Wellington Beekeepers Association
Support and encouragment of beekeeping and beekeepers

Next meeting | Wednesday 7th October 2020
Where | Main Hall, Johnsonville Community Centre, Moorefield Rd

Topics for the October meeting

Beginners session 6.45pm in the upstairs meeting room
Swarm prevention and pest management – Jane Harding and Eva Durrant

Main Meeting 7.30pm in the main hall

********Annual Photo competition ********

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A note from the president – James Withington

With the government's announcements early this week means we can now return to our normal monthly meetings without the social distancing restrictions. I am looking forward to seeing you all and being able to discuss in person all things beekeeping. This also means we will be running the annual photo competition.

In the meantime the beginners classes have gotten off to a good start with 15 new members being added to the club. They are being encouraged to attend the monthly meetings so please welcome them into the club. We can all remember when we first started, not knowing much and being daunted by the prospect of being surrounded by more knowledgeable people. Hopefully we can still get several meetings in before the end of the year including the December festivities. We are lucking out with the food trucks and are still looking for one to assist our meeting in December.

Regardless of the covid outbreaks the bees are well into their spring build up with some hives already getting extra boxes added. Don't forget to check the food levels in your hives as the bees are really starting to churn through them to support the sudden boost of numbers in the hives. But remember the pesky varroa mite also flourishes at this time of year to help your bees out and get those treatments in. The winds over the past week have tested the durability of our hives and personally I found one of my poly nucs lying horizontally on the ground late one evening, despite having two paver stones on top of it.

Well let’s hope we get to see you all next month.

James

Managing Varroa - Richard Braczek

Managing varroa is an important but challenging task for the new beekeeper. If you don't manage varroa, your hives will suffer from virus infections such as Deformed Wing Virus and collapse and die out. They will also infect neighbouring hives.

The minimum treatment is to treat your hives with different miticides in early Spring and late Summer. This way you are preventing mite build-up as bee numbers increase in anticipation of the honey flow in Summer. You are also treating at the crucial time when mite numbers are high in late Summer and bee numbers are dropping in anticipation of Winter.

This regime allows you to remove treatments before the honey flow and resume them when it ends. However, I'm finding that two treatments a year are no longer sufficient. With

mild winters such as we've been having, there has been a strong supply of brood in the hives and consequently, a strong presence of varroa as well. This has meant that some of my stronger hives are already showing high mite counts. So, those who haven't done any treatments since March may find their hives already badly infested.

I would recommend giving your hives regular treatments throughout the year in addition to the usual spring and late summer ones. Try out different techniques so that you have options available depending on the time of year. MAQs (Formic acid) can be used during the honey flow. I like to use an oxalic vapouriser as you can treat at any time and you don't have to open up the hive. Key times are before winter and late winter/early spring and mid-summer. A weekly treatment for 4 weeks is quite effective.

Mite Monitoring

Regular monitoring of your mites will indicate how often you need to treat. If you do an alcohol wash of half a cup of bees (300) and treat when the mite count is over 6 in total, you will be keeping your mites at a manageable level. The ***Scientific Beekeeper*** is well worth reading on this topic http://scientificbeekeeping.com/refining-the-mite-wash-part-1-treatment-threshold-and-solutions-to-use/

If you don't like killing your bees, an alternative is to use a CO^2 cannister which knocks the bees out as well as the varroa, but you can put them back in the hive after your test.

Varroa Resistant Queens

It is also a good idea to buy varroa resistant queens when you requeen. Good stock and good varroa management together will make for much healthier hives.

Safety

Always follow the directions on the packet. Key things are:

- Use safety equipment if specified especially when using a vapouriser (mask and goggles).
- Don't leave treatments in hives longer than specified to prevent mites building resistance
- Alternate treatments with different active ingredients again to prevent resistance
- Ensure any treatments used during the honey flow are safe to use at this time
- Some treatments are temperature dependant

Preventing Swarming – Richard Braczek

Swarming is a natural process. Hives build up numbers in anticipation of the honey flow and when these are high, the hive will start creating queen cells in preparation for swarming. While you can take steps to postpone swarming, you can't stop it. Once the swarm cells have larvae in them, the hive will swarm when the weather is suitable.

Artificial swarm

So, the best action you can take once you detect viable queen cells is to do an artificial swarm, pre-empting your bees absconding on their own.

There are various methods of doing this. This is a simple yet effective technique.

Leave the original queen in a brood box in the original location with only a couple of frames of brood. Put a honey super on top of this. All the rest of the brood and the bees go into the other brood box which you can either put above as a split facing the other way or in a new location, with a queen cell. (You need to remove all the other queen cells. You also need to check for queen cells in about a week as they will create more from any eggs around). The older bees will fly back to the original hive evening out the numbers.

When the new queen has started laying and the honey flow has started, you can recombine the hives with newspaper and let the two queens sort it out. You now have a strong hive bringing in the honey for harvest.

Checking for queen cells

Generally, it takes around 16 days for an egg to emerge as a queen so it's recommended that you check for viable (with queen larvae) queen cells around every 10 days. Once spotted, do your split straight away.

Swarming season is generally from October to December with a strong hive full of sealed brood a strong indicator. (This results in an explosion in bee numbers triggering a swarm). You can transfer sealed brood into weaker hives and do the other slowing techniques covered here, but eventually the hive will swarm. So it's best to keep an eye out and do an artificial swarm rather than lose your bees.

What if you just let them swarm as nature intended?

- Loss or workers when needed most**.** A swarm will consist of around 5-10,000 bees and while the hive will recover, there is a lag until the replacement queen starts laying.
- A swarm that goes feral will die due to varroa.
- A swarm that ends up in a wall or ceiling cavity in someone's house will have to be poisoned as there is no other way of removing them.
- A swarm that gets picked up by another beekeeper will be used to gather honey for them rather than you.
- A swarm can be frightening to others.
- It looks bad when you let your hives swarm. ►►

What about other ways of preventing swarming?

Removing queen cells and clipping the queen's wings don't work. Removing brood, adding frames for laying and creating space will merely delay swarming.

Things to do this month

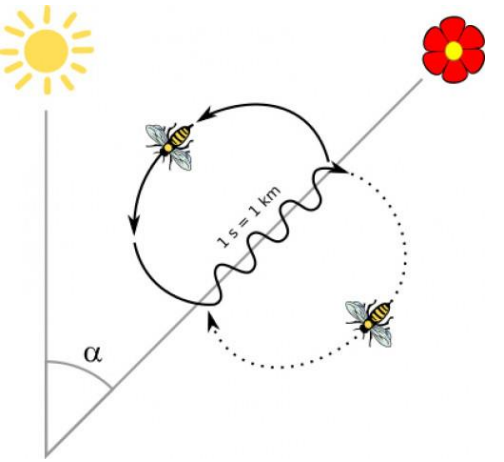
October checklist

- Apply a varroa treatment if surplus honey flow is anticipated within eight weeks, or hives are showing mite damage, or there are more than 6 mites per 300 bees after a sugar shake test
- Remove entrance guards
- Spray or cut vegetation around the hives
- Check all brood frames for American foulbrood
- Control swarms
- Split hives
- Requeen hives with mated queens or own queen cells

Taken from Practical Beekeeping in New Zealand by Andrew Matheson & Murray Reid

The waggling wisdom of the bees

By Hannah Davidson and Elodie Urlacher,
Environmental Protection Authority- Te Mana Rauhī Taiao



A diagram of the waggle dance - the direction the bee moves in relation to the hive indicates direction, and the duration of the waggle part of the dance signifies the distance.

This so-called waggle dance is one of the most extraordinary forms of communication we know of and is rich with information. Bees returning to their hive dance to tell their fellow bees where to find food. Key clues about how far away and in which direction a patch of flowers may be found, as well as the quality of the source, are given in a repetitive and impressively precise series of movements.

Read this fascinating Introduction to ethology and be amazed again how wonderful and clever bees are.

https://www.epa.govt.nz/community-involvement/science-corner/the-waggling-wisdom-of-bees/

Queen bees for sale

Mark Grenfell of Days Bay
has queens for sale

Overwintered queens – available now - $65
New seasons queens – available from mid Oct - $60
5 or more will be $50 each
Phone 027-447-3337

Gary Jeffery of PEDIGREE QUEEN BEES

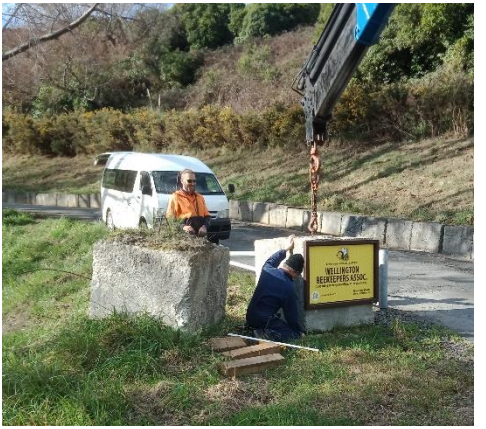
"If you want a quiet bee that also produces a good crop with some resistance to the Varroa Mites included, order now for October onwards. These are new season's queens as breeding and mating is already underway on the West Coast. Price $57.50. If the Club was to submit a bulk order (10 + queens) price would reduce to $52."

Place orders with John Burnet WBA

Wingate apiary update

The photo shows PK in action (with assistance from hoist truck driver) levelling a concrete block on which our new Wingate Park apiary sign is mounted. The truck has just delivered our new storage container to the apiary.

Everything is on site now, and just in time for the new 2020 season.



Too many bees?

From: **Kintailhoney** <office@kintailhoney.co.nz>
Date: Thu, 17 Sep 2020 at 8:53 AM
Subject: RE: Bee pollen

I am really sorry but since there is so much overcrowding of beekeepers in the area with too many bee hives we don't collect pollen as the bees need it to raise healthy brood.

In fact, we have to feed our bee artificial pollen to make up for the resource shortage.

I have phoned several commercial beekeepers in the Wairarapa/Wellington area for you and they all said the same –there is a shortage of pollen for the bees.

There are currently 300,000 too many hives in NZ for the resources available- crazy eh when everyone wants to save the bees.

Editors Note: This email was in response to a request from a student for anyone who has collected pollen in the Wellington /Hutt area. If you have pollen available, please contact Kintail Hone.

From the CE, Karin Kos

Last Friday I had a productive day with the Southern Beekeepers' Discussion Group in Ettrick (Central Otago). While the world of online Zoom meetings has its place, you can't beat face to face meetings for good, two-way conversations. Most in the Group noted their hives were in relatively good shape, and while acknowledging some positive movement in honey sales, low prices and impact on profitability remain a concern heading into the new season.

Bee health was a big focus of the day with Marco Gonzalez, from the AFB Pest Management Agency providing a fascinating insight into non-compliant AFB cases and some of the factors driving that behaviour. It was clear that stress can play a key part in poor decision making, and it was a reminder that beekeepers need to stay in touch and check in with each other. The Southern Beekeepers' Discussion Group certainly prove the value of this, keeping connected and meeting regularly.

This Group is also actively involved in running a research programme called Project Clean Hive. They are investigating different testing options for sub-clinical and clinical AFB including DNA analysis. While there's some way to go with the project, this is excellent demonstration of beekeepers taking the initiative, understanding the AFB pest management plan is owned by beekeepers, and wanting to work proactively to build a better understanding of the wider AFB picture.

Interesting websites

It might sound odd, but if a beekeeper paints their beehives different colours, returning bees will be more likely to enter the correct one https://www.habitatbyresene.co.nz/blogs-people/decorate-your-beehives-in-the-most-bee-friendly-colours

Bees are integral to our way of life – the food we eat, be it honey from the hive to the vegetables they pollinate – but they might be cleverer than we first thought. Recent studies have shown how bees can count landmarks, and even do simple maths to find food.
https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/122824342/bright-brains-on-wings-who-knew-bees-could-count

Bright brains on wings. Dr Elodie Urlacher has spent many years of her life studying bees, as a postgraduate scholar, first in France and then at Otago University, and now as an advisor at the Environmental Protection Authority.

Her free public talk, *Bright Brains on Wings*, was on at the Lower Hutt War Memorial Library on Wednesday 23rd September.

https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/122824342/bright-brains-on-wings-who-new-bees-could-count

Photos from inside a tree reveal intimate lives of wild honeybees

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2020/03/photos-reveal-wild-honeybees-intimate-lives-inside-a-tree-feature/

Who can I speak to?

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