



CBKA Newsletter

December 2011

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From the Exam Secretary

I spoke about the BBKA examinations at the last meeting. The examinations consist of a series of practical and written (theoretical) exams.

The first exam that should be undertaken is the Basic Assessment. Last year four candidates from CBKA took this exam and all passed. This assessment covers, as the name suggests, basic proficiency in practical beekeeping. The syllabus emphasises bee disease, bee husbandry and swarm prevention and takes about an hour. The assessment consists of opening a hive and going through it with the examiner asking 'pertinent' questions as this is done as well as a question and answer session. The exam is normally carried out at an local apiary.

Once the Basic has been passed it is possible to take two practical examinations; the General Husbandry and Advanced Husbandry. These exams are for beekeepers who prefer the practical approach to beekeeping. The level of these examinations is progressively raised, the General Husbandry is a three hour exam and the Advanced Husbandry is an all day affair.

On the theoretical side, once the Basic has been passed, it is possible to take the written exams called modules. These are;

- Module 1 - Honey bee Management
- Module 2 - Honey bee Products and Forage
- Module 3 - Honey bee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning
- Module 5 - Honey bee Biology
- Module 6 - Honey bee Behaviour
- Module 7 - Selection & Breeding of Honey bees
- Module 8 - Honey bee Management, Health and History

Each of these exams consists of a 90 minute written exam. These will be taken locally on dates decided by the BBKA. This year the dates are 24th March for modules 1,2,5 and 7 and November 10th for modules 1,3,6 and 8. Module 4 has been removed as it was felt that it covered subjects that overlapped Module 5.

Information on any of these exams, costs and syllabus can be found on the BBKA website on

http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments

To apply for the examinations, the application form and fee, must reach me by the date specified by the BBKA for the exam you are applying for.

It helps me to have the Basic applications by the end of May so that we do not do them piecemeal.

For any queries contact Tom on t.rettig@btinternet.com

You know you're married to a beekeeper when...

You plan weddings, child birth, surgery and funerals around honey extracting time.

Winter and Colony Starvation

This time last year the north east was knee deep in snow and it was very cold, and it continued like this for months. Yet I hear that bee colony losses were no worse than other years, perhaps even lower than normal. This year we have been enjoying relatively balmy weather for November and early December, though as I write the weather forecast is warning of an icy blast heading our way. The good weather hasn't just been enjoyed by us, you'll have noticed that your bees have been flying about too, and that hasn't necessarily been a good thing. The honey and the sugar feed that the bees stored away to last them through the winter has been used at a faster rate than last year – flying bees use more energy than ones clustered together so they will eat more stores. Unfortunately there aren't too many flowers about so they will not have collected enough nectar to replenish those stores. If we keep getting mild spells throughout the winter some colonies will run out of stores before spring and the bees will die of starvation.

So what can we do? “Heft” your hives – very gently lift one side of the hive about 1cm and estimate its weight, then do the same on the other side. If you have a set of luggage scales you might be able to rig up some way of using them to get an accurate reading. Do both sides as one side might be heavier than the other. The hive should have about 20kg of stores at the beginning of winter. As the winter progresses into early spring do this every couple of weeks, especially if there's a warmer spell. If the hive starts to feel light then give the bees some fondant. Normally it is good advice to not disturb our bees during the winter, but it is much better to risk quickly opening the hive on a sunny day to put a piece of fondant under the crown board and save the colony than lose it to starvation. Plan ahead, have some fondant ready for such an emergency. You're going to need to feed your bees in spring anyway so either make some from the recipe in the December 2009 newsletter on our website www.teesbees.co.uk or buy some ready made from our local suppliers.

Wishing you a cold winter.....

The Mentor Scheme

One of the great things about being a member of CBKA is the mentor scheme. Have a look at your members list, you'll see that some people have volunteered to give their advice and time to other members.

Everyone will at some time have a beekeeping experience where a second opinion is useful so take advantage of the mentor scheme. If you feel you have some beekeeping experience and have the time and inclination to help others then ask to join the mentor scheme.

Save £5 for Christmas

It's not a £5 voucher for your favourite shop..... but make sure that you pay your 2012 CBKA membership before the end of December and it will cost you only £25 instead of £30.



Secretary: Derek Herring, 8 Wardale Avenue, Acklam

Tel 01642 282030

Meetings are held in the Southlands Leisure Centre, Ormesby Road, Middlesbrough,

TS3 0HG on the third Monday of the month from September to April at 7:15pm. Visitors and new members welcome.

BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES

Allan, Tony & Richard Jefferson

Stonlea Apiaries, 1 Dalehouse Bank, Staithes, Cleveland, TS13 5AN

Tel 07749 73 1945 or Tel/Fax 01947 893811

tony@stoneleabees.wanadoo.co.uk

Suppliers of all beekeeping equipment

Honey bought and sold

LONGNEWTON GRANGE BEEKEEPERS SUPPLIES

John R. Allen

The Grange, Back Lane, Longnewton, Stockton-on-Tees TS21 1BN

Tel 01642 585896 or Tel Home 01642 898073

beekeepingsupplies@longnewton.fsworld.co.uk

Suppliers of beekeeping equipment.