bucket is a good size for honey.

The frames can be put back in the supers. Return the supers to the hives and place over the clearer board so the bees can dry the comb. It is advantageous to have a spare clearer board to place on top.

JILLY SPEAKMAN-BELL