

Welcome to Westerham Beekeepers' BeeZeen for September 2018,

And there it was. Over. The bees are packing up for winter, the honey supers are stored safely from the clutches of wax moth and rodents, and any chemical treatments to reduce varroa have finished (or are close to being so). A lingering sadness creeps over the beekeeper with the realisation that in four weeks time, you won't see the bees for 6 months..... 😬

In September's edition, we look at:-

- > Prepping for winter
- > Asian hornet alert
- > Nuc newspaper combine
- > Gravel trays (more kit you didn't realise you needed)
- > Top tips
- > National Honey Show dates

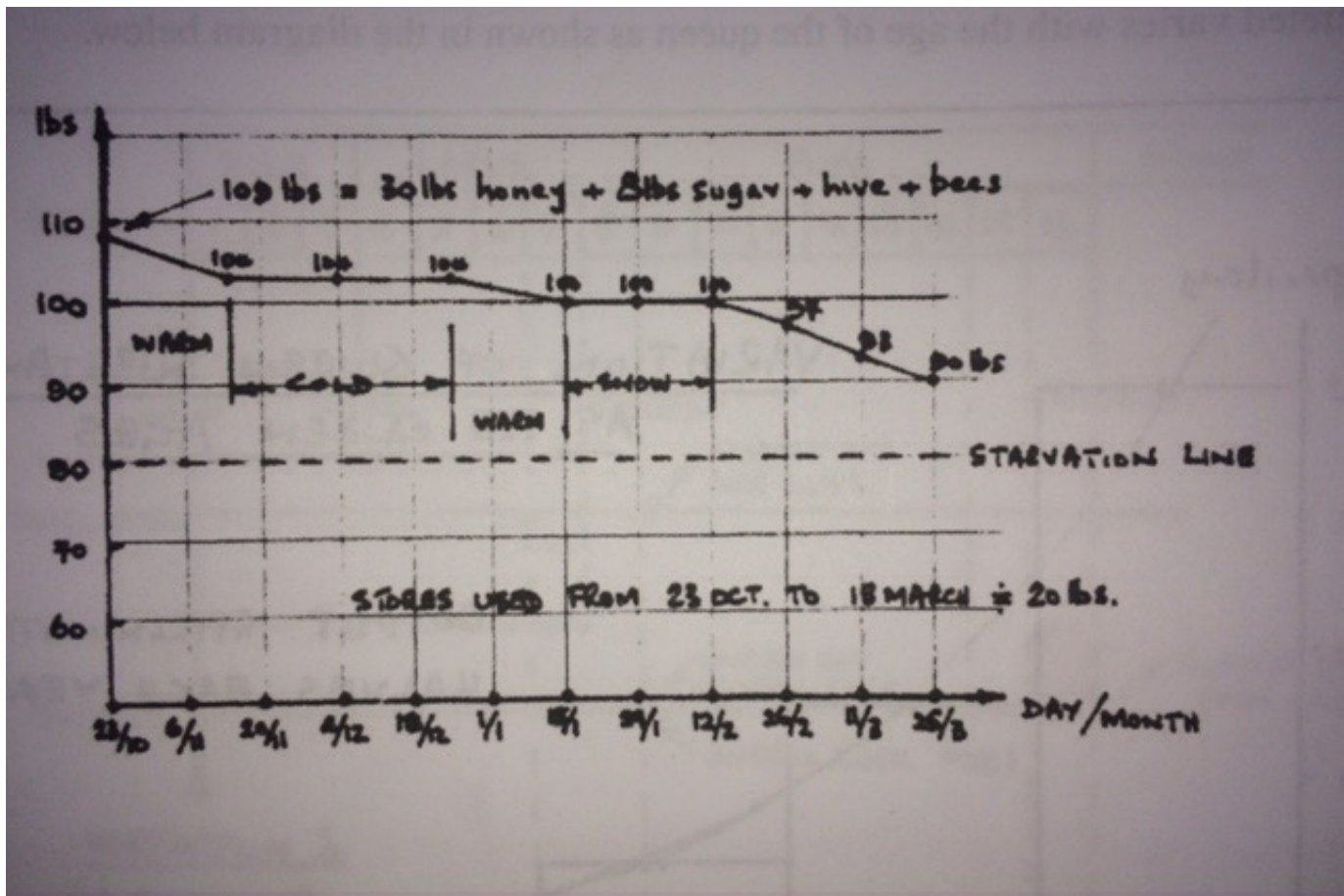
Winter stores

What level of honey stores do colonies need to survive winter? A rough rule of thumb is 40lbs of honey (or sealed syrup) which will see them through a mild winter, where they are more active, and prep them for Spring duties the following March. But different strains of bee or a smaller colony can get by on less than that. So for the British Black Bee or a small to medium size colony, 25-30lbs may suffice. Whilst Buckfast bees, with their more prolific Italian breeding nature, will need the full 40lb +.

So how much is 40lbs in weight? A super full of honey is around 30lbs (roughly 2-3lb a frame). 1 brood frame of honey = 5 lbs. So we can estimate.

Alternatively, and with a bit of planning, weigh a hive when empty and at different points through the season. Continue weighing at the start of winter, then monitor the weight as it reduces through the dark months. You'll find the biggest use of food occurs when larger amounts of brood are being reared from mid-Feb to mid-March. This is when heat production is most important in the brood area.

The graph below is from Yates, who write excellent beekeeping study books. It charts the weight of the hive through the winter, showing that more stores are used through the warmer spells when the bees break cluster and access stores.



Sugar syrup mix

Building up winter stores may require feeding the colony thick, 2:1 ratio syrup. This is measured as 1kg of sugar to 0.635ml of water, or 2 pounds of sugar to 1 pint of water.

The lower ratio of water in the mix allows the bees to more easily reduce the water content down to 20% before sealing for winter stores.

Don't feed syrup into October. The bees will struggle to reduce the water content in the cooler conditions, especially at night. This syrup can remain uncapped and will ferment giving the bees dysentery.

If you need to feed because the winter prep has gone horribly wrong, use fondant from October onwards.

Ivy

The local ivy was budding towards the end of August so will be in full flow in September. This is the last major source of nectar and fresh pollen for the season. The nectar does crystallise quickly in the comb and there is much debate in beekeeping circles as to

whether the bees can access it for winter stores or not. Well, they have for millions of years.....

I always try and leave a little space in the colony for the ivy bounty to be stored; otherwise, the bees can fill out the brood area with stores where you want your winter bees to be laid. Note: don't over stuff the hive with syrup.



Asian hornet ALERT

Whilst on ivy, these are excellent places to spot Asian hornets, which come to browse on nectar and other insects. Be alert for any nests, which become increasingly visible as the trees lose their leaves. They are positioned up to 10m high and often towards the outside of the branches, where the sun can warm the nest.

The nests themselves are up to 1 meter high and 0.6 meter wide. In France, there are about 15 nests per kilometre, so easy to spot.



Known for their yellow legs, here's a reminder of how they compare to our European hornet. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=698>

If you suspect a sighting, try and get a picture. Then contact our Asian hornet

coordinator, the fearless Tracy Johnston, nurseonabike@hotmail.com

=====STOP PRESS===== Unconfirmed reports of Asian hornet sightings in the Poole area.

Nuc newspaper combine

We're all familiar with a newspaper combine. Put one brood box on top of another, choose 1 of the Queens to go forward and put newspaper with a few slits in it between the 2 colonies. As the bees chew through the newspaper, they gradually get used to each other's odour and get along right dandy.

So here's a version with a nuc that we carried out a few weeks back at the Training Apiary.



The purpose was to combine a queen right nuc with a queenless colony. In doing so, making the combination strong enough to overwinter.

The frames with the nuc (and Queen) are placed at the back of the Queenless hive. They have a single sheet of newspaper over the top of them and down the front, separating the two colonies. The newspaper gets chewed out of the hive and gradually, as brood hatches, the queen right nuc component makes its way forward and dominates the colony.

It works particularly well for this reason. The Queen has her own daughters to feed, clean

and defend her.

Gravel trays go mainstream beekeeping

Remember we used these cheap-to-buy gravel trays for cleaning QXs by soaking them in soda crystal solution? Well, they have other uses:-



As aTemporary, water proof roof

Or honey cover on top of the supers when extracting.....

Or dribble catcher underneath the honey supers when in the back of the car or awaiting extraction.....

Easy to clean and store. They'll become an indispensable part of one's beekeeping gear. Another piece of kit you didn't realise you needed 🙄

Top tips

German plunger

How about this for a queen marker? It has a pointy top, so as you raise the foam, she nestles into the gap at the top, ready to be marked. Works well.



Bubble scum *(an old Top Tip but timely.....)*

After the honey has been through the sieving and settling process (leave it for 24 hours), air bubbles drift to the surface forming a foamy layer, sometimes referred to as slubbum.

To this, add cling film



And pinch out from the middle



Any leftovers around the rim can be spooned out and added to the breakfast honeypot, together with the slubbum, for a yummy snack on hot toast.



Ready for jarring. This is especially important to do if you are preparing honey for sale or the Westerham Beekeepers Honey competition on Wednesday 14 November 🤪

National Honey Show

Before signing off, just a reminder about the The National Honey Show at Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher which begins on Thursday 25 October to 27 October, 2018. There are tons of lectures or workshops and more beekeeping gear than you can dream about. In

the run-up, there are great offers from the bee equipment suppliers, which you can collect at the show to save postage. More details at www.honeyshow.co.uk

Steve

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Westerham Beekeepers

Sent from my iPad