



West Sussex Beekeepers Association

Wisborough Green Division



Newsletter January 2008

Officers and Contact Information

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MEMBERSHIP FOR 2008

Final Reminder. Your forms and cheque should be sent to Andrew Riley - his address is at the bottom of the membership form. Any questions on the forms contact Judy Knight (contact above)

Winter Meeting – Speaker to be confirmed
Wednesday January 16th 7.30pm The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood

Winter Meetings

7.30pm The Chapel, Spy Lane, Loxwood (unless otherwise stated)

- 16th January:** Speaker to be confirmed. (I will circulate e-mail with details) **moved from 24th Jan**
- 2nd February -** Beginners and Improvers Day (Pulborough Village Hall contact Roger Patterson for general enquiries or Andrew Riley for bookings)
- 21st February** Tools of the Honeybee' - John Hendrie
- 1st March** West Sussex Beekeepers Convention – Lodge Hill, Pulborough - see note below
- 20th March** AGM to be followed by 'Mead-Making' by Roger Patterson and Derek Ready

Beginners' and Improvers' Day.

Don't forget - Saturday February 2nd, Pulborough Village Hall
– see attached flyer

Apiary Meetings (Dounhurst Farm, Skiff Lane, Wisborough Green)

Sunday 20th Jan, 2.00pm

Sunday 9th March, 2.00pm

We start apiary meetings again this month with a meeting on Sun 20th Jan 2.00 at Dounhurst. This will be preceded as last year with Sunday lunch for those who wish. **Roger must know in advance for booking lunches**, preferably by Wed 16th. We will do the normal winter checks on the bees i.e. food, dryness, etc. I do not expect the meeting to take any more than 1-2 hours. There will be no tea. We will repeat the dose on March 9th, so make a note now.

Bee Auction

Now is the time to start collecting your unwanted kit for the auction, and when sowing seeds, transplanting, splitting, etc to remember the plant stall.

Patterson in Print – Roger Patterson

I was quite pleased with the apiary last year, but I am concerned at the way colonies lost adult bees towards the end of the season, resulting in weak colonies going into the winter. I am not confident they will be off to a flying start and in a condition to take advantage of the oil seed rape in the spring.

We start the year with the news from NBU that we have *nosema ceranae* in the country, and it appears to have been here some time. It seems that it is impossible to see the difference between *nosema ceranae* and *nosema apis* even with a microscope, so we will have to rely on the NBU for identification. It is very widespread and no doubt we will soon be able to say that we all have it, and it will be yet another thing we will have to deal with. I suggest you find out as much as you can, and at the moment the obvious place is the internet, although I suggest you look at several sites as some, even the “official” sites such as Ministry or State sites often conflict. Don’t ignore it as there have recently been 40% colony losses in Spain and I have recently had an e-mail from there asking me how to deal with it! This was from a lady who attended our last Beginners Day who was enquiring on behalf of her uncle.

Nosema apis is probably present in most colonies, but the native type bees are able to manage it providing the weather allows them to go on cleansing flights, but it seems that *nosema ceranae* is much more virulent and it is looking as if we will have to deal with it as a matter of course. To the best of my knowledge there is no established spore threshold, but in recent copies of “Bee Culture” it is suggested that below 1million *nosema apis* spores per bee in the autumn is not considered worth treating! Counts of 40million spores per bee have been recorded.

I believe winter losses will be high this year, and already Judy has lost all her bees, Ray has lost 3 colonies, and I have lost one. In Judy’s case hers were reasonably free of varroa in August, but when she removed dead brood they were riddled with mites. It seems the mite population can rapidly increase under certain conditions, and I am convinced we still have a lot to learn about varroa.

I am afraid there are some beekeepers that have not treated for varroa, some even still using pyrethroids which in this area are probably now useless. There are also a number who haven't fed their colonies. I'm afraid they haven't given their bees much of a chance.

I know there are several colonies that are either queenless, or have drone laying queens, and these won't survive.

Richard Dyer has done a good job at the apiary monitoring varroa, and I would like to thank him for his effort. There is a lot happens between meetings that members don't see and this is one of them. I have doubts about the method of counting mites, and have had discussions with Richard and Daisy. All three of us counted the same trays and on one Daisy counted 26 mites, I counted 46, and Richard was somewhere in between. Richard then did a much closer count and found around 40 mites. Variation can be for a number of reasons including poor light (which was the case that day), mites being covered by other debris, debris looking like mites, and mites on their edges being difficult to spot. That variation can mean the difference between being a light infestation with no action needed, and a heavy infestation that needs immediate treatment. I reckon the three of us are good at counting, and if we are that far out then many others are as well, and if they are on the low side they could lose their bees. When counting the other trays we were around the same percentage out which is alarming, and this when we knew we were counting against two others. I spoke to Alan Byham about my concerns, and he agreed with me, but at the moment there are no other methods available in the field.

I am sorry if I appear so negative, but it is frustrating when I see good beekeepers losing bees when they are unable to do anything about it.

I am grateful for the help I have had from our demonstrators during the summer, although they all have other commitments occasionally which can leave us short at some meetings. Often we have enough to have specialist groups such as queen clipping and marking, or one-to-one tuition, all of which helps to increase knowledge. It is not easy demonstrating as you need to be a good handler of bees, reasonably knowledgeable, and be able to deal with different kinds of people. I also insist that colonies are dealt with in the "WG way" so that everybody knows what is going on. What is done at home is up to the individual, but not so long ago our meetings were a shambles and the standards very poor, but now thanks to the dedication and firmness of our demonstrators many of our members have become good handlers. Can I thank Judy, Derek, Graham, Debbie, Daisy, and Ray.

I have read a report detailing the world honey shortage. Last winter saw 25% colony losses in Argentina against the normal 10%, the 2007 Canadian crop is 60% of 2006, the US crop is normally 250m lbs, but is estimated at 140-160m lbs, and the Chinese are struggling on several fronts, one of which is increased domestic demand. These are four of the world's largest producers and exporters. No doubt the increase in disease is having a severe effect, and it seems logical there may be future problems with chemical and antibiotic residue levels to combat it, as was seen in Chinese honey a few years ago.

Roger Patterson.

WSBKA Annual Convention

Please see attached flyer and Booking Form

County Diary – Around the Divisions – all Members are most welcome at all Meetings

Chichester –Contact Mrs Chris Burnett on 01243 514642 for details.

Wednesday 16th January at The Bader Arms- “A Review of 2007”. An informal report and discussion on the successes and failures in the beekeeping year with contributions from Stuart Hanwell, John Letheren, Roy Robinson, Mike Dunckley and Di Pitts.

Worthing contact Brian Tolworthy on 01903 241369

Website www.worthingbeekeepers.fsnet.co.uk/org.uk

Winter meetings at Ferring village hall. Arrive at 7.15pm. Commencing at 7.30pm

Thursday 10th January – Erica Sheward from castle Kitchens talks on “Handling honey with health (and safety) in mind.

Wednesday 23rd January – Social Get Together at “The Sussex Potter” Manor Road, Lancing at 7.30pm.