



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

PO Box 1482, Woden, ACT, 2606

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Incorporated

Website: www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

Meetings of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Inc are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm at the CIT, Heysen Street, Weston in Building A

Contact: Association President – Dave Alden Ph: 62826908

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September 2006

Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 14th September at 7.30pm, at CIT Weston. The guest speaker will be Dr Denis Anderson, Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO Entomology.

Dr. Anderson's talk is titled "Asian Honeybees/Biosecurity Issues for Australian Beekeepers".

The meeting will begin with Beeginner's Corner, sharing beekeeping news and questions and Dr Anderson will speak from about 7.45pm.

President's Note:

A crowded room of enthusiastic members greeted Dr Carolyn Hawkins at our August monthly meeting. Carolyn is an immunologist at Canberra Hospital and also holds a position at the ANU. She spoke to members about bee stings and the immune response and although some of her talk was quite technical, members certainly grasped the key points. Members asked lots of questions and the discussion continued through the refreshments at the end of the evening.

I was particularly heartened to hear that research has shown that when immunotherapy was given to individuals that had sustained a life-threatening anaphylactic shock as a result of bee stings, none had further shocks, while those that didn't want the immunotherapy did have further shocks. I'd like to think this means that no member need ever give up keeping bees, even if you become allergic to bee stings, but of course you should check with your GP or friendly immunologist at the Canberra Hospital first!

We thanked Carolyn for her engaging talk by presenting her with some prize winning honey from this year's Canberra Show. On behalf of members I'd like to thank Paul Hooper for donating the honey and Mark Elliott for making the arrangement for Carolyn to attend the meeting.

Dave Alden

Tool of the Month

This handy head torch has a multitude of uses in beekeeping and in other situations. It is ideal for sealing up a hive prior to transport or for picking up the swarm collected earlier and now settled in its box. The bright blue light doesn't seem to disturb the bees as much as ordinary torch light and having the hands free makes many jobs easier. The torch is always shining where you are looking and are about to walk. It can be clipped onto a watch band or held in the hand like a conventional torch.

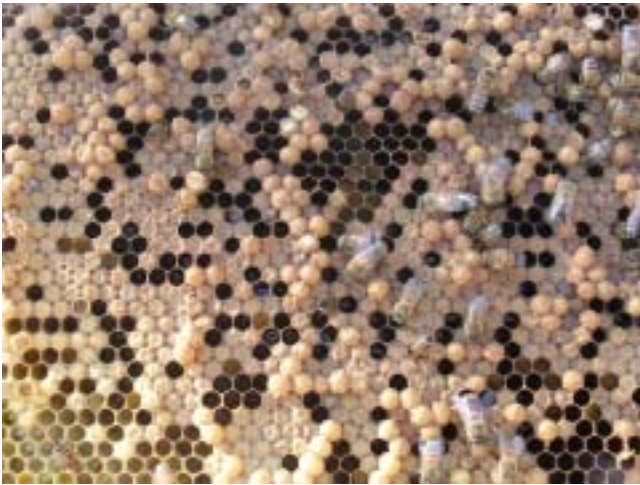


Our son used a similar torch when cycling for many years and found it better than a conventional bicycle light. Around a campsite or at a car breakdown having both hands free makes working much easier.

Similar torches can be bought at camping and bushwalking stores or at Jaycar or Dick Smith Electronics.

Spring Inspection

Now that warmer weather has come it is time to conduct the first hive inspection of the season. Choose a still day with a temperature about 15°. Examine all brood box frames for a laying queen. Check that the queen is laying a good brood pattern and is not placing drone cells randomly over the comb. If the queen is missing or seems to be failing take action quickly before the hive dwindles away. It may be too early to purchase a commercial queen but re-queening may be done by pasting hives together to make one strong hive rather than two weak ones or it may be possible to use a swarm to re-queen the hive.



Frame showing drone cells spaced randomly by a failing queen.

Examine brood closely for signs of disease. If you see something that you are unsure about ask an experienced beekeeper to have a look with you. Some diseases can be treated effectively if dealt with early. Examine and clean the bottom board, scraping away accumulated debris.

Next check that the bees have sufficient honey and pollen for brood rearing activities. Most bees in town will be bringing in sufficient pollen but if not, pollen patties or pollen substitutes may be provided. If honey stores are low the feeding of sugar syrup will usually increase the amount of brood the hive can raise. Syrup should be made from one measure of white sugar to one of water and can be delivered in a variety of ways to each hive in need. Feeding should be continued until the bees are bringing in enough nectar to begin storing honey above the excluder.

Hives with a strong queen and large population may cause a different problem for the beekeeper, they may decide to swarm. Swarming is the natural way bees increase their species. Swarming reduces the parent colony's ability to produce a honey crop and, in town, may also cause problems for the neighbours. Signs that a hive may be considering swarming are that the brood box is full, either with brood and/or honey and pollen, so there is no space for the queen to lay more eggs; production of large numbers of drones; full honey boxes with no space for more storage; and building of queen cells.

Destruction of queen cells alone will not prevent swarming unless the causes are addressed at the same time. Space can be made for brood-raising by removing frames that are full of honey from the brood box to the honey box and replacing them with empty frames. Another option is to lift one or two frames of capped brood to the centre of the honey box immediately above the brood and replace them with empty frames. When the brood hatches the bees will normally fill these frames with honey. Another option may be to remove the two outer combs which are likely to be full of older pollen. Move other combs to the outside of the box and place two empty combs or frames with foundation in the centre of the brood nest. Do not move combs with brood to the outer position at this time of year as the hive may not be able to maintain the temperature and the young bees will chill and die. Some beekeepers like to separate foundation frames placing them either side of a developed frame, believing that the bees will do a better job of building out the comb in this case. Frames can be rotated regularly with each inspection to allow extra laying space.

A strong hive may be split (artificially swarmed) to reduce the likelihood of swarming. Such hives may be used to increase hive numbers or later reunited when the urge to swarm lessens. This technique will still reduce the amount of honey crop especially if the hives are not later reunited.

If the honey box or boxes are full then another super must be added to allow for more storage space. If the frames of honey are about 80% capped they can be removed for extracting and the stickies returned for refilling but keep in mind that the weather is changeable in springtime and the bees are using a lot of honey for brood raising. If you take away all their stores and the weather becomes cold or wet again you risk leaving them without supplies for the young. Make sure there is a reasonable store in the brood box around the brood or leave a frame or two of honey. A sensible precaution might be to put on an extra super and wait until it is at least half-full before removing the full one and extracting.

A strong springtime hive will usually contain several hundred drones. Drone cells are not in themselves a problem but excessive numbers of drones become a drain on resources and reduce the amount of honey available for extracting later. If brood combs contain excessive numbers of drone cells they may need to be moved above the excluder and eventually removed from the hive. Drone eggs should generally only be laid along the edges of the brood frames. If a queen is laying drones randomly over the frames it usually means she is no longer able to fertilise every egg and she needs to be replaced as soon as possible. The frames with extra drone cells may need to be lifted and replaced as well because a new queen may continue to lay unfertilized eggs in cells that have been enlarged to drone size.

Management needs will vary greatly from hive to hive, location to location, season to season and within the season. The best advice would seem to be to examine your hives regularly, observe each hive's need, consider the likely changes as the season progresses and act accordingly. Then cross your fingers and be prepared to change your plans and go to Plan B, C or D if necessary. May this season be a honey-laden and joyous one for all.

Lyn Shiels

Swarm Collecting

Members who would like to be included on a swarm list should give their names to Lyn Shiels before or at the next meeting. Nominate the area you are prepared to collect from and give a phone number. Environment ACT no longer maintain a swarm list as they did in the past. Rod West of Environment ACT has agreed to pass on a swarm list if the Association prepares it.

Old Beekeepers Access to State Forests.

Monday September 4th 2006.

State Coalition Leader, Lawrence Springborg, said the Beattie Labor Government's planned lockouts in state forests covered about half the areas used in Queensland for honey production. It left beekeepers with virtually nowhere to go.

Queensland's Beattie Labor Government's decision to phase out beekeeping in state forests would be overturned by a Queensland Coalition Government.

"The honey bee industry would have to rate as one of the least environmentally harmful of all primary industries," he said. "Yet, as part of its extreme green agenda, Labor seems determined to drive beekeepers out of business."

Mr Springborg said Queensland was Australia's second largest honey producing state, while crop pollination from bees was estimated to be worth about \$300 million a year to the state economy. "We should be doing everything in our power to encourage the honey bee industry," he said. *SOURCE: Queensland Country Life weekly rural news service, updated daily by FarmOnline.* http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=37034

In Bloom around Canberra

Argyle Apple is blooming in Pearce. Bees in town seem to be progressing well and collecting good supplies of nectar and pollen.



Drawing by Jenny Pearce

Information is sought from members about floral sources in town and surrounding areas. If you notice particular plants in flower please email me at editor@actbeekeepers.asn.au or call at 6286 2421. Lyn Shiels

Irradiation of Beehives – New Charges

There has been an increase in fees for irradiation at Steritech. The new charges are:

Single Hive \$8.80

Double Hive \$16.50

Triple Hive \$23.10

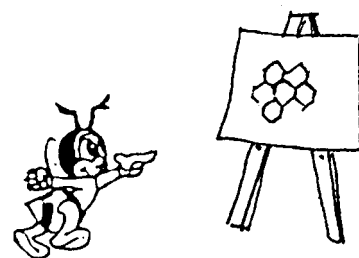
Prices for irradiation of honey are available on application.

We are sending a load of hives to Steritech about the 18th September. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have hives that you would like to send. The total weight of each unit must be less than 25 kilograms and they must be double wrapped and double emlocked. We have some extra emlocks available to members to help with packing. NSW Agriculture publishes an Agnote detailing the wrapping required which can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/j9g78>

Transport cost depends on the number of hives sent and is usually about \$6-\$7 per hive. Please contact Lyn or Pat Shiels on Ph 62862421.

Beekeeping Course.

The Backyard Beekeeping Course at the CIT School of Horticulture, Weston will begin on October 10th with eleven students. There will be a second course



offered in November if there is sufficient interest. The course consists of four evening theory sessions in the classroom and four Saturday morning practical sessions conducted at beehives located at the CIT, Weston.

Topics will include bee biology and behaviour, handling bees, getting started, equipment, seasonal activities, pests and diseases, and extracting. The course will provide beginning beekeepers with basic knowledge and some experience to start them in beekeeping. For enrolments phone CIT Solutions on 6207 4441.

Please promote the course to new or potential beekeepers.

Empty Super Award - Regicide in the Apiary

One of our backyard hives was rather bad-tempered so we decided to remove the queen and use a little quiet nucleus hive to requeen to achieve peace in the back garden. The queen was laying extremely well and the hive had a double brood box with about twelve frames of brood. Sixteen frames to search through to find the old queen and indulge in a bit of regicide. No problem, we have about half an hour to spare, let's get it done and pick up the nucleus from the other site tonight.

Removing the honey boxes I took each frame out of the first brood box and examined it carefully. Pat stood on the other side of the hive and lent his sharp eyes to the task as well. No queen! Well, she must be in the second box. Same procedure with box 2. No luck! Plan B, Pat will look through one box and I'll do the other and we'll surely find her. Sixteen more frames examined, and still no sighting.

Time for Plan C. I removed the brood boxes from their original site and placed the honey boxes there on a new bottom board. On top of the honey boxes went the queen excluder and on top of that an empty box. Now back to the brood boxes and each frame was lifted and checked. No queen being sighted, the bees were shaken into the empty box. The only way home was through the excluder. A bit of smoke encouraged the workers to make their way

down into the honey box, leaving behind a few drones but no queen. Fifteen repetitions of the procedure and we still had no queen. Last chance! I picked up the last frame and checked. No queen!

Thinking "Plan D? Well actually I don't have a Plan D", I turned to shake down the last frame and there at my feet was one very elusive queen with a very short life expectancy.

The story has a happy ending for all but Her Majesty. The small hive was successfully amalgamated with her erstwhile dominion and we and our neighbours can now wander unmolested in our back gardens.

Lyn Shiels



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