

Welcome to Westerham Beekeepers' BeeZeen for August 2018.

After a deluge of much needed rain at the end of July, hopefully plants will be reloading their nectar pumps after a sustained dry and very warm period. August is a mad, mad month with honey to extract, supers to clean, varroa treatments and if there's time, a holiday to squeeze in 😎

In this truncated holiday edition, we look at:-

- > Wasp attacks
- > Propolis: learning from the bees
- > Treatment free update
- > Varroa treatment legislation 🚔
- > Top tip

### **Sweet not meat**

August brings a change of appetite for the wasps. Sweet replaces meat. They become very interested in the honey in our hives, rather than the odd recently dead bee in front of the hive. So what can we do?

- > Keep strong colonies; weak hives are vulnerable to robbing from wasps and also other bees. Combine weak colonies ahead of winter.
- > Close entrances down to a few inches so that guard bees can easily defend them
- > Fox 'em; wasps aren't so smart as bees when finding the entrance. Here's an example of some clear corrugated plastic across the entrance. Works well.



### **Why do bees line their feral nests with propolis? (Learning from the bees)**

The bees are beginning to bring in propolis, gumming up the frames and sealing cracks where boxes or the crownboard joins up - all part of winter prep. The bees collect resins from trees and shrubs and bring this back to the nests on their "pollen baskets". It is one of the specialist jobs assigned to a small group of worker bees.



Propolis exhibits a high level of anti-bicrobial properties and Api-research has proven that colonies with larger amounts of propolis in their nests have these benefits:-

- > Reduced chalkbrood and American Foulbrood (probably also true of European Foul Brood but this hasn't been scientifically proven)
- > Inhibits the growth of viruses, including those associated with varroa.

> The bees do not have to invest so much energy into their immune system ( ie; less stress)

So can the beekeeper reconcile their dislike of sticky, hard-to-manage propolis with the benefit it brings to our bees?

Possibly. One idea is to rough up the inside of our brood boxes so that the bees fill the areas with propolis. Secondly, what about re-designing a dummy board to act as a propolis catcher? A winter project perhaps.....🤔

In the meantime, let's not curse propolis, but try to learn from the bees why they think it's beneficial to them.

### **Treatment free project**

The apiaries involved have already started using Queen Frame Traps (QFTs) to reduce varroa levels. Whilst QFTs have been around a while, they are not widely used in the UK so we are learning as we go.

Here's the Queen on a "Westerham designed" QFT - why is the red marking so hard to see? (Clue 7pm)



And here is the frame trap in the hive, which is re-cycled every 9 days or so.



We'll be writing up our notes over winter to share with those who are interested in going Treatment Free the following season. In the meantime, there's tons of info on the Westerham Beekeepers Training Apiary Facebook site: <https://m.facebook.com/groups/688146028031698/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

### **Varroa treatment legislation**

As the government views honeybees as food producing animals, beekeepers must comply with the current legislation to protect the consumer. This requires beekeepers, who use chemical treatments on their honeybee colonies, to fill in the Veterinary Medicine Administration record card, which should be kept for 5 years. A copy can be found on the link:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1081>

I'm sure you're all aware that there is a restricted product set for varroa chemical treatments. If you're found using other substances (eg; homemade oxalic or thymol treatments) then you are **liable to prosecution**. For full disclosure, click on the link for the permissible current list:-

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1059>

### **Top tip**

When leaving your hive tools to disinfect in a solution of soda crystals and water, add a stainless steel scourer in with them. Shifts all stubborn propolis bits and grime.



An additional benefit..... one's other half may think you are going to clean the oven 🤔

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Wishing you all the wonderful pleasure of fresh summer honey dripping over heavily buttered toast 🌞

Steve  
Education Officer 🚔  
Westerham Beekeepers

Sent from my iPad