

Beekeeping

The Journal of the Devon Beekeepers' Association



Vol 92 No 5

Summer 2026

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Back Issues Previous editions of this magazine from 2018 onward, are available to download in PDF format from the DBKA website. Older editions can be obtained on request from: webmaster@devonbeekeepers.org.uk

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Front Cover Picture:

Hive Endoscopy

Using hive endoscopy to inspect
a WBC brood chamber

See page 13

Photograph by Dr Matthew Edmondson

The next issue will be August 2026

Deadline Items for the next edition of the magazine must be with the Editor by 10 July 2026.

Your Branch Secretary or Executive Council Delegate can provide you with the log-in details for the members' area of the Devon Beekeepers' website.

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The Buzz Word

Warwick Newson - Chair DBKA

June is upon us, along with the well-known “June Gap” — that period when colonies can suddenly seem short of forage just as brood rearing is at its peak. Bees certainly have a habit of keeping us on our toes, and colonies that appeared strong only a week before can quickly begin to struggle if stores become limited. Alongside all the usual seasonal inspections, it is important to ensure colonies always have at least seven days’ worth of stores available. If supplementary feeding is required, a simple 1:1 mix of white granulated sugar and water remains the recommended option. Brown sugar should never be used, as it can cause dysentery in bees.



Queens continue to be a sensitive and much-discussed subject within beekeeping circles. With increasing research emerging from Maggie Gill and her team regarding *Tropilaelaps*, the outlook is becoming increasingly concerning. Like many beekeepers, I was initially misled by magnified images and videos, not fully appreciating just how difficult these mites are to detect in real life. In reality, they are extremely small and can be almost impossible to see with the naked eye. Given the demographic of much of our beekeeping community, we cannot rely solely on visual detection.

The greatest concern remains the movement of bees and queens across borders, particularly as *Tropilaelaps* continues to spread across parts of Europe at an alarming rate. One simple but important step we can all take is to ask breeders where their queens originate from. Many breeders are rightly proud to promote their UK-bred queens, although less attention is sometimes given to the volume of imported stock also involved. Responsible purchasing decisions help encourage sustainable UK queen breeding and strengthen our own local resilience. This is not a call for any particular strain or type of bee — simply a reminder to think carefully about imported stock.

New *Tropilaelaps* data sheets are now available on the BBKA Members’ Hub and are well worth reading.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Devon County Show 2026. Please do come and say hello — I am always happy to stop for a chat or share a cuppa with members.

Happy Bees

Warwick Newson

Other Reading for *Tropilaelaps*

National Bee Unit (NBU)

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/exotic-pests/tropilaelaps>

APHA Leaflet, *Tropilaelaps*, *Parasitic Mite of Honey Bees*

https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resource_for_beekeepers/Advisory_leaflets/Tropilaelaps_2026.pdf

Bee Improvement & Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA)

<https://bibba.com/tropilaelaps/>



SMALL SHIPMENT. BIG RISK.

Importing queen bees can introduce hidden parasites and pests that threaten our hives, our environment and our future.



You can't see
the risk.
But it can spread.

PARASITES AND PESTS THAT CAN HITCHHIKE ON IMPORTED QUEEN BEES

1. TROPILAEELAPS MITES



Parasitic mites that reproduce on developing bee brood. They feed on pupae and can weaken colonies, causing deformed wings, reduced bee lifespan and colony losses.

2. SMALL HIVE BEETLE



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- ✓ Buy from Reputable Breeders.
- ✓ Report suspicious pests or diseases.
- ✓ Ask questions if unsure about the source.



**NO IMPORTING IS RISK-FREE.
BUY UK LOCAL BEES.**



Editorial

Robert Blackmore

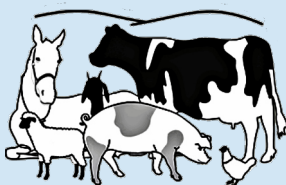
I am sorry to say that you probably received this issue of Beekeeping later than usual. I am writing this a week past my deadline for getting the magazine complete, checked and formatted ready for printing. I have just filled the last empty space with some photographs I took at the County Show and now need to write this. I can therefore say with a degree of certainty that, if this issue got to you by the target date of on, or before, the first of June, it was nothing short of a miracle.

Why is it late? Putting **Beekeeping** together is a team effort; for each issue, Graham gives us an article and reports on DARG activities; David brings us the benefit of his beekeeping and bee-inspector experience; Simon produces an item and sources other contributors; Warwick writes from the Chair; Michaela compiles the adverts and mailing list: All the above delivered for this issue on time, if not ahead of schedule.

So, why is it late? While the contributions from the team form the backbone of our content we have space for other things such as news, reports, notices, pictures, shared experiences, instructive articles, etc.: ... And there wasn't any, or at least nothing like enough. A shortage of content is something that appears late in the day. Sourcing and researching meaningful content takes time and because it's late, creates pressure; pressure that is occurring more often than I am comfortable with or I have time to deal with.

As yet, no decisions have been made but something needs to change. If you have any thoughts about this magazine, its value, its role in the Association, have something to offer to help produce it, now is the time to speak up. All feedback is much appreciated.

Robert Blackmore *Editor* editor@devonbeekeepers.org.uk



118th Okehampton Show 2026

Thursday 13th August

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www.okehamptonshow.co.uk

Honey Show

Hosted by Okehampton Beekeepers

Bee Entry Form & Schedule

www.okehamptonshow.co.uk/other-competitors

What's Wrong?

by Simon O'Sullivan

What's Wrong with this Frame?

Continuing our series on pests and diseases, have a look at this picture do you know what is wrong with it?

Strictly speaking this is not a pest or a disease but will still cause the end of the colony if not dealt with. The brood is all drone but appears to be in worker cells, there is no worker brood. The Colony is queen right and the workers appear to be behaving as usual. See page 23 for the answer.



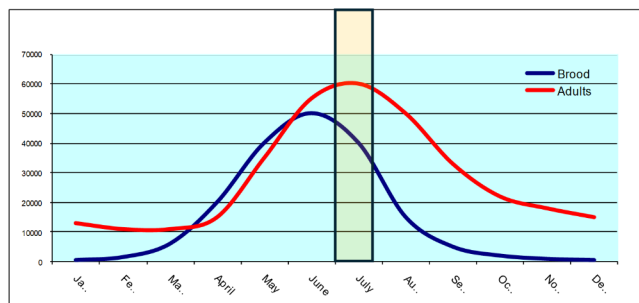
Image Courtesy The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), © Crown Copyright

In the Apiary - June & July

by David Packham

Introduction:

As I write this in early May, I'm just waiting for that golden yellow of oil seed rape (OSR) to fade so that I can start to remove the spring crop. Hopefully, if your hives are within



Growth of the colony to maximise foragers

flying distance you should have already removed your spring honey crop. Although last year my bees did not store any OSR, preferring the more local sycamore, perhaps farmers are growing a different variety which is less attractive to the bees. The brood nest will still be expanding to take advantage of the main honey flow in July. Egg

laying will reduce significantly after mid-June, this will allow more bees to forage with less 'child care' duties.

Swarming:

As we enter June, the main swarming season will be drawing to a close but I will continue to inspect those colonies that haven't swarmed but look likely to do so. As we move towards July there's a logical argument for clipping the queens' wings. As although the queen may be lost, the flying swarm will return to the hive and be available for foraging. As a bee inspector I met a number of commercial beekeepers who would remove queens in July not just to prevent swarming but primarily to maximise the number of foraging bees.

The June Gap:

We are now entering the period of time known traditionally as the June gap, a critical period when nectar and pollen sources for bees decline after spring blooms (like hawthorn) fade and before summer flowers (like clover) arrive. It can create food shortage. However, recently it seems that this is becoming increasingly rare but be mindful of the possibility.

The main Flow:

I find that the main honey flow here in Silverton normally starts in early July when abundant nectar sources allow the bees to rapidly store surplus honey. Major nectar sources like lime, clover, and blackberry, providing the majority of the summer harvest. I have in the past, planted many Lime trees which are now beginning to pay dividends. They provide an excellent source of nectar for my bees mostly during hot, humid summers; flow is most abundant when the soil is moist. The honey is a golden colour with a distinctive greenish tinge. It is one of my favourite honeys which I find hard to describe, some people describe it as having a zesty, floral explosion, reminiscent of "spring sunshine".



Lime tree in flower

Photograph by David Packham



In the spring I tend to super before it is required to ensure that there is sufficient room but in July I wait until it is really needed. I do this to avoid half filled supers. In a good season it is not unusual for the supers to be filled in a week, this can last for two or three weeks then as suddenly as it started it just stops, like someone has turned off the tap.

Honey Extraction:

When I first started beekeeping the norm was to remove the honey at the end of August. Not anymore. As soon as the flow has finished I inspect the top super and test any uncapped honey to ensure that the water content is below 18%. I now turn my attention to extracting. Any frames where the honey is not up to standard or the frames need replacing I place in a super and put aside to be placed under the brood box as winter feed. Dependent on the year, I normally manage to provide each colony with a full super. You can return the supers to their original hive for the bees to clean out. Please do not place them in the open for the bees to rob as it will attract bees from afar and risks spreading diseases like American Foulbrood or European Foulbrood. It can also trigger robbing within your apiary. I place them above the crown board and within a day or two they will be nice and dry and ready for storage. Clean supers will be less of an attraction for wax moth but you will still need to protect them. So, why am I so obsessed with extracting before the end of July? All will become apparent in notes for August.



Photograph by David Packham

Uncapping a super frame

Insulated Hives:

I mentioned in November the current fashion for comparing modern wooden hives with bees' natural habitat of cavities high off the ground, often in trees, which provide



Photograph by David Packham

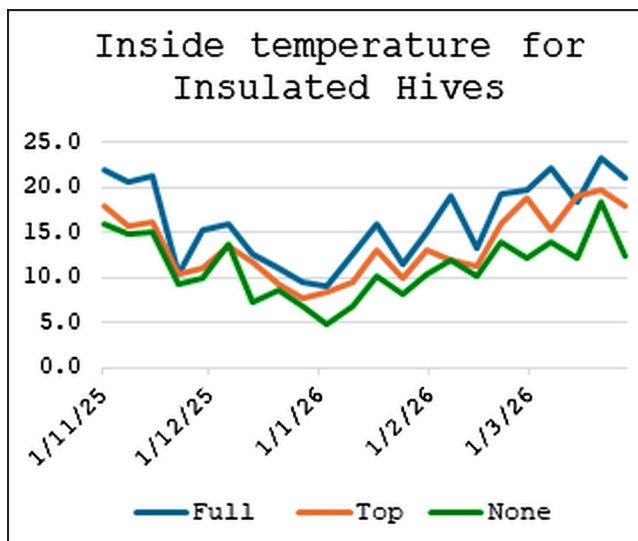
Hive insulated with 3 inch kinspan

protection from predators and the elements. The thickness of the tree cavity providing a degree of insulation which prompted the debate as to the merits of insulating hives. Although it should be remembered that honey bees originated in the tropical climates of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. They thrived in heavily forested areas, using tree cavities and rock crevices for nesting. Their ability to manage hive temperature allowed them to eventually expand from tropical zones into cooler temperate climates. If they have an active nest with brood they are able to generate heat by vibrating their powerful flight muscles having disengaged their wings, a process known as shivering or thermogenesis. They fuel this high-energy shivering by consuming their stored honey.

I hesitate to refer to my experiment as scientific, more of a preliminary exploration or informal trial aimed at seeing what happens rather than proving a strict hypothesis. I selected four colonies from the five in front of my bee shed. Ideally, they should have been in identical condition i.e. same size, queens of the same age and with the same genetics. Two hives had 3 inch Kingspan on the top and sides of the hives, one had 3 inch Kingspan under the roof and one had no insulation. All four colonies were standard



national cedar hives with open mesh floors and each had a super under the brood box. I purchased four simple wired temperature probes. On the basis that the experiment was to assess what effect the insulation had on the heat loss from the cluster, I placed the probe on the inside of the hive mid-way down the brood box. Assuming the colony has brood, we know that the centre of the cluster will be about 35°C whilst the outside will be about 8°C. The difference in temperature between the outside and the inside wall of the hive should show some measure of heat loss that the hive and insulation has prevented. When we compare this figure for the different hives it should provide some indication of the effect of the insulation. Therefore, logically the warmer the ambient temperature within the hive the less energy the bees will need to expend maintaining the core nest temperature and hence less stores will be consumed. However, there is an argument that the warmer ambient hive temperature will allow the bees to expand more rapidly in the late winter early spring and therefore consume more stores.



The graph shows the inside temperature of the wall of the hive. I have omitted the outside temperature as it confused the graph as sometimes the hive temperature was below that of the outside. Perhaps this was when it was a cold night and the outside temperature increased with the morning sun. If I had recorded the temperatures during the night I suspect that would not have happened. I also weighed the hives with luggage scales, probably not the most accurate and they seemed to vary week by week. The difference in

weight between the beginning of November and the end of March was as follows. The fully insulated hive reduced by 15.5lbs, top insulation 20lbs while the hive with no insulation reduced by 28lbs.

I'm not sure what, if anything, we can conclude from the experiment. Of the 12 hives that I overwintered, I had one drone layer, the remainder survived and I have to say as I write this in early May there is no obvious difference. But from the results of this little experiment I will, where possible, insulate my roofs with Kingspan.

Perhaps it should be conducted with more hives and better scale and thermometers. I am aware that there is specialised equipment which will transmit the information direct to a mobile phone. Maybe this is something that a branch might like to organise.

Conclusion:

The end of July marks a critical turning point in the apiary, the main nectar flow has finished and the bees begin their transition towards winter preparations. Our attention next month turns to ensuring that they achieve their aims. For now, as the beekeeping year draws to a close we can take a moment to enjoy the fruits of their labours to take time and simply watch the calm, productive rhythm of the hive. You might even have time for a short holiday and indulge in a little 'midsummer madness'!



Diapause, Quiescence and Hibernation

by Graham Kingham

The animal kingdom has evolved to inhabit all parts of the world and has adapted to withstand the harshest weather and temperature conditions. They often enter a period of dormancy, a state in which an organism's growth, development, and physical activity are temporarily halted.

The honeybee enters a period of diapause, meaning a pause or cessation of reproduction, during our temperate winter, when declining food supplies, lower temperatures, shorter daylight hours, and a lack of flowers cause them to cluster inside the hive and live off their stored pollen and honey.

Not all bee species have a dormancy period; in tropical climates, they do not stop laying eggs, as their living conditions are favourable year-round. However, they do have a couple of quiet periods during which they reduce egg-laying; this is called quiescence, meaning being at rest, still, inactive, or motionless, and it is immediately reversible when conditions change. The other survival method is winter hibernation, which involves a period of dormancy: the animal relies on its fat stores, its metabolism slows, and it sleeps for several months. Hedgehogs and brown bears come to mind.

Other species of wasps, hornets, and bees do not enter diapause, except for the queens. These queens mate the previous summer and overwinter alone, while the workers and drones all die in autumn. On emerging in spring, she builds a small nest and lays her first eggs, which develop into the initial workers that help expand the nest. Summer workers are then produced, followed by males, who mate with a newly foundress queen. The old queen dies, and the cycle is repeated each year.

Some insects spend the winter months in a diapause state as chrysalides.

Diapause is a hormonally regulated, genetically programmed state of reproductive arrest in the western honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. One researcher has suggested that the reduction in autumn pollen is a main trigger of diapause.

The cessation of brood rearing alters the physiology of the younger winter bees, as they no longer need to produce royal jelly to feed the brood. They develop larger fat bodies that store lipids (fats) and glycogen (sugars). The majority of the colony enters a state of torpor, characterised by lower body temperature, slower breathing and heart rate, higher tolerance to carbon dioxide, and reduced metabolic activity. This promotes longevity and, together with stored pollen and honey, serves as the colony's main energy and protein reserve during overwintering.

The long lifespan of winter bees, well over 90 days, is linked not only to the fat body but also to the absence of brood pheromones compared to the summer worker life span of about 42 days.

In late January or early February, the queen breaks her diapause and begins to lay a few eggs, even though the weather is cold and daylight hours are short. This builds up into March, when the weather can be more temperate, tree pollen is abundant, and spring flowers start to bloom.



A winter cluster of honeybees in a state of diapause

Photograph by kind permission of Randy Olivier.

Scientific Beekeeping: <https://scientificbeekeeping.com/>





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Hive Endoscopy

by Dr Matthew Edmondson

Hive endoscopy – the missing middle ground?

Standing in the endoscopy suite as a medical student, I saw how healthcare used tiny cameras mounted on the end of a cable to view inside the body. Historically, these views would only have been accessible under the surgeon's knife, requiring a fully 'open' patient and a lengthy recovery.

Having been involved with beekeeping growing up, the possibilities of applying endoscopy to a hive struck me. YouTube provided the answer, showing numerous likeminded beekeepers using off the shelf borescopes, and getting lovely views of honeybee clusters in the depths of winter. Seeing brood inside the comb, however, remained elusive. Two barriers existed. First, navigating the bee space (our final frontier?) would require a scope diameter less than 6mm. Second, our hives encourage long, straight corridors between frames. Flexible scopes inevitably curve at some point and pass through, rather than look into, the comb.

Fast forward 10 years... I stood in my apiary, slightly fed up after a night shift in March. The birds were singing but not a bee could be seen. All five over-wintered hives had been lost. Being the first to admit I'm no master beekeeper, I still felt a huge sense of loss and frustration. I'd followed the book, prepared, treated, fed... and still this?

On the verge of calling the whole thing a day, I remembered myself as that medical student. Could endoscopy help me here? In its current form, no. But that's where, like a lot of beekeepers, I went to the shed and got tinkering...

Now shed-based between hospital shifts, I identified the need for a two-part system. The first part would be an endoscope that could navigate the bee space safely and give views inside cells. In particular, the base of cells, where eggs and larvae would be. The second part would be an access through the hive wall, permitting the scope to view as much of the frame as possible. It also had to be ergonomic for the beekeeper to use, minimise the exit of bees towards the operator and minimise internal temperature change.

Specification decided, prototyping began and the start was not pretty. With holes being sawn into my hives and an exotic collection of endoscopes, my initial efforts were little better than the YouTube videos I'd seen. Each improvement offered just a little more hive information though, so on I went.

The inner workings of the hive began to open up in front of me as my equipment



Honeybee up close, captured using hive endoscopy

All Photographs by Dr Matthew Edmondson

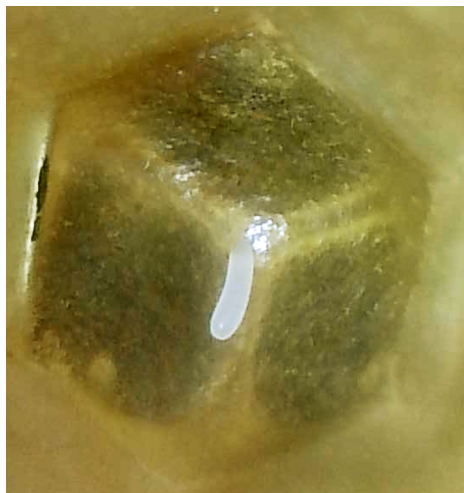


Using hive endoscopy in a National brood chamber



and technique improved. All of a sudden, I could see rows of eggs, freshly hatched larvae and their recently occupied casings, and larvae hungrily moving in search of jelly. As my experience grew, I saw older larvae surrounded by bee bread, the ripples of mandible impressions across tightly packed pollen, and the glass-like surfaces of newly built comb.

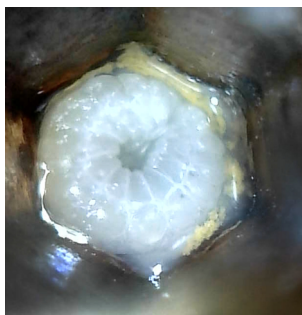
I had a system that I could share with friends. One newer beekeeper was thrilled, saying *“that’s the first time I’ve convincingly seen an egg!”*. Another said they’d struggled with lifting supers, and seeing inside without lifting anything was such a relief. For me, it was insight into hives during the winter blind spot, seeing their remaining stores, when the queen stops laying and, reassuringly, starts again.



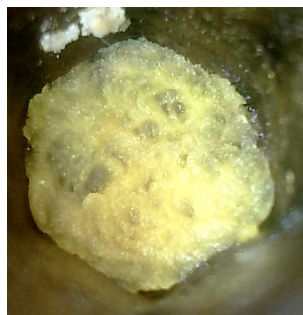
Egg, captured using hive endoscopy



Larva



Larva surrounded by bee bread/pollen



Surface ripples in packed pollen, showing how honeybees press it down using their mandibles

With this, the potential uses exploded in my mind. I’ve had time to reflect on how something like this could fit into our modern-day beekeeping. It starts with every beekeeper having their own style. As such, I suspect some of you will have thought about how hive endoscopy could be included in your practice. Others, will have developed a mild allergy to the idea and decided to stay clear. Such is beekeeping. But it raises an interesting question about inspection philosophy.

In both healthcare and beekeeping, we are trying to understand what is happening inside something; human or hive. The question becomes: how much intervention is necessary to get the information we need?

The important point is proportionality. As beekeepers, we already accept that our inspections create disruption, both seen and unseen. The level of intervention should ideally match the value of information being gathered.

Sometimes a surface-level assessment, like checking a patient’s pulse or observing a hive entrance, is enough. Other times, an open inspection of patient or hive is required.

Hive endoscopy represents a new middle ground in beekeeping that healthcare has been



using for decades. A way to gain meaningful insight whilst keeping the hive intact, the smoker unlit and disturbance to a minimum. You can see eggs, larvae, laying pattern and stores, even at times of year when opening the hive is traditionally avoided. Equally, it has limitations. You only ever see a cross-section of the colony and there remains the potential to miss queen cells or other problems. It is not a replacement for conventional inspection, but an option between doing nothing and fully opening the hive.

I feel strongly that external observation and open inspection both remain vital skills that we all need to know and practice as responsible beekeepers, especially for thorough disease control.

Minimising stress on our bees whilst improving our understanding of colony health should remain high on our list. For me, hive endoscopy has become a valuable tool in that process.



Multiple type of pollen packed together



Honeybee legs up close, showing details of pollen press and basket



Egg laid neatly on the foundation wire

N.B. I have a clear conflict of interest to declare. Since my time in the shed and between shifts at the hospital, I have set up a business that sells the hive endoscopy system I developed. You should therefore read my enthusiasm with appropriate caution until you decide whether the approach could work for you.

Dr Matthew Edmondson *Intensive Care Doctor & Founder of BeeVue*

<https://www.beevue.co.uk>





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Eye of Toad, Finger of Newt

DARG Meeting 10th May

Eye of toad, finger of newt, what's the alternative? *by Graham Kingham*

It is estimated that only 14% of UK honey is native. Where does the remaining 86% originate from?

Honey is the third most adulterated produce worldwide. How pure is the £1.80 jar in your local shops compared to your own £8.00 jar of honey?

Honey can be purchased in bulk for as little as 31 p per pound on the open market. The UK imports around 60,000 tonnes a year.

In a blind tasting, local honey was easily recognised by its taste, mouthfeel, and smell compared to six other shop honeys labelled as produced in the EU or China. Under the microscope, all contained pollen.

What makes honey appealing? Historically, it was one of the few sweeteners known before sugar was introduced. Often marketed as a health product, it is produced by bees and gathered from flowers, which impart various flavours, unlike refined sugar, which only provides sweetness.

A list of modern alternative syrups to honey, and their costs, is shown below.

Syrup	Sugar	Percent	Colour	Taste	Viscosity	Sweetness	Price £
Honey	F G	40-30	White -Brown	Sweet	1.4	0.97	8.00
White sugar	F G	50-50	Clear	Sweet-intense	0.85	1.0	Base measure
Golden	F G	50-50	Golden	Buttery smooth	1.37	0.3	2.00
Agave	F G	60-20	Gold-brown	Mild- runny	1.48	1.5	4.00
Maple	F G		Brown	Maple- runny	1.37	0.5	5.60
Malt	Maltose		Brown	Malty - thick	1.42	0.5	8.00
Treacle	F G	50-50	Black	Bitter-sweet	1.37	0.3	1.75
Rice	G M		Clear	Clear neutral	1.42	0.4	4.40
Corn	G	100	Clear	Runny neutral	1.38	0.5	3.50
Date	F G		Brown	Sugar sweet date	varied	1.0	3.30

Note on sugars above. Nectar is Sucrose split into Glucose and Fructose by an enzyme, invertase, in the bee's saliva, plus Gluconic acid.

Honey has a pH of 3.9, making it acidic, and in the UK, it must contain no more than 18% water.

Inverted sugar is a liquid sugar that has been treated with an acid (usually citric acid) and water, then heated to achieve the desired colour, and is sold as Golden Syrup.

The viscosities are similar to honey, and the pH was similar; the sweetness showed the most variation.

Not forgetting the vegans.

Since vegans do not eat honey, we used a recipe that mimics honey by heating sugar with lemon juice, cider vinegar, or both, to avoid overpowering the final flavour. This mixture is inverted and heated to achieve the desired colour before caramelising. Often, pure apple juice is added and boiled down with the inverted sugar to create a syrupy consistency. A chamomile tea bag can be included, along with orange extract, and optionally, flower heads like meadowsweet that have been soaked for a few hours, strained, and boiled down. It is illegal in the UK to label this as honey or a honey substitute. It has an apple-like flavour, not unpleasant, but it does not resemble honey in any way. It is labelled as an alternative.



The past and our fraudulent honey.

Corn sugar was added to honey in America in 1880, marking an early instance of honey fraud. Both corn syrup and rice syrup are affordable, readily available food products with qualities similar to honey, but they are less sweet, allowing the honey's character to come through. There is also high fructose corn syrup, which has the added benefit of remaining runny for much longer due to its higher fructose content; however, it is sweeter. We also found that adding lemon juice to the mixture reduced the sweetness when we tried to produce our own fake honey. The other syrups were either too strong or too expensive, although some colouring and background notes appeared when testing all of them in the mixture.

Our first attempt at fraudulent honey.

We started with some local runny honey as a base, then mixed it with rice syrup at 75:25, 50:50, and 25:75 to determine the threshold at which we could taste and smell the difference.

Next, we further adjusted the ratio to fine-tune it and assess the level before concluding that it was not honey. These were presented to a panel of beekeepers for blind tasting. The final experiment involved adding rosehip or elderflower syrup to the fraudulent mixture at a 50:50 ratio to imitate the floral taste of honey.

We also mixed two-thirds sugar, lemon juice, and one-third water, then heated it to invert it, and then added one-third honey as a base to adulterate further. This did not taste or smell of honey but retained a syrup-like consistency.

Since taste is subjective and can vary based on what you've eaten or your personal preferences, any of the syrups listed above, including the cheaper honeys, might be the ones you're used to and therefore prefer, making them a point of reference for you.

Most people do not compare local honey to cheaper alternatives as they trust the label and producer.

Being of a certain age, I grew up with sugar rationing as a child, and when it was finally available again, it was sprinkled on everything. Even now, I find many desserts and cakes far too sweet — perhaps my sweet tooth was removed early!

Our second attempt at making fraudulent honey.

We tried using various additives to cut the sugar taste to enhance the flavour, like a floral honey in our syrups, but none of the plain rice syrup mixtures came anywhere near honey in taste.

The 66:33 sugar honey was used as a base to mix separately with added Lemon juice, Rosehip syrup, Elderflower syrup and Pomegranate molasses with no major effect in minor amounts, but these became overpowering when increased further.

To test the combination of honey-rice syrups on fellow beekeepers, the experts! To see how they perceived the different tastes or textures, we mixed honey with rice syrup in the percentages shown in the chart.

Honey	Rice syrup	Aroma	Additives	Taste	Mouthfeel	Comments
75	25	Y		Honey	Y	Smells and tastes like honey
50	50	N		Not honey	N	No smell not honey?
25	75	N	Lemon	Less sweet	N	No smell, no taste
100	0	Y		Honey	Y	Recognised by all tasters.
80	20	Y		Honey	Y	Smells and tastes like honey
70	30	Y		Sweetish	N	Not honey
60	40	Y		Sweet	N	Not honey
50	50	Y	Rosehip	Rose	N	Defused the sweetness
50	50	N	Elderflower	Lemon	N	Too lemony



The tasting panel, comprised of eighteen people, could all detect the real honey in the sampling; most admitted to tasting their own honey by the spoonful, so they could easily tell. However, adding it to toast or porridge would hide some of the effects of fraudulent honey. This low-tech attempt failed, but big companies with scientists can and do beat the system. It has been claimed that some bee farmers abroad keep their hives indoors and feed sugar syrup freely, as the bees invert the syrup in their crops and then fan the liquid down to produce a honey of sorts! Pollen is added later. What else is involved in the mixture is a matter for the chemists involved.

What we need is an honest labelling system and a fair market so people know what they are buying and why the product is priced accordingly. We have become accustomed to cheap food, and some bee farmers are now being squeezed out of production as buyers and packing companies in the UK turn to much cheaper imports.



The 135th Honiton Agricultural Show

The Showground EX14 3AW

Thursday 6th August

A great day out for all the family

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Details on DBKA, Exeter and East Devon websites



Devon County Show 2026

Bees & Honey

At the time we are going to print, the County Show is in full swing. Blessed with a spell of fine weather, it looks like being another successful show. Here are some pictures from day one in the Bees and Honey marquee.



All Photograph by Robert Blackmore





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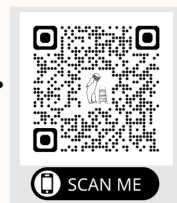
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What's Wrong?

The Answer

What's Wrong with this Frame? (see page 7)

This problem is caused by a Drone laying queen, either because of her age or she was poorly mated. She has run out of sperm and so can now only produce drone brood.

The queen stores sperm in an organ called a spermatheca and can decide whether to produce a worker by fertilising the egg from her stored sperm or not and if not she will produce a drone. As usual with our articles on brood problems we are showing extreme examples, hopefully with a little knowledge this problem can be sorted before it gets to this stage where there is no capped worker brood. Look for the signs of less and less worker brood and more drone particularly in worker cells, the queen is still trying to lay workers but cannot, hence the drones in worker sized cells. The queen has reached the end of her useful life and for the colony to survive she has to be removed, the colony carefully re-queened or reunited with another.



For Sale and Wanted

Small Ads (up to 100 words) in Beekeeping are free for DBKA members. Ads may be repeated for up to three issues on request.
 To place an advert or for more information, email: ads@devonbeekeepers.org.uk
 To advertise on the DBKA website: <https://devonbeekeepers.org.uk/for-salewanted>

For Sale: Nuclei and Colonies

Available on National frames with 2026 bred queens. The bees are gentle to handle and not prone to swarming

Contact Adam Vevers 07908159189, or adamvevers@gmail.com

Colonies for Sale

Small number of colonies available. All have successfully overwintered, are locally bred, pleasant, productive and have a 2025 marked queen.

Currently in Maisemore poly hives, colonies are available as full colonies or 6 frame nucs. I am happy to include the hive or transfer the colony to your own hive if preferred.

The cost of a full colony is £180 (without hive), and a 6 frame nuc is £140, hive prices on request.

Contact: Brian Sharp (North Devon); email: bjjsharp@outlook.com

Bee Nucleus for Sale

Nucs are supplied on 6 British National Frames overwintered with 2025 queens, marked and clipped.

Anne has bred the queens from our gentle, hygienic and prolific colonies. They were treated for varroa in Autumn 2025.

They will be available for collection or delivery from the end of March 2026 depending on the weather.

Price £240 collected

£255 delivered and hived

£50 deposit will secure your nuc

Contact or 07484 815119 or hillviewhoney@aol.co.uk.

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Maisemore Jumbo Rapid Feeders (Green) .

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Each feeder holds 3.5 galls/13.25 litres syrup, has 2 feed holes/cups, and protective lid. Feed holes are ribbed to give the bees good grip. Excellent condition, several available at £15 each.

Contact: Brian Sharp (North Devon) - email: bjjsharp@outlook.com

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Useful Addresses

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet reporting
- Use the app (*preferred*) or email:

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)

bbka.org.uk

BBKA Find a Local Swarm Collector

bbka.org.uk/find-a-local-swarm-collector

National Bee Unit (NBU)

nationalbeeunit.com

Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG)

www.dargbees.org

Dave Cushman's Website (Beekeeping)

www.dave-cushman.net

Branch Contacts and Websites

Click to email Secretary

Click to go to website

Telephone

[East Devon](#)

eastdevonbk.co.uk

01392 832956

[Exeter](#)

exeterbeekeepers.org.uk

[Holsworthy](#)

holsworthybeekeepers.org.uk

[Newton Abbot](#)

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[Torbay](#)

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07721182094

Diary Dates

Members may attend meetings of any Branch, but it is advisable to check the details with the Branch Secretary first. Contact details are on page 26.

June:			
Saturdays	14:00	Newton Abbot	Saturday afternoon weekly hive inspections to commence (weather permitting!) All Welcome
Tuesdays	11:00	North Devon	Every week from now through to October at the Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
Sat 6th	14:00	Tiverton	Apiary meeting
Thu 7th	19:30 - 21:00	Tiverton	Branch committee meeting, Village Hall, Uplowman Tiverton
Sat 21st	14:00	Tiverton	Apiary meeting
Sat 21st	11:00 - 14:00	North Devon	At our apiary in Horestone. £8 per person. Bring your family and friends and join us for delicious food and great company. Perfect for Father's Day!
Sat 27th	pm	Okehampton	Another opportunity to again meet Mike Krefta's bees at his Colebrooke apiary - followed by our usual 'Bring and Share' tea!
Sun 28th	11:00	North Devon	Meeting at Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
July:			
Saturdays	14:00	Newton Abbot	Saturday afternoon weekly hive inspections to commence (weather permitting!) All Welcome
Tuesdays	11:00	North Devon	Every week from now through to October at the Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
TBC	pm	Okehampton	Mark Tanner's, Down St Mary - are subject to the availability of bees! (many of us have lost colonies this winter). David is organizing a 'backup'
Thu 7th		Tiverton	Branch committee meeting
Sat 4th	14:00	Tiverton	Apiary meeting
Sun 19th	14:00	Tiverton	Apiary meeting
Sun 12th	11:00	North Devon	Meeting at Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!
Sat 25th	18:00	Newton Abbot	We will have a BBQ in our paddock area. Please bring chairs, food to cook on the firepit, drink and some food to share. Sleepovers in tents or campervans are very welcome. All members are welcome.
Sun 26th	11:00	North Devon	Meeting at Horestone site. Bring a packed lunch and join us!

Events

Honiton Show, Honiton Showground EX14 3AW: Thurs 6 August

Okehampton Show, Stoney Park Showground EX20 1SW: Thurs 13 August

Devon Beekeepers' Day, Crediton: Sat 26 September

National Honey Day: 21 October

National Honey Show 2026, Sandown Park: 22-24 October



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