

West Wilts BKA News

News, the planned activities and some advice for members of West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association



Time to think!

We are half way through and if we reflect on the talk given last year, July is the month where we should be preparing for Winter. That may be a gloomy thought, but it is the time to consider which hives we are keeping, which we are merging and what state we enter the end of the calendar year?

On a cheerier note, we should have a lot of Summer before our Winter preparation need to have complete and we should have completed our harvests.

This month's newsletter has a couple of reviews, especially of the Royal Bath and West Show and what we have done in the apiary, also a short editorial asking to see what you want to see and whether you can fill in a couple of gaps!

There is also a list of events over the coming months, so pop them in your diary now so you don't get double-booked.

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This is your 'go to' section that will describe the things that you need to know about.

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Editorial

The Royal Bath and West has taken place – back after a couple of years off and cautiously stepping forwards. I must admit I was concerned that with the number of events on over the Jubilee weekend that there would be a poor turnout...how wrong I was.

We have a slight pause from lectures, partly because the attendance has reduced, partly because everyone is busy and partly because we need to decide what we want. If you have any views, please send them in and we'll take them into account – you can email the newsletter and we'll take it from there (Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com).

What do you know about WWBKA?

During the preparation of the county association for the Charitable Status the question was asked how long the various branches have been in existence. Well, for West Wilts we don't actually know. We know it started as Warminster Beekeepers and then progressed to Westbury and District Beekeepers before changing to West Wiltshire BKA. Do you have any more history of the branch, such as dates of when it started? If so, please send them into the newsletter (Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com).

Diary of events

September 2022

Wilts BKA Honey Bee Health Day – 3rd September, Market Lavington Village Hall

West Wilts BKA Honey Show - 10th September; Bratton Jubilee Hall

October 2022

Wiltshire Bee and Honey Day – 8th October; Corn Exchange, Devizes

National Honey Show – 27th-29th October; Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher

November 2022

West Wilts BKA Annual General Meeting – 7th November; Bratton Jubilee Hall



Need to know

Wiltshire Beekeepers' Association now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, approval has been given by the Charity Commissioners for Wiltshire BKA to convert to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) whose Constitution is on the website <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/> under "About". All Branches now conform to this single common constitution.

As a working document and guidance for new trustees of the CIO is the Trustee Handbook which can be found in the "Members' Area". In the appendices of this very readable document are the individual rules of the four Wiltshire BKA branches. The Branch Rules for West Wilts BKA are in Appendix 3. While it is accepted that most hobby beekeeping members may not wish to delve into the Constitution and Trustees Handbook, all members of West Wilts are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to read their Club rules to ensure they are happy with how their hobby club is being run.

Good to know

Apiary Sessions - June

For those that read the June Newsletter, you will see that we had some fun/challenges/issues/learning experience/nightmares* (*delete as applicable) at the sessions in May, but that is why we have the apiary so that people can learn from others and chat through options. Well, it wasn't much of a surprise when the first session in June (7th) followed on the same theme. The hive that was split was still misbehaving and trying to supersede, whilst the split was freestyling its reaction to a split. Not to be put off this gave some excellent opportunities with a surplus of virgin queens to 'pull' some queens, make up a nucleus and requeen a couple of queenless colonies, as well as keeping the split on track to becoming a productive colony. We wait with baited breath on what will happen, but the image is of one of the virgin queens inheriting her new colony!



Q&A

Do bees feel pain? (asked by a member as they crushed a bee!)

What a great and somewhat controversial question, so thank you for putting me on the spot! It is also a question that I am not sure there is a definitive answer, although I am prepared to be corrected. Bees do have a nervous system albeit a dispersed nervous system, so where in mammals the processing of nerve response is dominated by the brain, this is not the case in many insects that have distributed ganglia that process nerve signals, so they can definitely 'feel' things but whether that equates to 'pain' is another matter as pain is an interpretation of the nerve signals in the brain. So, a review of the bee literature fails to reveal any evidence that bees feel pain...however research is underway and our understanding could change.

Given that this question was originally asked in a discussion about crushing bees, it is far better to be careful and not crush them for three reasons:

1. Crushing them can release diseases into the hive.
2. You end up with fewer bees.
3. They release an alarm pheromone which excites other bees to react and protect the hive by stinging whatever is attacking them...I can confirm that beekeepers do feel pain!

Is that smoker on its last legs?

"Oh dear! Your smoker seems to have seen better days!" exclaimed one beekeeper when they saw the gaffer tape on my smoker.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"You seem to have a load of tape holding the bellows together." was the response.

I could see why they had come to that conclusion, but the smoker was fine...in fact it was quite new ('new' being a relative measure and not absolute). The bellows is a part of the smoker that is in constant contact with my hand when I am with the bees and between hives, therefore it gets the filthiest as I move from hive to hive and the place that will transfer pathogens to my hand after I have washed them between hives. So, what I do is put tape on the contact points of the bellows because:

1. It is easier to clean the tape than the wood.
2. I can replace the tape every now and again and I know no disease has got into the wood to get transferred to my hands.



The alternative would be to scrub the wood on the smoker...it is surprising how quickly it wears through!

There are a few years left in that smoker yet!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEND THEM IN OR ASK AT THE APIARY.

Contact us and services

Newsletter content

We will try to send this out as close to the 1st of the month as possible. We will have a copy date of a week before to give us time to get everything together, and we would really like to hear from you. If you want to include anything please send an email to Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com.

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