



Call for Extra Cash to Research Bee Deaths.

Inside this issue:

<i>1st Winter Talk by Kevin Cowle</i>	2
<i>2nd Winter Talk by Eric McArthur</i>	3
<i>Topic for discussion</i>	4
<i>Hat Night</i>	5
<i>New Books</i>	5
<i>Carrick Academy Pupils</i>	6
<i>Earthwatch Institute Public Debate</i>	6

Beekeepers have asked for more funding to research why bees are dying in unprecedented numbers, warning that their loss is costing the UK economy millions of pounds.

A survey by the British Beekeepers Association found that nearly one in three bee colonies has been lost, and that stocks of UK honey will run out by Christmas.

Three hundred members of the BBA presented a petition at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday 6th November, asking for a rise in funding from the £200,000 currently spent on bee health research each year to £1.6m a year over the next five years.

As there seems to be nothing anyone

can do about their losses, beekeepers are concerned that there will be a repeat of last years losses, leading to a further reduction in the number of bees.

The larger contribution would help prop up the £12m honeybee industry in the UK and would represent less than 1% of the £825m that pollination by bees will add to the agricultural economy in that time.

Tim Lovett, the association’s chairman said the same problem was occurring in the United States. He has lost half his bees in 12 months and now has only two hives. There are about 44,00 beekeepers in the UK producing 6,000 tonnes of honey per year.

Special points of interest:

- .Topic for Discussion -Bee Health Strategy as proposed by the Scottish Government.
- Guest Speakers at Doonfoot Academy.
- Carrick Academy Pupils and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme



It has been suggested that we have a “Topic for Discussion” in Buzzword - a good idea, and I have taken the liberty of choosing the Bee Health Strategy as our first Topic. Gentle reader, if you have any suggestions for a

Topic you would like discussed, please forward to bees5@btinternet.com.: or if you would just like to make a point about something, share a joke or a recipe, we’d love to see it.

*Ayr and District Beekeepers first Talk by Kevin Cowle
Written by Kevin Lincoln.*

Everyone who attended the first of the winter lecture programmes at Doon foot primary school will join me in giving thanks to Kevin Cowle. He gave heart felt talk on keeping bees in the Clyde valley, with extras on honey production, frame & hive maintenance, wax rendering, and the art of presenting and selling your honey.

Starting his slide show of the Clyde valley area the position of his apiary seemed ideal. The large shed he used as a backdrop for his hives had the full sun from morning in the east to evening in the west, and warmth was given off the shed side likened to a built in storage heater.

The forage in the area was abundant for the bees to process as wanted until the frames were full. Starting off with crocus in the gardens, the spring tree pollen and nectar through to apples, pears, soft fruit, leading to summer with Willow bay herb, borage, Himalayan Balsam, clover and the heather, managed, of course. He had not seen any ivy up to present. This all seems an idyllic Utopia that is not often seen so far from the gardens of Kent, an area to be envied.

As a relentless perfectionist his main aim was to provide all his offspring with the environment and accommodation to ease their stressfully short lives. Their payment for this practice was to present him with honey that he bottled and labelled in a most efficient and professional manner. Any beekeeper would be happy to produce such saleable produce.

Whilst giving the talk on his way of keeping bees, a sense of satisfaction in the long learning curve that he has travelled to get things right are evident. The mark one solar waxmelter, then mark two, even a mark three would continue until perfect. This is why the bees happily bow to his idealistic workings.

With all the knock backs that bees have to endure in life we as custodians must provide an environment worthy of, and up to the best standards we can achieve under the circumstances. Stress less bees are happier bees.

More thanks to a beekeeper who is striving to provide for a better environment for his charges.

Mr. J. McColm

Apologies to Jim for spelling his surname incorrectly last time. Since then he has shown at the Wigtown Flower Show and won the Glenrazie Shield for best exhibit in Class 87 for frame of honey and for extracting. This is the second time Jim has won this Shield, the first time being in 2005. This shield was first awarded at the New Luce branch in 1935.

Jim also achieved 2nd and 3rd for light honey display, 1st for medium honey, 2nd for set honey and 1st for beeswax.. This meant he was runner up for Points cup for Total points, and Margaret will require the assistance of Santa's little helpers in order to keep the trophies gleaming.

Eric McArthurs Talk to Ayr and District Beekeepers.

It is always pleasing to listen to an expert, especially someone who obviously enjoys his subject. Even after many years of beekeeping, having started in 1967, Eric McArthur has lost none of his enthusiasm for beekeeping.

Eric's talk focussed on four main topics:

1. Varroa and its treatment
2. Queen rearing methods
3. Swarm Control
4. Some Practical aspects of Beekeeping.

In the treatment of Varroa Destructor, Eric emphasised the need for beekeepers to be acutely aware of the corrosive nature Formic Acid if using to treat for Varroa. The strength to use is 60%, and the safety considerations include wearing gloves, an industrial mask, and safety glasses. A bucket of clean fresh water is important in case of splashes. The treatment is carried out using a 20ml. plastic syringe available from a vet, the dosage is 2mls of acid solution/ frame space occupied by bees, which is drawn into the syringe and trickled onto a 6"x 6" flat kitchen sponge carried in a special board placed directly on the brood frame top bars. Leave for 3 days then repeat another twice at three day intervals. Remove the fumigation board on the 11th day after the start of the procedure. Do this in the spring around Mid April. Eric explained this killed the Varroa mites in the brood cells. Around 85% of the mites infesting a bee colony in summer are in the brood cells. Repeat in the June Gap after your 1st honey is off. A colony covering 10 frames will receive 2 x 10 mls = 20 mls acid; a colony covering only 5 frames will receive 2 x 5 mls = 10 mls acid.

In his very comprehensive talk on this topic, Eric then explained how Oxalic Acid is complementary to Formic Acid. Oxalic Acid is best used in winter when no brood is in the hive, approximately 3rd week in December. There are 3 main methods of use:

- * Trickle; Use 50mls of 3 ½ % solution for a colony covering 10 frames. Trickle 5mls using syringe into each space between the frames occupied by bees. A colony covering only 5 frames will receive a total of 25 mls acid.
- * Spray; Safety precautions again need to be paramount. Very labour intensive.
- * Fumigation; or Vaporisation through hive entrance with no need to open the hive. Requires a dedicated gas mask and special equipment.

Eric continued his talk by describing a unique method of combining Queen rearing and Swarm Prevention which involves removing the queen bee from the strong colonies around the end of the 1st nectar flow, before the colony has made any swarm preparations. The hive is left queenless for 8 days, when all queen cells except the best looking unsealed cell are cut down. The colony should have a new mated and laying queen around 22 – 25 days later. Leaving an unsealed cell means you can identify that a grub is actually present! This hive will not swarm. The bees have made a new Queen and the beekeeper has used a method of swarm prevention

Another method of swarm prevention is to give the bees extra room. Towards the middle of April donate the first super of drawn comb without using a queen excluder. The queen will rise into the warming super after the bees have spring cleaned it and lay there. Around the first week in

Continued from page 3

May smoke the bees and queen down into the brood box, add the Queen excluder in the normal way, and add another two supers with drawn comb or undrawn foundation on top of the original. The bees will rise to nurse brood in the first super and continue to expand upwards as the early summer progresses. The first super in spring should always be fitted with drawn comb for best results.

Some practical aspects suggested by Eric include marking of Queens, and making sure you have enough equipment. Eric reckons this should be about 50% more again of the actual amount you are using. Also have one nuc for every strong hive you are working in order to easily increase or for swarm control. Plenty of spare parts means less rummaging about when you're busy.

Eric believes the secret of successful beekeeping is to learn Basic Bee Biology, and the Natural History of bees. Knowledge of the life cycle and metamorphosis of the bees is essential if the Beekeeper wishes to progress in his or her chosen hobby or occupation.

Eric was generous in the imparting of his knowledge, and without scaring us too much emphasised the need for beekeepers to be vigilant as well as accurate in the ongoing battle against bee pests and diseases, for the bees sake as well as our own. Everyone present benefited greatly from his giving of his time to visit us in Ayrshire, and we hope he will be able to return in the not too distant future.

Honey Bee Health Strategy in Scotland : Topic for Discussion.

The Scottish Government has produced a document describing its proposals for a strategy for bee health.

The overall aim of the strategy is “To achieve a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees for pollination and honey production in Scotland through effective partnership working between the Scottish government and stakeholders” It acknowledges that legislative control of notifiable diseases and pests is directed by EU legislation and that Varroa is the major threat to the honeybee population in Britain. This government declares its ongoing commitment to protecting the health and welfare of bees and those who manage them, and a greener environment as a result of a healthy honeybee population. This is a 10 yr. plan.

The stakeholders are the Scottish Government and Beekeepers. Other contributors include the research community, honey importers and packers, medicine manufacturers and hive and appliance manufacturers who have a role in keeping beekeepers up to date with bee health developments and giving advice on the use of their products.

There are four main Strategic Outcomes proposed:

1. Effective communication and relationships should operate at all levels - government, SAC, beekeepers etc, sharing information.
2. A Database of all beekeepers. Co-operation with other agencies such as Bee Inspectors and RPID staff who will target ports and depots to prevent the importation of exotic pests.
3. Education and training of beekeepers.
4. Evidence based sound science to underpin the bee health policy.

For the purpose of this discussion, I would like to concentrate on the Education and Training of Beekeepers if I may.

In order to implement this element of the Strategy, it is proposed that National Associations and the SAC Will work together on a crucial element of the strategy - improving the education of beekeepers and the

Bee Health Strategy Discussion Continued

standards of bee husbandry through coordinating and streamlining training programmes, outreach initiatives, practical examinations (run by the SBKA) and written examinations (which the SBKA buy-in from the BBKA). Beekeepers are to be encouraged to undertake training, education and professional development. Apiaries used for training purposes to agree to a minimum standard, otherwise not used for training. This is of course a potted version of this part, the full thing is on page 15 of the Strategy.

What do people think of this strategy?

I could start off by saying that education is always a good thing, and that beekeeping has a history of encouraging its followers to be tested on their knowledge.

One question which arises is - is this training going to be compulsory for anyone starting out in beekeeping.? How are these proposals going to be enforced ?

Will potential future beekeepers be put off by the thought of exams - this is a hobby for most beekeepers after all; on the other hand it is not like stamp collecting, we are dealing with live creatures, as are pig-breeders, chicken farmers and pet owners.

What do people think? Other parts of the strategy can be discussed at a later date if desired.

What do people think. Other parts of the Strategy can be discussed at a later date if desired.

Hat Night at Doonfoot

**Beekeeping gets under
your skin I have no
desire to give it up
despite all the
problems we are
having at present.**

The Hat Night at Doonfoot was a great success despite the small number who attended. To those who were unable to make it, I have only one thing to say—"you fair missed yersels" The panel comprised David, Joyce and Ian, and they truly entered into the spirit of the occasion. The many questions ranged from asking the panel about their personal experiences of beekeeping, asking for advice, to questions on the

bee health strategy. There were too many question which meant that some went unanswered and proceedings had to be brought to a close otherwise there would have been no time for tea and biscuits!

The one question the panel were all in agreement about was that none of them had ever thought about giving up beekeeping. As Davy said "it gets under your skin" and it

was reassuring to hear that all had made mistakes at some point in their beekeeping careers which had the audience laughing, but would not have been funny at the time.

Many thanks to the panel for making our Hat Night a resounding success, and to Phil and Lindsay for keeping control of the proceedings. Looking forward to the next one.

Association Library



*New Books
Available.*

Two new books have been acquired by the library:

1. "A world without Bees" by Benjamin and McCallum, hobby beekeepers. Published this year.

2. "Keeping Bees" by Paul Peacock, a beekeeper who has had work published in Country Life.

If anyone has knowledge of a book which they think would be a

useful addition to the library, please let me know and I should be able to acquire it.

Carrick Academy Pupils and Beekeeping.

Some enterprising young people at Carrick Academy have involved themselves in Beekeeping as part of the Duke of Edinburgh pilot Scheme in South Ayrshire. The pupils were in S3 and are Ashley McLean, Erin Bayne, Nathan Green, Connor Graham, Connor Kennedy, Sarah Brown, Blair Jardine, Bethany Fairbairn, Stacey Scott, Jordan McCulloch, Glen Torbit, Ross Dickson and Jo Maxwell. The pupils were mentored and encouraged by their teacher Lindsay, and by Phil and Tony who gave a lot of their time with the pupils at the Association Apiary.

The course content covered most aspects of beekeeping all of which helped develop the four capacities for a Curriculum for Excellence.

The pupils were also involved with the open-hive display at the Ayr Flower Show. They encouraged members of the public to take part, and assisted Phil and Tony in the actual demonstrations. This was greatly enjoyed by members of the public who thoroughly appreciated seeing how the youngsters calmly and confidently handled the bees.

The pupils made candles as an enterprise project and raised £90 in the first month. This will go towards the costs of having their own hive and looking after it. It is hoped that these pupils will continue their interest in beekeeping into the future and become members of the Ayr and District Beekeepers Association.



Connor Graham assisting at the Open Hive Demonstration at this years Ayr Flower Show.

Earthwatch Institute (Europe)

Irreplaceable - The Worlds most Invaluable Species.

A public debate is being held at the Royal Geographic Society in London on 20th November under the auspices of the Earthwatch Institute (Europe).

An online poll conducted by the Guardian Newspaper asked readers which species they thought was the most invaluable out of a given list of five. With polling still having two days to go at the time of writing this, it is clear the our bee population is considered by most who took part to be of greatest importance.

Five scientists will take part in the debate, one for each species. The case for the bees is being made by Dr. George McGavin, Honorary Research Associate, Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

Dr. McGavin says...."Bees are irreplaceable and the debate about what might happen if they disappeared is no longer academic. We have set in motion processes that may lead to the extinction of the planet's most important pollinators..."

Eminent scientists and institutions are now becoming involved in the debate surrounding the problem of our disappearing bees; the general public are also by now hugely aware of the issue as we have witnessed when speaking to them at the various shows. This should increase the pressure on the government to release extra funding for research into bee diseases.

Bats	nil point
Bees	41.7%
Primates	16.7%
Plankton	20.8%
Fungi	20.8%



Bees are favourites to win the online poll