

October 2015 Summary

This month's speaker was Ben Harden. He gave the group a lecture with an emphasis on heather honey production. Firstly, it was explained why successful beekeeping is essentially a local issue; bees can be slow to adapt to new environments, with native bees being more acclimatised.



He used the metaphor of a “three-legged” stool to illustrate a successful honeybee colony. Each “leg” represents an essential ingredient for colony success during a given year:

1. How the bees themselves, exist within their locality
2. Weather
3. Flowers/available flora

Next, spring swarm control was discussed and how the bees are very adept at hiding Q cells! Ben explained his method of swarm control to the group. A slideshow was then shown which illustrated some production/extraction equipment and also a novel, hive transport prototype which the speaker had constructed. He explained how drawn comb is very valuable to the beekeeper because it may be required quickly during a strong honey flow. Bees expend a lot of energy to draw comb and usually this response is only triggered when the hive has an 80% frame occupancy rate.

Drawn, dry supers should be correctly managed during winter by being stored in a stack, with mesh on top and in an airy, daylight position. This deters wax moth but encourages spiders! It was recommended to store the extracted honey in food-grade plastic bags within a large plastic bucket.

How to move bees to the heather

1. Find an appropriate site; younger heather growth yields the best nectar
2. Set up the hive stands during daylight hours
3. Move the hives after dark providing adequate ventilation, (i.e. roofless)
4. Apply two hive straps in the same direction to hold hive together for transporting

During question time, Ben discussed the possibility of the evolution of mite-tolerant bees. He explained some promising research that is currently taking place, including John Kefuss's “Bond” method . (Yes, we are talking about James Bond....it is based on the principle of “live and let die” :.))

Our chairman, Sean, concluded the meeting and thanked Ben for his informative presentation and travelling down to visit our group.



Further Information

Google: John Kefuss – Keeping bees that keep themselves (PDF) presentation