

Positive Thinking May 2020

We are still all in the grip of this dreadful disease but hopefully on the way out of the worst of it, God willing.

Our next committee meetings will be held using IT technology. I have already been involved in such meetings within branches and businesses, it is an option, but not as good as sitting face to face with discussions flowing freely, however, it keeps the wheels turning.

One item I have been asked to highlight is about swarming. A member wrote to the office asking for us to make people aware that in the current situation, it is very important that we keep swarming under control.

Weekly inspections must be maintained and we must all keep our eyes open for the early signs that the bees are getting ready; this means more drones in the hive and perhaps more than a couple of play cups, over-crowding, where the pheromones are not getting into all corners and where there is no room for the queen to lay her eggs. Even a failing queen, where there are not as many eggs being laid as you would expect at this time of year. As a beekeeper we should all be able to identify these signs and then act upon them by any of the methods available for swarm control, (we have a special issue on this subject if needed, orders are still being dispatched from the office staff).

It means taking that extra time during your inspection, making sure that the bees are not hiding a queen cell in a corner, or on the edge of the frame.

The lock-down came at a really bad time as far as we beekeepers are concerned. My own branch had quite a few people signed up for its Beginners Course which should have been held in April. We did not want to let them down, as I am sure no other branch does, so I thought I would share our solution with you.

Thankfully, we have a member on our committee who is well versed in anything which involves computers. He organised a 'Hang Out meeting' for our beginners and we provided a full days learning for those able to take it. We had 18 new beekeepers and 5 committee members on the session, so we were able to answer questions in the breaks from any of the new beekeepers. Our education manager had provided a fully comprehensive power point presentation, offered in four units with breaks in between and it worked very well. The questionnaire at the end of the session was very complimentary.

We cannot of course, currently offer practical sessions but will do so as soon as possible and each new beekeeper is provided with a mentor so they always have someone to contact and to help setting up their hives when they do get bees.

It was very successful, and the system used was free, so no reason for others not to take advantage.

We are also using a similar system to have the BBKA meetings. We have successfully managed the Standing Orders and Governance, Communication, Education and Husbandry committees, before the EC next week, with of course, others to follow. I will give you an update on anything new in the next letter.

I have been asked to remind everyone about the BBKA Forum as a useful place for discussing beekeeping <https://bbkaforum.co.uk/> the popularity of this medium for information is very popular among beekeepers.

Meanwhile, the sun is shining, my own bees are loving it and it is a pleasure to see them so active. Hopefully, they have done a good job on my orchard and I will have a bumper harvest, yet again.

Please take care of yourselves, I know that quite a large proportion of 'us beekeepers' are in the vulnerable bracket, so stay safe and look after yourself, as well as your bees of course.

Margaret Wilson