

## NHBKA November 2014 Newsletter

Our last indoor meeting before the Christmas break was opened by our Chairman, Gary Hammond, with another full agenda for the evening.

The unanimous decision for our logo from the previous meeting, a realistic bee image in a hexagon, was presented by Gary. We will begin to use the logo on our publicity material and we will get some idea of costs for producing polo and T-shirts, and fleeces with a transfer or possibly an embroidered roundel. You could wear the roundel next to your BBKA Basic Assessment badge. There are no current plans at present to hold our indoor meetings around a large toadstool.

Gary gave us brief review of the 83<sup>rd</sup> National Honey show he attended in October, very good value if you get a £12 3-day ticket. The lectures (and those from 2013) are available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/nationalhoneyshow>. This year's lecturers included Ricarda Kather and Jamie Ellis. The honey competition had over 1700 entries from almost 250 entrants with a wide variety of classes. In one of the more unusual entries, wild comb had been drawn inside a bell jar. Gary came away with an oxalic acid vaporizer for treating varroa.

Chris Mercer and Gary represented us at the Herts committee meeting in October and I attended a treasurers' meeting with Gary and our treasurer Vince Wright with representatives from Welwyn, St. Albans, and S. E. Herts. We discussed methods to facilitate the work of the Herts treasurer; the position at the moment is unfilled although being covered by the S. E. Herts treasurer. The intention was not to change the current independent branch accounting but to standardise on the information each branch uses so that the data submitted by the Herts treasurer (to HMRC etc.) can be easily consolidated from the branch data.

There are several training opportunities being offered by Welwyn BKA next year

- a new season preparation course – 3 evenings – 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> March - £15
- a swarm collecting course – 1 evening – 25<sup>th</sup> March - £5
- a BBKA Basic Assessment preparation course – 2 evenings – 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> February - £10

If you need details of these please liaise with Gary.

North Herts are hosting both the Bee World event at the Herts County Show next year and also a Bee Disease Course. Gary hoped we could make the Bee World event more interactive than previous years. The Bee Disease Course has been underwritten by Herts and is eligible for a BDI grant, it is planned for 30<sup>th</sup> May. We will need volunteers for both events so please pass your name to Gary or me if you are interested in participating.

We hope to organise a day long event featuring Roger Patterson next year. Gary has agreed with Herts that they will underwrite the event. The day will include lunch and will be open to other BKAs. We anticipate an audience of about 150 people. Chris Mercer attended a Roger Patterson event in Bucks for about 90 people with an entrance fee of £10, so we would hope to do something similar.

Hertsmere Borough Council is running Level2 Award Course in Food Safety in Catering in January. The courses are £50 for a group booking but it is felt they are too commercial for any requirements we may have. If you are interested, please contact Gary in the first instance.

Gary handed round an interesting development in the control of varroa mites; it is called the Bee Gym and sits on top of an open mesh floor inside the hive behind the hive entrance. The bees squeeze under a very fine Limbo wire and the unit also has spikes that encourage the bees to groom themselves and hence get rid of the mites. The Bee Gym costs £15, details at [www.beegym.co.uk](http://www.beegym.co.uk), and are a useful part of an overall Integrated Pest Management approach.

Sharon Moat has a background in general nursing and as an oncology nurse and gave a very interesting and instructive presentation about bee sensitivity describing our normal reaction to a bee sting, a hyper-sensitive reaction and also details of anaphylaxis.

In a normal reaction to a bee sting, the area of the sting becomes red, swollen, and itchy, this reaction may continue for a few days but will not spread elsewhere. The recommended treatment is to remove the sting and wash the area with soap. A cold compress may also help the patient feel better. You should try not to scratch the area and can take paracetamol or ibuprofen for any pain.

A hypersensitive or allergic reaction to a sting may extend beyond the area of the sting; a sting in the arm may spread down to the fingertips for example. Antihistamine can be used to damp down the body's immune response. A short course of steroids may also be prescribed to deal with any swelling associated with the sting.

Anaphylaxis is an unusual sensitivity or an over reaction to something, it may occur as a reaction to food, nuts in particular, milk, seafood, or perhaps some form of medication. The reaction is immediate and usually results in itchy or raised skin. The subject may become distant, or vague, and light headed. In an apiary, where a sting could occur through a bee suit or glove, we should note if a subject may become unusually quiet. The reaction may result in swollen eyes, lips or hands, and cause narrowing of the airways, possibly abdominal pain, and possibly loss of consciousness. An anaphylactic reaction is quite different from the reaction from a localised sting, and affects other parts of the body. An anaphylactic reaction is an emergency, so dial 999 from a landline or 112 from a mobile. The 112 number has functionality which will hunt for any available network for the call. It can be made on any mobile and will not require the code to unlock the phone as it overrides the phone security. Operators taking the call can access the base station and triangulate the call; obviously very useful if calls are made from a rural apiary. The caller should tell the operator that they suspect anaphylaxis. The patient may have a previous history of reaction and carry an EpiPen or auto-injector; injections of one dose are made into the thigh muscle. A second dose may be required and the attending paramedics should be informed if an injection has been administered. If the patient is conscious, then they should be laid flat and made comfortable. If the patient is unconscious, then the patient should be put into the recovery position; if breathing stops, then CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) should be performed.

An anaphylactic reaction to a sting is uncommon, and usually a person is predisposed to a reaction; they may have asthma, or an allergic skin condition (e.g. atopic eczema). Beekeepers can be at risk as each time a person is stung, the body may have an equal or higher response, so it seems possible that in some people the response can be accumulative. There is no reason to suspect that they will suffer from anaphylaxis but it may be beneficial to discuss treatment of bee stings with their GP and possibly seek referral to an allergy centre.

Deaths from anaphylaxis **are** rare; there are 20 – 30 deaths each year from anaphylaxis across all causes.

Sharon's top tips for beekeepers are

- know the Post Code or Ordnance Survey coordinates of the apiary
- dial 112 from a mobile
- have a First Aid kit on site (cold packs, antihistamine, water)
- calm down the patient
- have next of kin details of people visiting an apiary
- have details of allergic reactions for visitors, especially from bee stings (possibly from a health questionnaire)

A big thank you to Sharon for an informative and very practical presentation.

After an excellent refreshment break Gary gave a presentation on one aspect on the theme of Safety in the Apiary entitled 'Things to be considered when setting up an apiary'. We took a comprehensive canter though

- Finding the site
- Consideration of the general public
- Forage
- Environment
- Access
- Space
- Signage
- Animals
- Crop Spraying

Finding a site for your hives will always involve some compromise. You need good relations with neighbours, and you need to educate them about pollinators, swarms, flight paths, etc. A jar of honey always helps oil the wheels of acceptability. Beekeepers would prefer to locate hives in their gardens but not all gardens are suitable. Local farmers and gamekeepers are often useful when looking for a suitable location. The traditional annual payment for a rural apiary plot is a jar of honey per hive, Gary reckons this equates to a rent of £18,000 per acre, slightly more than the normal acreage rental. If you have concerns over a location, a second beekeeper's opinion is always worthwhile. If you have to locate your hives away from home remember that the closer proximity to your home the better, especially if your time is limited.

Remember that despite all the publicity of late, not all the general public will have a positive view of bees, so avoid hives close to paths and bridleways, and try to manage flight paths using hedges and fences. We all aspire to colonies of good-tempered bees, and that's even more important in an urban setting. Unfortunately hives do get stolen, so it's better to make your apiary less conspicuous if you can and consider branding the hive body parts.

When you are looking at the forage (food and water) in particular areas, it's worth remembering that open fields are sometimes not the best sources of nectar. Intensive agriculture often produces green deserts for bees although this is gradually improving as farmers are being encouraged to leave uncultivated field boundaries, and local authorities leave verges and in some cases plant them with wildflowers. In fact, apiaries in an urban landscape can provide an abundance of nectar throughout the year. A source of water is important as the bees use it to dilute the stored honey for food and use it to regulate the temperature inside the hive.

The environment of the location where apiaries are situated is important. Avoid damp and prevailing winds, foragers need to land and take off; a sheltered south facing site is best. Although bees cope with cold better than damp, avoid frost pockets as it will cause the bees to use up their stores more quickly. If you're in a rural environment, remember to protect the hives from livestock and deer.

Good, safe, easy access to the hives is essential. There are no prizes for carrying heavy full supers around, and it's no surprise that beekeepers often suffer from back complaints, so bend those knees and use a wheelbarrow. Beekeeping is much more pleasurable at a safe level site that is easy to manage.

When considering the spacing of the hives in an apiary assume a minimum of two hives to cover contingencies. Make sure you have good access around each hive for managing inspections, and that the hives aren't located in the flight paths of other hives. Ideally stands should be 24cm high to provide a comfortable working height and make sure the hive sits level on the stand. Point hive entrances in different directions and allow two hive widths between hives; this will stop drifting and reduce the spread of disease.

Use signage at the apiary to caution visitors that there are live bees in the vicinity; also indicate the location, a contact and what to do in an emergency (also see Sharon's Top Tips)

At farm apiaries, avoid locations where large farm animals have access, or erect a barrier to prevent the animals interfering with the hives, this is especially important if hives are located temporarily to take advantage of particular crops.

And lastly, when considering a rural location, discuss the use of sprays with the farmer or landowner so hives can be closed or moved if spraying will be a problem.

(Full body bee protection suits for donkeys are available from Gary for use during the forthcoming pantomime season at reasonable cost)

Please let Gary know if you require fondant for the winter. If we have enough requests we should be able to get it at a better price.

Derrick is a keen proponent of less is more, so was keen to pass on his experience with the swarm boxes he uses. Rather than disturbing the bees every 10 days with a plague of fire and earthquake, Derrick allows his bees to swarm (the emerging swarms will happily use one of the several swarm boxes in his apiary) and limits his inspections to check for disease. This season, Derrick accommodated 9 swarms from his hives.

Don't forget to book for the BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University, the dates are Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Our next indoor meeting is on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at Howgills and starts at 7:30pm but don't forget our festive get-together on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December at the Buck's Head in Little Wymondley. The address is Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, Hertfordshire SG4 7HY and we will meet from 19:30 onwards. Gary has promised us a quiz; I guess the winner gets a 'B' rather than an 'A'. Hope to see you there.