

Autumn Management – Adam Leitch, Reigate Beekeepers

Autumn is the start of the beekeeping year. Like many farming disciplines, it's time to sow the seeds for next years crop. That means healthy colonies, well provisioned, and protected from the environment (predators & weather). A little time invested now, pays back ten fold next year. Furthermore, as autumn is a relatively quiet time of year, and the weather is still fairly mild, it's an ideal time to ready everything for next season. Repairing supers, sterilising and preparing frames (without foundation), making any new equipment and storing everything away for the winter months. Remembering that drawn comb is an asset, suitable protection from damp, and wax moth damage allows us to be ready when the colonies burst into life next spring.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Bees:•Checked for Varroa levels•Young, virile queens•Winter bees that have developed fat bodies•Checked for drones•Spare Nucleus for emergency requeening•Nosema / Acarine Checks•Foulbrood checks•Watertight•Mouse Guards in place•Wasp attacks•Fed & provisioned for winter•Queen right•Woodpecker Guards•Small Hive Beetle (SHB) awareness.•Bricks on lids if exposed•Regular checks for vandals, animal damage etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Annual Crop•Honey seeded, labelled & stored•Old stock, bottled and dispatched•Wax cappings processed•Annual Rents Paid•Candlemaking•Preparations for Christmas markets.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Beekeeper•Education,•Conferences•Shows•Analysis of records•Plan for next year•Study for exams!

•Equipment

- Sterilised
- Supers (dried)*
- Suitably Stored
- Mouse / Bee tight
- Co-Location of any out-apiary equipment
- Woodwork Repaired
- Mouse / Bee tight
- Tidy Apiaries – trim grass, cut back brambles/branches

FERA Guidance on Daily Mite Drops (as at May 2010)

August / September

Medium / High is greater than 4 per day - Treat
Low Infestation is less than 4 per day – Treatment not yet required.

Check again before Christmas!

References / Books for further reading:

Guide to Bees & Honey, Ted Hooper
Beekeeping – A Seasonal Guide, Rob Brown
Practical Beekeeping, Clive de Bruyn
Keeping Healthy Honey Bees, David Aston & Sally Bucknall
www.reigatebeekeepers.org.uk (for a copy of this presentation/handout)
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm> (Bee Base -the National Bee Unit website)

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For handouts / a copy of the presentation with large text size. Please contact me using the details above.

Additional thanks to:- Martin Adams (Hives in flooded quarry photo)

How to do a Small Hive Beetle Inspection

Guidance on the lifecycle of Small Hive Beetle can be found here <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=125>
Method: Scanning combs and boxes. Remove the hive roof and place it upside down next to the hive. Remove the supers and upper brood chamber (in double brood chamber colonies) and place them on the upturned roof for a few minutes. Place the crown board on top. A few minutes later lift the boxes out of the way and scan for beetles on the inner surface of the upturned roof. When hives are opened adult beetles quickly scuttle away from the light, so look for adult beetles moving inside the hive, running across combs, crown boards and the hive floor. In warm weather, adult beetles will be mostly on the hive floor; in colder weather they hide themselves in the cluster for warmth. Look for clusters of eggs (two-thirds the size of bee eggs) in irregular masses usually in cracks and crevices in the hive. Look for larvae in the combs or on the bottom board. Remove combs one at a time and carefully examine each of them for evidence of SHB larvae or adults. Although they may at first glance look like wax moth, they can easily be distinguished after close examination.

From Page 11, the “The Small Hive Beetle” – Crown Copyright © 2003.

VETERINARY MEDICINE ADMINISTRATION RECORD – TO BE KEPT FOR 5 YEARS

NAME AND FULL ADDRESS OF PERSON KEEPING RECORD ADDRESS: POST CODE:	NAME: _____ NBU ID No: _____ TEL NO: _____ FIRM: _____ VETINARY NAME / MAP REFERENCE: _____
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TO BE COMPLETED AT TIME OF PURCHASE					TO BE COMPLETED AT TIME OF ADMINISTRATION							
Name and Address of Supplier of Medicinal Product	Date Purchased	Identity and Quantity of Medicine Product			Date of Admin. Initiated	Identification of Animal or Category of Animals Treated		Date treatment finished	Date withdrawal period ended	Name of person administering veterinary medicine	Total quantity of veterinary medicine used	Date & route of disposal if not administered
		Name	Batch No	Quantity		Withdrawal Period	No.					

- NB:**
- Columns headed in *Italics* relate to information which is **NOT** a statutory requirement but will assist to meet some Farm Assurance Scheme requirements
 - Principal Purchaser of all veterinary medicinal products must be kept

These are general guidance notes only, and cannot be taken as an authoritative view of the law. Further information can be obtained from Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 3LS. Telephone: 01332 836911. www.vmd.gov.uk

Autumn Essentials - Feeding

Syrup = 2lbs of sugar to 1 pint of water. (Note White sugar only!). A full British National frame holds 2-3kg (4-6lbs of stores). Ted Hooper suggests 40-45lbs for a queen who can fill a Modified National Brood chamber with Brood, and 50-60lbs, for a queen who can fill a brood & a half (or 14 x 12).

Example: Imagine it's autumn and I have a 14 x 12 colony that has 28lbs of honey (estimated). I live in the south of England and with the mild winters I do get late brood rearing – so prefer to have close to the high side of recommended stores in the hive. If I want to get 60lbs total, I need $60\text{lbs} - 28\text{lbs} = 32\text{lbs}$ more “honey equivalent” syrup. Why do I say equivalent? Well, 32lbs of syrup doesn't require 32lbs of sugar – 1 pound of sugar is approximately equivalent to $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of honey (or 1kg to 1.25kg). So we divide 32lbs by 1.25 = 25.6lbs of sugar made into syrup.

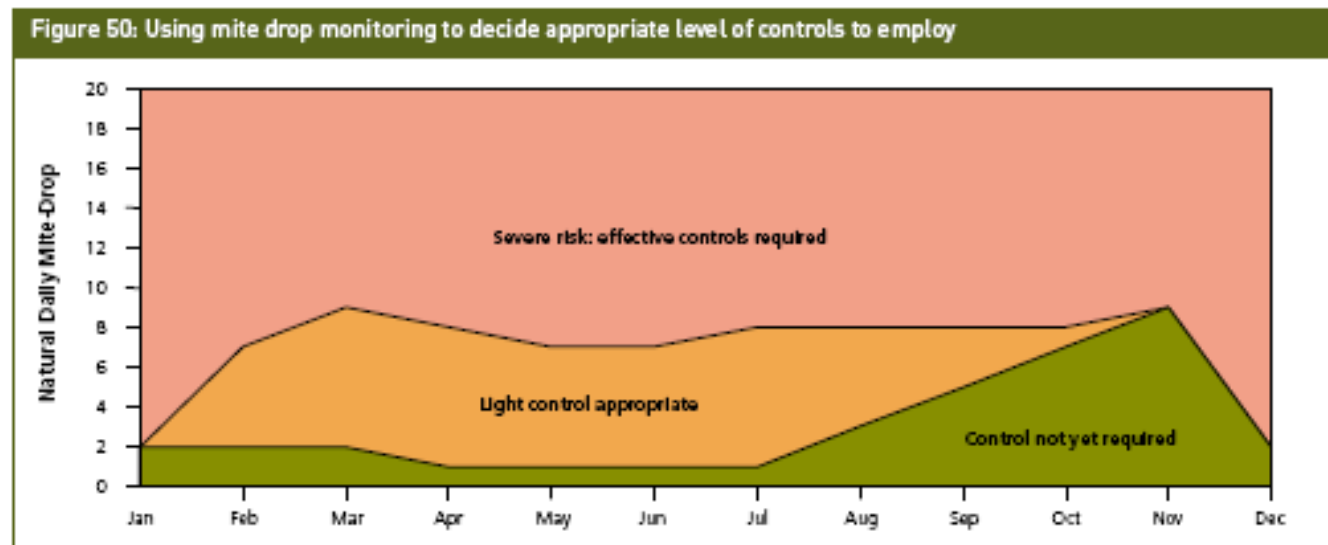
Don't forget to dribble some down the feeder entrance hole, bees aren't mind readers – they don't always twig there is a food supply right above their heads!

Autumn Essentials – Varroa

A simple way to check if treatment is needed is to use the online varroa calculator here:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=67>

The latest guidance and booklets from FERA are superb – I can't recommend them highly enough. They can be downloaded in PDF form, or hard copies requested from the BeeBase website.



Graph from “Managing Varroa”, The Food and Environment Research Agency © Crown Copyright 2009

Hefting Hives

Hefting hives is the process of lifting either one, or both sides of the hives, possibly with a set of spring balance scales to estimate the amount of stores in a hive. A good write-up can be found by Pam Gregory (NDB) here:

<http://www.britishbee.org.uk/files/beecraft-downloads/feb04-beginners.pdf>

With only one or two hives, it's difficult for beginners to gauge the weight, so a simple solution is to take an empty beehive, and rest it on a set of bathroom scales, with something to raise it up to a normal working height. Then fill it with bricks until it has the requisite amount of weight to represent the stores. Practise hefting it perhaps once a day for a few days running and you soon get a good feel for the typical weight to look for.

Pam has a different technique which she describes as follows "My own formula is to lift up the back of the hive. If I can tip it easily then it there isn't enough food; if I find it hard to lift then there will probably be enough. Knowing where the balance lies comes with experience, so it is a good idea to heft hives at intervals to get a feel for it. However, discovering there is not enough food is a bit like finding the horse has gone when you open the stable door."

Bees confined to the hive during winter cannot process syrup easily – without the ability to get out on cleansing flights, dysentery can result, and when clustering bees do not process the syrup, it can ferment (although Thymol crystals can be added to prevent this). Overall, the feeding is much better done earlier in the Autumn period – finishing October at the latest, preferably September. If they are light, you may need to consider providing fondant if they are light on stores.