



Newsletter – March 2022

Committee Members 2021/2022

Tim Bullock	Chair
Stephen Greenaway	Vice Chair, Spray and Swarm Liaison.
Clive Harris	Treasurer
Kathy Hobson	Secretary, Membership Secretary
Justin Downes	Newsletter Editor
Nicola Perrett	
Mike Benson	
Mick Carter	
Juliette Cavilla	

Website Manager Christopher Wilkinson

Apiary Notes - March - Tim Bullock

Hopefully your bees are now flying actively on warm days and the queens are laying. This increased activity and heating of the brood uses more energy, so colonies will be using stores faster (for March work on around 4kg of stores for a typical colony). As the nectar sources aren't huge at the moment it's important to keep feeding if you even think they might be a bit low. If in doubt – feed!

Personally, I wouldn't do inspections in the first half of the month unless I had serious concerns about a colony. Even in the second half if you must inspect, then keep it brief. If you must inspect, make sure it's a really warm, non-windy day and keep the inspection brief -have they got food, any sign of disease? are eggs and larvae present (don't worry about looking for the queen) is all you're really likely to need to know. If the bees are flying well and bringing back pollen, then I wouldn't inspect.

SDBKA Archives

Thanks to the hard work from Nicola Perrett, the Wiltshire Archives Centre has agreed to house and retain the club archives which were formally collated by Joy Simpson. There is some material which they will not accept, this will be returned to the club and maybe destroyed.

TWIGS

The fencing at the Club Apiary is in need of repair and some general maintenance at the site is needed. A work party of volunteers is required and the proposed date for this is 12th March at 10:30am. If any of you can help if only for an hour the please let Kathy Hobson know.

Found Coat/Jacket

A jacket has been found in the shed at TWIGS. It's a M & S size 14 and is beige/khaki in colour. If you wish to claim it then please contact Kathy Hobson

Basic Bee Beekeeper Exam 2022

Stephen Greenaway will be running this and hopes that some of you will take part. If you are interested, please email him asap stephen.greenaway@outlook.com

SGM Vote

All members should have by now received voting information in the post. Members are reminded that the SGM ballot is on 8th March and will be held at The Corn Exchange in Devizes.

Neonicotinoids – Article by Clive Harris

Emergency pesticide authorisation approved to protect sugar beet.

In 2018, the use of all neonicotinoid insecticides was banned throughout the whole of the EU due to the widely acknowledged serious long term destructive effects they presented to all pollinating insects and specifically, to the detriment of Honeybee colonies.

I was extremely alarmed therefore, when I became aware of the Government's intention to now lift the ban at the behest of the sugar industry which was hidden under: (www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-pesticide-authorisation-approved-to-protect-sugar-beet-if-specific-conditions-are-met). The proposed exception is in respect of Syngenta's Cruiser SB for use on sugar beet. This prompted me to tackle my local MP (Justin Tomlinson) over the issue, pointing out the concerns of the local beekeeping community particularly over the proven persistent nature of this material and its tendency to leach into waterways.

I received a very comprehensive reply assuring me that he was well briefed on the problem and that he would continue to closely monitor the situation. Indeed, his apparent knowledge of the facts that he quoted were fully endorsed by our own Chairman, Tim Bullock, who is a professional agronomist. I felt however, that Justin was also very much following the political party line. I accept that the proposed exception is intended only as an emergency temporary measure, but I still cannot fully reconcile the need

A Parliamentary debate on the issue was secured by Luke Pollard MP (see UK Parliament> Hansard> Commons:2 February 2022> Westminster Hall> Bees:Neonicotinoids) which was most certainly very well attended.

One telling issue pointed out during the debate was, and I quote: -

"When we left the EU, the Government promised to follow the science on bee-killing pesticides. They said that their decisions about emergency authorisations would be guided by two expert bodies, the Health and Safety Executive and the expert committee on pesticides.

In January last year, both expert bodies recommended that emergency authorisations for neonic bee-killing pesticides should not be given for sugar beets. The expert committee on pesticides said:

"The requirements for emergency authorisation have not been met."

It said that the risk to bees and freshwater biodiversity outweighed the benefit to sugar beets. That is important.

The Health and Safety Executive came to a similar conclusion.

DEFRA has therefore lifted a ban on neonics against the overwhelming advice of its own expert bodies, by which it said it would be guided. That suggests that the decision was a political one, not a scientific one".

Further, in my opinion, the economic argument advanced by the industry also fails to hold water. Current contracts negotiated between DEFRA and the growers now include an insurance clause specifically arranged to cover losses occasioned by "virus yellow". Losses anticipated by the industry, therefore, really cease to have any relevance, which then negates the definition of an "emergency".

We now wait to see if the anticipated level of "virus yellow" infection indeed reaches the threshold required to trigger the use of this material in 2022. Apparently, these measures were proposed for use in 2021. Cold weather conditions last year however, held the aphid vector sufficiently below the trigger levels necessary to activate previous implementation.

The Chair and Secretary of County (WBKA) have also been made aware of the situation.

Clive.

Club Meetings

24th Feb 2022 - New Beekeepers

The focus of this meeting will be on new beekeepers. Especially those who are embarking on their first year. We would encourage those all of those who are starting this year, those that have attended a taster day and considering starting or anyone who considers themselves new to come along. This will be an opportunity to ask questions, obtain advice and support from more experienced members and network with others.

We also aim to discuss colony losses and invite members to bring any homemade equipment they may use – which may be of benefit to others

In addition, as this is my first year, I'm proposing to form a new beekeeper's 'first year peer group' where participants can share experiences, ideas, equipment and learn along with each other. This will include access to support from more experienced keepers. If you wish to participate in this journey, then please let me know.

Justin Downes

Editor – justin.downes@yahoo.co.uk

Further dates of interest:

March 31st Guest Speaker - Richard Oliver WBKA Training Officer

April 28th Guest Speaker - Avril Earl Seasonal Bee Inspector

May 26th Skittle's evening (postponed from December)

July 28th Honey Extraction Demonstration (at Park Farm)

October 27th AGM

Club Meetings

These are held on the last Thursday of each month in the Skittle Alley at Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Swindon SN25 1JD, start time 7.30pm. Please come along, all are welcome.

WBKA

Bee Health Day - 3rd September 2022

Bee and Honey Day 8th October 2022

Newsletter Articles

If you feel you would like share anything of note or which may be of benefit to other members, then please let me know.

Justin Downes

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