

BEEKEEPING IN NORWAY

A group of Beekeepers from Norway visited ADBK in August this year. Unfortunately on the day they visited our apiary at Monkwood Mains, the weather was very disappointing. The visitors were however heartily cheered by Tony and Elizabeth's hospitality and Elizabeth's home baking, with several of the Norwegian ladies returning home with recipes for Parly cake.

There were twelve in the group some of whom had been keeping bees for over thirty years. An evening was arranged for members of ADBKA to be given a talk on Beekeeping in Norway, and Donald who is Scottish, but has lived in Norway for over thirty years, volunteered to be the speaker. Donald described how most of the beekeeper are situated in the far S.W. of Norway. The country is mostly mountainous with only 3% being arable. Most of Norway is above the tree line and the summers are also short with honey production lower than other European countries, although the yield is relatively high. Beekeeping is mostly combined with other professional activities. There are some 150 beekeeping organisations. Donald explained that beehives were initially made of straw, and hollow tree trunks were also used. Hives were of the loose frame system and honey extractors were introduced in 1850.

Statistically there are approx. 3,500 beekeepers in Norway, mainly hobbyists. Annual production is approx. 800 tons with roughly 35 Kg per hive. In East Norway it may be 100 Kg. per hive. The Cranolian bee is the most popular at 46%, the Nordic Brown bee at 29% the Buckfast bee at 13% and Crosses at 12%.

The Norwegian Beekeeping Association was established in 1884 and has 2,700 members in 117 local Associations, with 14 at County level. The Association lobbies government, performs P.R and provides general information. It also breeds Queens, performs trials, does research and produces a monthly magazine called BIROKTEREN.

The Honey Marketing Board was established in 1927. It is a co-op with approx 1,500 members. It buys, packs and sells honey both from Norway and abroad. It receives used wax — 20 tons per year and treats and sells wax foundation to beekeepers. The Board also sells standard equipment via five agents who also receive honey from beekeepers.

Government Subsidy. There are annual negotiations between the government and farming associations. Lobbying by the Norwegian Beekeeping Association and the Honey Marketing Board resulted in beekeeping's importance being recognised. Beekeepers are now being subsidised with those who have more than 25 hives receiving £30 per hive to a maximum of £7,500 per annum. Sugar is also subsidised. If more than 6 hives on application = 50% of the cost is refunded = return of tax on sugar, however if buying from abroad no tax is refundable. If honey is sold as Ecological it is possible to buy Eco sugar. Ecological honey must have no chemicals in hive, and no chemicals sprayed within 3Km., and hives not to be placed near busy roads

Beehives. The National Board introduced standard frames and hives around 1908. They consist of bottom board, brood chamber, queen excluder, super and top. There are 10 frames (36.5 x 26 cm) per hive. Polystyrene hives are now very popular. Donald's apiary faces S.E., away from the Northerly winds. Continued on page 5

THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION.

By Eric McArthur

I was recently introduced to the above Commission, which when I started to ask around about it of friends, acquaintances, professional contacts, medical practitioners and ultimately politicians - even my barber, I was astounded to discover that few if any of those questioned, like myself, had even heard of Codex let alone understood the significance of the organisation. Perhaps I was asking the wrong people!

Beekeepers also should have some knowledge of Codex Alimentarius, since as food producers, viz: honey, they should be aware of the tight regulations defining exactly what honey is; its origins, its constituents, qualities and the parameters which honey must meet to be deemed saleable as a pure honey product. The Codex rules cover the complete range of extremely demanding tests which may be carried out on honey to determine adulteration or spoilage caused by heating and over heating. These tests are carried out to determine that levels of key constituents in honey fall within the pre-determined levels established for pure unadulterated, unspoiled honey; substances such as HMF (Hydromethylfurfuraldehyde), diastase and invertase, which are extremely sensitive to temperature. Water content is also an important criterion: Honey is also screened for adulteration with HFCS (High Fructose Corn Syrup) and any other substances which fall out-with the Codex definition of honey.

Codex's origins as a set of regulations, are based on the Napoleonic Code, which is a positive code of practice; if a list is drawn up of permitted items, anything not on this list is forbidden. Whereas under Common Law, anything not forbidden in a list is permitted.

The organisation which oversees Codex is the World Trade Organisation (WTO) formed in 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).

Despite the tight definition and control of food regulations, there are glaring omissions in the Codex rules primarily in the fields of GM foods, pharmaceutical and chemicals. There is great pressure being brought to bear to dilute the standards required for the labelling of foods with a GM content, also on Food Supplements including vitamins, minerals, nutrients and foods for Special Dietary uses. Codex rules preclude any claims being made that a normal diet does not have sufficient nutrition for people with Special Dietary needs and thus at a stroke denies patients suffering from ailments like cardio-vascular, cancer or diabetes etc access to such food supplements. Worse, under Codex vitamins, minerals and nutrients for special dietary needs are now classed as "poisons". However the pharmaceutical multinationals have very generously been excluded from such Codex regulations and patients are able to purchase their high priced patented products recommended for these conditions.

Regarding GM based food the real test of the power of Codex appeared in 2003. The principles of Codex for genetically modified foods, which were adopted at that time, were instrumental in the US, Canada and Argentina launching and winning a trade dispute at the WTO against the European Union. Further, future guidelines for GM foods will contribute to making such foods, which comply with the regulations, mandatory for all WTO member countries. The three countries mentioned above are now pushing hard that there be no requirement for food manufacturers and exporters of GM foods to disclose GM content in their products. Thus by default, while the world population sleeps, the big GM multinationals achieve their goal - the universal consumption of their GM foods. Unlike conventional foodstuffs GM crop seeds can be and are already well covered by patents.

Pesticides and Chemicals are out-with the mandate of Codex and in this field the disregard for Consumer Protection is quite dramatically demonstrated: despite 127 Nations agreeing to forbid the use of nine of the world's most dangerous persistent organic chemical pollutants; chemicals which are so dangerous to human health that the agreement to ban was unanimous: under Codex, seven of these nine chemicals have been reinstated for use; hexachlorobenzene, toxaphen, aldrin, dieldrin, pentachlorophenol, endrin and mirex.

Organic foods are increasingly being targeted by Codex. Rules governing the natural quality of organic foods are systematically being undermined and the Codex Committee on Food Labelling is moving to permit substances like sulphur dioxide, which is a known allergen; sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate, which are potentially carcinogenic and have been implicated in hyperactivity in children; carrageenan which is associated with ulcers and cancerous tumours in the digestive system.

Codex has given the Green Light to the use of ethylene for the Production, Processing and Marketing of Organic Foods. Thus moving this industry toward WTO enforced acceptance of the same dubious unnatural standards that non-organic foodstuffs are subject to. By reducing the high standards expected of organic foods the market is opened up to large non-organic food producers, who see the opportunity for higher profits on the back of the high reputation for purity which organic produce enjoys at present. In addition of course, organic produce does not contain pesticide residues or genetically modified organisms. On a more sinister note – good consumer health is not in the interests of the ‘health care’ industries. The demand for high quality organic produce is ultimately a threat to the chemical and pharmaceutical industries according to Dr Paul Taylor of the Dr Rath Health Foundation (<http://www.dr-rath-foundation.org/>), because as well as promoting good health organic products result in lower demands for pesticides, veterinary drugs and GM foods and thus are a continuing threat to multi national profits.

It would seem that Codex once ratified will enforce the routine treatment of all dairy cattle, with recombinant bovine growth hormone, resulting of course in all milk being contaminated by this hormone. By the same token all animals in the human food chain, be they furred, feathered or finned will be treated with sub-clinical antibiotics. All food, which is not eaten fresh, under Codex will be irradiated.

However well intentioned as Codex was, as a set of voluntary food regulations, somewhere between its resurrection and the present time the agenda altered virtually unnoticed. Instead of the Codex Alimentarius remaining voluntary; these Regulations suddenly became mandatory by default, because any sovereign State which is not Codex compliant, in a dispute loses its case however justifiable and correct that case may be. In 1962 the powers behind the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which presides over some 27 active subsidiary committees and ad hoc intergovernmental task forces, decided to embark on an ambitious program setting out comprehensive rules for all food consumed in the human food chain. The present aim of the project, which was initially proposed as a voluntary code is to have the Codex Alimentarius rules in place by early 2010 at which time Codex would be ratified world wide. Once ratified according to Dr Rima Laibow, President of the American National Association of Nutrition Professionals (NANP) – (www.Heathfreedom.org), Codex is cast, not just in stone, but the equivalent of solid rock – Codex it seems is not subject to the normal rules governing treaties between countries. Codex can NEVER be repealed! Is this a good idea?

FURTHER DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT

Eric’s article coincides with a groundswell of concern highlighted across a large section of the press and stimulating much debate on the blogosphere:

“The Plight of the Honeybee stung by funding from the Chemical Industry”, an article in the Guardian on 14.10.09 by George Monbiot, describes concerns that research to be done by Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), is being partially funded by Syngenta, a Swiss based company which manufactures neonicotinoids, insecticides linked to the disappearance of bees, and banned in several European countries.

Felicity Lawrence on 16.10.09 writes “It is too late to shut the door on GM foods” and asserts that “the public may be surprised to discover how far GM has already penetrated our food supply”. A report by the Royal Society to be published on Wednesday 21.10.09 will confirm this, and that the official line on GM is becoming untenable, since so much of the food on our supermarket shelves already has traces of GM in it.

The Soil Association is urging people to sign an online Petition on the problem of neonicotinoids and bees. (This links into an article published in March's Buzzword submitted by Rosie).

The Soil Association is calling on the Government to ban the use of neonicotinoids immediately and has produced the Soil Association Bee Briefing, available via their home page, as is the petition.

An article in October 2009 BBKA News entitled Neo-nicotinoids and Honey Bees explains the position of the British Beekeepers Association on this subject to date, thus: "Application of the pesticide to the seed should reduce the potential for exposure of honey bees to the CNIs* when compared to a spray or granular application. However, as was seen in Germany in 2008, problems can arise. The experience in Germany, where the application of the pesticide to the seed was incorrectly carried out and the design of the seed drilling equipment exacerbated the spread of dust containing the CNIs*. This led to intensive activity by the pesticide manufacturers working with the seed suppliers, seed drilling machinery suppliers, farmers and contractors to modify their equipment and practices as well as reinforce the product stewardship of their product at the seed dressing plants. These practices are also in place in the UK"

Meetings have taken place between the BBKA, Bayer Crop Sciences as well as Adrian Dixon, Head of the Pesticides Environment Policy Branch and the team at the HSE Chemicals Regulation Directorate in York which deals with the regulation and approvals of neo-nicotinoid containing products, and the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme.

Following these meetings "In general the BBKA has been reassured that the current and any increase in the use of CNIs* containing insecticides in the UK should not cause an unacceptable risk to honey bees, and that the lessons learned in Germany and elsewhere have been taken into account in the regulation and risk mitigation measures for CNIs* containing products placed on the UK market. Whether beekeepers like it or not we are faced with the fact that, unless new evidence arises which precludes their use, these products will continue to be placed on the market if there is a socio-economic need for them. The BBKA strategy is to maintain an open dialogue with the producers and users of such products, seek to influence them to minimise any potential for damage to bees, and ensure that farmers and contractors and the public are competent in their use."

*CNIs: Neo-nicotinoids such as Acetamprid, Clothianidin, Dinotefuran, Imidachloprid and others.



As my old English teacher used to say: compare and contrast the above. Should we be reassured by the BBKA, concerned by the other side of the argument, or is the jury still out?

What do people think? Email to bees5@btinternet.com
Thanks. Suzanne

COMING SOON TO A CINEMA NEAR YOU.

"The Vanishing of the Bees" will be showing at the Glasgow Film Theatre, 12 Rose Street, Glasgow, on Tuesday 3rd. November at 6.10 pm. Presented by the Co-op as part of their Plan Bee programme and introduced by Mr. Eric McArthur of the Scottish Beekeepers Association.

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Honey: Main Plants are Raspberries, Oil Seed Rape, Heather, Fruit Trees and Mustard. There is Summer and Autumn honey and most beekeepers move their hives to upland areas in Autumn. The Honey Marketing Board buys honey at £3 per Kilo and the retail price is £10 per Kilo. If sold at farmers markets or supermarkets it is £10 to £11 per Kilo. The price can depend on the packaging.

Honey Extraction. Similar to the UK. Heather honey has special equipment to extrude the honey i.e. needles agitate the cells separating the honey and the cappings need not be removed

Varroa is now unfortunately encroaching in Norway.

The lowest winter temperature is minus 10C and summer can be 25C.

Our Norwegian friends come from around the Stavanger region which looks particularly beautiful. It was really interesting to discuss beekeeping methods in Norway, which are not so different from ours apart from the greater use of polystyrene hives. Donald's talk also gave useful insights into the way their government supports beekeepers in Norway through subsidies. A very interesting talk which was given with enthusiasm and was thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed by all. Haste ye back!



APIARY HYGEINE AND QUARANTINE.

Attention to good apiary hygiene practices and the use of quarantine for both bees and equipment can have a significant impact on reducing infection levels and recurrence of disease. They should be practiced routinely by all beekeepers.

APIARY HYGEINE. Bees are a food producing animal so all beekeepers should maintain simple hygiene practices to prevent contamination of honey and the spread of disease between colonies. The following are a few pointers to help improve beekeeper practice.

CLEANLINESS

REPLACING OLD COMBS. Old brood combs carry disease pathogen loads, invariably increasing with age and use, so exchanging old for new has a significant impact on disease incidence. Super comb also carries a pathogen load though not to the same degree. As a result they should be exchanged regularly but not necessarily to the same frequency as brood comb unless they have contained brood or there is a significant disease problem. New super comb improves the quality and clarity of extracted honey; beginner beekeepers often win prizes at honey shows because they are only extracting from new combs.

HIVE BOXES. Brood boxes and supers should be cleaned annually. Propolis and wax should be scraped off the surfaces and the interior lightly scorched using a blow-lamp. Some beekeepers use caustic or washing soda to clean boxes.

SITTING OF BEES. To reduce the spread of disease between bee colonies they should be situated to reduce drifting to a minimum and measures taken to control robbing.

GLOVES. If you wear gloves to examine bees avoid those made of leather and use washing up gloves or similar. They are easy to wash off between colony examination and are cheap to replace when the time

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when the time comes. Also they give a better “feel” and make jarring the bees less of a problem.

HIVE TOOL wash your hive tool off between examinations. Use a solution of washing soda. It is cheap, dissolves propolis and also has anti-bacterial properties.

SMOKER These are difficult to clean. However the barrel is not a problem as it gets hot enough to kill disease pathogens. The bellows can be scrubbed off using a washing soda solution.

BEE SUIT Though the risk of disease spread by a dirty bee suit is low they should be washed regularly. If nothing else it removes the pheromone left after a bee has stung the material thus reducing the risk of encouraging stings. Also it look business like.

CONTAMINATION

When using medicaments in bee colonies it is preferable to only use approved products. As a general rule “good practice” should be followed in that treatments should not be applied if supers are on the colony, there is a nectar flow or feeding is being carried out. Comply with the manufacturers directions and maintain a full written record. These actions will ensure that you can show a duty of care to your bees.

QUARANTINE PRACTICES

EQUIPMENT When disease is a problem or the apiary is at high risk then keeping equipment such as hives, queen excluders, hive tool, smoker etc. for specific use at one apiary only has a significant benefit.

BROOD COMB Restrict Movement. Moving brood combs between colonies carries a high risk of spreading disease. It is a major spreader of disease when the beekeeper fails to recognize the early disease signs. Many beekeepers move frames of eggs to confirm if a colony is queen right, if so it is best to maintain a written record or only exchange brood with the adjacent hive. Exchanging comb between apiary sites is a very high-risk procedure

SUPER COMB Restrict Movement. Super comb carries a risk of spreading disease. Ideally comb should be specifically used on one colony only. It is simple to mark a super and the top-bars of the frames with the colony number. This ensures that the beekeeper can maintain colony quarantine for supers. A less effective system is to ensure that supers and combs are restricted to use in one apiary, known as “apiary quarantine”. It has been show both in the UK and abroad that these measures significantly reduce the occurrence of disease.

ISOLATION APIARIES Collected swarms can be taken to a separate isolation apiary, hived on foundation and allowed to progress through two brood cycles i.e six weeks. Check the bees and brood to ensure no disease signs are present, before introducing the colony to and established apiary.

HOSPITAL APIARIES If a beekeeper should have outbreaks of disease in several apiaries then it may be beneficial to put all the infected colonies into one of the diseased apiary sites thus reducing the risk of spreading disease into the other apparently healthy colonies. In the case of the reportable diseases, currently American Foul Brood, European Foul Brood, Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps, a movement licence would be required. The authorised bee inspector dealing with your case will help you with this procedure.

.(the National Bee Unit Food and Environment Research Agency. July 2009) kindly supplied by Tony Riome

Bumblebees Return

A Bumblebee that died out in the UK but survived in New Zealand having been shipped there more than 100 years ago looks set to return after experts discovered how to successfully breed the “fussy eater” in captivity.

The short haired bees were transported to New Zealand on the first refrigerated lamb boats in the late nineteenth cen-

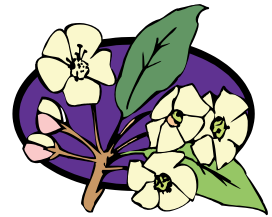
tury to pollinate crops of red clover.

The bee became extinct in this country in 2000, and now Natural England, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the RSPB and bee charity Hymettus have launched a scheme to bring the species home.

Nikki Gammans, project officer for the reintroduction, said: “The short

haired bumblebee is a fussy eater. It needs fresh pollen every day, and not just any old pollen. It needs high-quality pollen that has been collected by other bumblebees”.

It is hoped the reintroduced bees will not go the way of those which disappeared from this country, because of the efforts to restore habitat on farms in the south-east and on the reserve at Dungeness.



Frequently asked questions

Beginners often ask: What are laying workers?

If the Queen is accidentally lost, it may result in some of the workers in the production of sufficient ovarian development to lead to the laying of a few eggs. These lack the impregnation by the drone and, being laid in the smaller or worker cells, result in the production only of under sized drones. Laying workers lay irregularly, frequently laying several eggs in one cell. When there are many such eggs there must be many laying workers as each lays only a few.

It takes two or more weeks to develop laying workers. Queenlessness should be discovered before this stage is reached. The remedy for laying workers is to restore the balance of the colony by supplying one or two combs of eggs and young brood taken from another colony (brushing back adhering bees when taking the combs) followed by a new queen as soon as possible. The uniting of a queen in a nucleus by the newspaper method, the day after combs of eggs and young brood have been supplied is a reliable remedy.



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