

March 2011 Newsletter

Written by Roy Copley

Presented by Pauline Tidmas

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Spring is coming

On the occasional warm, sunny day the bees are flying. They are collecting pollen from snowdrops, crocuses and winter flowering jasmine.. These are flowers which are insect pollinated giving both nectar and pollen. Hazel nut trees have large catkins which produce masses of pollen. There are tiny red flowers which hope to catch some grains of pollen which are blowing around in the wind. The bees love the pollen but contribute nothing in exchange. My neighbour collects branches of catkins from the wild to lay on his tree. The flowers may come a bit later than the catkins on the same tree to avoid self-pollination.

We regard the collection of pollen as a sign that the queen is laying. Soon the hives will be bursting with young bees to replace the overwintered ones. Even when the temperature is a degree or two above freezing the queen is laying. The bees have concentrated their stores down to 20% moisture. In the spring they make brood-food from a mixture of diluted honey and partly digested pollen. Water is needed and bees fly even on cold days to collect it.

The colony which was fed well in the autumn eats very little until brood needs feeding. The stores are used up quickly during March. Here a little judgement is needed. No food and the bees starve and stop producing brood. But if every cell is filled the queen has nowhere to lay and the colony does not build up. So moderation in all things. The old idea was to heft the hive. This means lifting one side up and judging the weight. It needs experience to assess the weight.

March is the month when we make sure our equipment is in order. Supers can be made ready to put on the hives. Remember:- supers are used to accommodate bees. If the bees store honey in them that's a bonus. Only open the hive if it's absolutely essential and then only for a minute or two until the weather is really warm.

A good idea is to have empty, spare equipment to house the swarm that you will be offered by one of our members. If you are told of a swarm it is much better to go along with an experienced beekeeper. A swarm in a difficult place is a job for Danny.

We should not open a hive without a clear idea of what we are going to do. In early April when a hive might be opened, look for five things:- (1) are there eggs and brood? (2) Is there enough stored food? (3) is there room for the queen to lay?

(4) are there any signs of ill-health? (5) are there signs of preparation for swarming?

Each year in March the BBKA has a day of exams. There are eight modules. You can prepare for them with a correspondence course. There is a course for the basic exam. The latter is a practical exam. The microscopy exam is also a practical one.

Roy Copley I have some foundation for sale at a slightly reduced price.
Please let me have your old wax which I can exchange at kbs and so get a good price.

Foundation does not carry any disease.

Bees do not like it and need some food to draw it out, either a honey flow or sugar.

Harlow Division



Essex Beekeepers
Association
Registered Charity
number: 1031419

Next meeting
Thursday 3rd March
Spring Preparation
& Management
Pat Allen

April meeting
Queen rearing
Cris Chilver

Sugar

Danny Nicoll
01279 420679

Glass Jars

Gold Metal Lids
£42 Per Gross
White Plastic
£38 Per Gross
Discount 5 Gross +

David Tyler
01279 730228

Honey Buckets

David Tyler
01279 730228

Contacts

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