

# Buzzword



May 2014

Inside: Spring Report. Bumblebees. More Room, and more.



The mild winter means that most beekeepers have found their bees coming through the season in good numbers. The risk is that Varroa has also come through in good numbers and may require vigorous treatment.

May is the month when the brood nest expands rapidly, and we should ensure the bees have all they require to facilitate this. If necessary feeding should be implemented in order to ensure there is no break in the queen's laying routine.

The weather is now warming up, although some days a cold wind still ensures a sudden drop in temperature and the beekeeper must judge carefully if it is wise to open his or her hives for the first inspection of the season. If so, check food stores, remove old frames and replace, and clip queens if that is your preferred method of swarm prevention/control. Check for varroa and disease and treat if necessary.

## Spring report from the President

Welcome to all the beginners who have joined the club and attended the 2014 Beginners Course. Most have already visited the Club Apiary and we look forward to seeing you throughout the summer.

Cold winds, rain and cloudy skies meant that the first full inspections at the Association Apiary were only possible late in April. Most of the colonies were thriving but unfortunately one very weak hive had laying workers with only one frame of bees. The hive was dismantled and the few bees left to find a home in a neighbouring hive. Another colony had no queen or brood but had a lot of bees. A frame of eggs was taken from another hive and inserted to give the colony a chance to raise emergency queen cells.

Over the 2013-14 winter season of talks we had to make changes to the venue, sometimes at very short notice. We latterly moved to the Carrick Centre, Maybole which is a very comfortable, ideal meeting-place but unfortunately meant that folk from further afield found it was just too far away. We are currently looking into finding a venue for the coming winter which is more central – possibly Kyle Academy – and hope to be able to report on this very soon.

As you will all see from the Summer Programme which is on the website we are busy almost every weekend either at Shows, Association Apiary meetings or member's apiaries. Directions to Ian Stirling's apiary and my apiary will be given nearer the time. The Association Apiary is run for the benefit of ALL members to help people to learn about beekeeping and no matter how long you have kept bees you will find something of interest there. It's also enjoyable getting to know your fellow beekeepers and catching up on the latest news so do come along.

This year the Royal Highland Show held at Ingliston in Edinburgh have added two new classes to be entered by Local Beekeeping Associations. The Committee are planning to enter both of these. The Schedule stipulates in the second display the items must contain either honey and/or beeswax, labelled for information. If you are able to lend any of the following which you have made using either honey/and or beeswax please let me know and they can be included in our display (must be labelled for information)  
Cosmetics, potions, lotions, non-alcoholic honey drinks, preserves, conserves, pickles, mustards, vinegars, chutneys and polishes  
The RHS Honey Schedule is on their website and includes many categories including baking. If anyone wishes to enter something but

is unable to attend the Show I would be happy to transport items for you. Entries close on 19 May (on paper) or 26 May online at ([www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)). All entries have to be delivered to the Showground not later than 11.00am on Wed. 18<sup>th</sup> June so I would need to receive any entries by 8pm. Tues. 17<sup>th</sup> June.

Ayr Flower Show is later than usual this year – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August - because of the Commonwealth Games. This may give everyone more time to prepare exhibits and perfect baking entries! Recipes for the baking are in the Show schedule which will be available soon.

I hope everyone's bees came through the winter successfully and that you all have a very good season with healthy, happy bees and lots of honey.

Joyce Duncan.



## Spring Management: **More Room.**

**It is widely accepted** that one of the principal causes of swarming is congestion of the brood nest, but what is not so generally recognised is that this condition often occurs early in the season and if steps are not taken then, swarms may develop later despite preventative measures adopted by the beekeeper afterwards.

Colonies may commence brood rearing as early as Mid-January when only a few eggs are laid by the queen. If the colony is strong and weather and locality prove favourable, this amount may increase substantially by the end of March. A sufficient number of empty cells is required for this purpose and the subsequent development of the

larvae. Equally important, these cells must be in a position where the colony can make use of them.

By April, early nectar and pollen may be available, which, when gathered by forager bees, serves as an invaluable food source, thus hastening colony build-up. In early spring, the bee community confines itself to that part of the hive used for brood rearing and, if available, a small area immediately above it. When space above the brood is lacking, freshly gathered nectar is often stored in and around the brood nest and as this has a greater volume than when ripened as honey, many cells which would be better utilised for brood rearing merely become storage cells. Later examinations may not reveal these conditions, as the colony in all probability would have used up the food in a short space of time for feeding brood. So, too, can this invaluable food source become the means of introducing the germ of swarming fever unless space is made available for storage outwith the brood nest.

**The remedy is simple.** A super of **drawn comb** should be provided over the brood chamber. If fresh nectar is present in the brood chamber, a comb containing some can be withdrawn and placed in the super, which induces the bees upwards. An uncapped comb of last season's honey serves the same purpose.

The use of a queen excluder is recommended to avoid the risk of having brood reared in the super combs.

**The examination of stock in spring** will reveal that the brood nest has been started in the position last occupied by the winter cluster. This position is frequently found to be in the upper part of the hive. Where a double brood chamber is used, this situation can be a disadvantage for, during cold weather, bees are loathe to travel downward into the cold belt of air formed in the lower extremities of the hive. Thus throughout part of the season the bottom brood chamber may remain deserted. This waste of space is accentuated in a hive made up of a standard brood chamber with a shallow chamber on top. In such a hive, a colony may adhere to the limited space afforded by the shallow combs and may swarm later through lack of accessible room although the greater part of the comb area in the hive remains empty.

**If noted in the early summer, this condition is easily rectified** by switching round the top and bottom chambers so that the empty combs are now positioned on top and thereby made accessible to the bees. To transfer a comb of brood from the brood nest to the empty chamber above will induce the colony to make quicker use of the extra room made

available, but this operation should be carried out only with powerful colonies, as premature spreading may result in chilled larvae. Where the brood nest is situated between the brood chambers in a double-brood-chambered hive so that brood is present in both the top and bottom frames, this reversal of chambers should be avoided, as it would split the brood nest, leaving an intervening area of empty comb or stores which the cluster may be unable to bridge. This again may cause chilled brood.

Principles of Practical Beekeeping. Robert Couston.



## Bumblebees

Bumblebees have an annual lifecycle. New nests are started each spring by queens. Queen bumblebees are very large, and from February onwards you will see them feeding on flowers like willow catkins, bluebells and lungwort. You might see them flying low over the ground searching for somewhere to start their nests. Some species prefer to nest underground in empty mouse holes, while others nest just above the ground in dense grass or piles of leaves.

Once the queen has found somewhere to nest, she collects lots of pollen and nectar and then lays her first batch of eggs. She incubates a bit like a bird, sitting on them and 'shivering' her muscles to produce warmth.

When the eggs hatch the white grubs eat pollen and nectar, grow rapidly, and then form pupae (like the chrysalises made by butterflies). A few days later the first workers hatch from their pupae and begin helping their mother, expanding the nest and gathering food.

By mid-summer the nests of some species can contain more than 400 worker bees. At this point the queen starts laying both male and female eggs. The females are fed extra food and become future queens. Both

males and new queens leave the nest to mate, and the new queens burrow into the ground to hibernate until the following spring. The males, workers, and the old queen die off in the autumn, leaving the nest to decay.

Bumblebees can vibrate themselves, using their muscles. That's how they manage to stay whirring around at temperatures as low as 2°C without freezing. In comparison, a honeybee can't fly in temperatures below 8°C. Bumblebees' fur also arms them against the cold.

Honeybees and bumblebees both belong to the order *Apiformes*.

There are around 20,000 different types of bee in the world.

Many farmers are now breeding bumblebees, as three-quarters of the 115 most-consumed plants and crops require pollination by insects to produce seeds and fruits. Some plants like peas, beans and clover are pollinated almost exclusively by bumblebees.

Bumblebees do not sting in a wild and arbitrary fashion, and will warn potential victims before they act by lying on the floor and vibrating. Only if the victim still refuses to leave the bumblebee alone will it administer its sting.

Bumblebees do produce honey, but far less than honeybees. This as we know is because their colony only has a lifespan of one year containing only approx. 400-600 members. They vibrate their muscles to keep warm in winter eating honey to maintain their energy.

Additional information from Wonderpedia May 2014.



## Alternative to Imidacloprid

All farmers aren't in trouble it seems. A [Catch The Buzz](#) published the following information coming from the [Renewable Fuels Association](#) (RFA): “The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today projected that farmers will harvest a record corn crop of 13.76 billion bushels in 2013, up 28 percent from last year and 5 percent larger than the previous record crop. USDA expects that farmers will achieve a national average yield of 154.4 bushels per acre; that would be the third-highest yield on record, despite farmers experiencing one of the slowest, wettest planting seasons on record.

“America’s farmers have again risen to the challenge of producing abundant feed, food, and fuel for consumers around the world. After the disappointment of last year’s drought-stricken crop, farmers have responded by producing what is likely to be the largest crop of all time,” said RFA President and CEO Bob Dinneen. 'By rapidly adopting new seed and equipment technologies over the past decade, this country’s corn growers have distinguished themselves as the most productive in the world.' ”

*Maybe so, but a lot of this corn production may be at the expense of honey bee nutrition. Some consider this monoculture much more problematic than pesticides affecting beekeepers in the corn belt. There's been a lot of emphasis on the plight of one beekeeper who keeps bees in the region . [He](#) was also featured in the Time Magazine piece. Jim Tew in this month's Bee Culture thinks food resources are a growing problem for beekeepers in what is being increasingly called the “[anthropocene](#).” This “gorilla in the room” has also been the concern of [certain UK researchers](#).*

Bayer has gotten the message it appears about pesticides and honey bees and so a [Catch the Buzz release](#) reveals the Corporation has come up with a more “bee friendly” chemical. The active ingredient is flupyradifurone, and will be marketed under the trade name Sivanto.

## CATCH THE BUZZ

Bayer Introduces Imidacloprid Alternative

Bayer CropScience introduces a new class of Chemistry as an alternative to Imidacloprid. The new active ingredient is a systemic from the butenolide chemical class and is active on sucking insect pests. The AI is flupyradifurone. It will be marketed under the trade name **Sivanto**. It is marketed as a “bee friendly” product with no bloom (application) restrictions. It will be registered in 2015.

A host of annual and perennial crops have been tested for aphids, leafhoppers, psyllids, scales, thrips and whiteflies. It causes a rapid feeding cessation effect from both soil and foliar applications. It is active via ingestion and contact. It is an adult knockdown product that controls nymph and egg stages.

It is systemic for root uptake and translaminar from foliar applications. It has, says Bayer, minimal impact on beneficials. The label includes a 4 hour reentry interval.

Apis Newsletter and Catch the Buzz.



On the subject of American Beekeeping Practices, I was baking a cake the other day, and one of the ingredients was ground Almonds, produced in USA. It got me thinking about the honeybees which would have been sacrificed in the making of this product. There is a DVD available in the Association Library called **More than Honey**. It is a documentary by Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof which compares small family beekeeping with industrialised honey farms. It's worth watching just to see the way honeybees are used in the pollination of Almonds and other crops in the USA.

For those of you who would rather own it, it is available from Amazon for approx. £9 odds.

Needless to say I shan't be buying any more ground Almonds.  
Suzanne.

**Library:** For those of you who still have Library books (and it's good to see you're keen on learning about beekeeping) you could, if you are finished with them, hand them over to a committee member, or indeed, myself if you happen to be taking part in any of the shows. Many thanks. Suzanne.

### ***More Hives Stolen.***

Reports recently again highlight the sorry tale of bees being stolen from apiaries. Incidents in Craichie by Forfar, Angus and reported in the Herald on April 29th., and also from a farm in Coupar Angus, Perthshire, could be related. In the latest incident, three queen bees, the working bees and three honeycomb frames were taken. Rosie Crighton, secretary of the Aberdeen and District branch of the SBA, said that hives were becoming an increasingly popular target for criminals.

The second report in the Herald on May 6<sup>th</sup> indicates that a Rogue Beekeeper could be behind the thefts after raids took place on Balgrove Honey Farm in Coupar Angus. Here six queens and 18 honeycomb frames were taken. The president of the East of Scotland Beekeeping Association, Gavin Ramsay, warned the raids could be the work of a "beekeeping loner" out to restock his depleted colonies, and people should be on their guard. The last two thefts are very similar, and he thinks it could well be the same person responsible. He warns people to look out for folk selling bees outside the usual channels, or a rogue beekeeper trying to recover from having lost their colonies.

As Rosie Crighton says, keep your hives out of sight and avoid publicity.

Reports in The Herald by Daniel Sanderson and Tim Bugler.

*Thanks to Jane for the following information.*

**Martha Kearney** is hosting a Bee Garden Party for **Bees for Development** and **Bees Abroad** at Lambeth Palace in London on Tuesday 1 July 2014, from 6 to 8.30 pm. An evening reception with wine, canapés and music - to raise awareness and funds for beekeeping projects around the world. Tickets on sale from 1 May. Save the date in your diary now!

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Observations, news, poems, greets or groans, all will be most welcome. Suzanne.