

LS 2020-03-20 Coronavirus letter from Anne Rowberry

The Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The impact of the Coronavirus could not have been foreseen but the BBKA is working hard to support members. We regret that all the BBKA training courses at Stoneleigh have been cancelled, this includes the Healthy Hive training, General Husbandry and Advanced husbandry training. The Exam Board have cancelled the Module Exams, the Assessor Training and will be publishing information on the Healthy Hive and Basic Exams.

We are suggesting that Beginners courses and other Branch or Association organised training courses are postponed. It is important to keep the health of members at the front of our minds. It may be possible to deliver some aspects of these courses online. I would welcome suggestions as to the best way this could be achieved; possibly some Associations have information that they would be prepared to share. We can post some ideas on our website so please share any that you think may help.

I am sure younger members of groups will support older members or those confined through association with family etc. who have the virus by offering to check hives in out apiaries, making sure they are upright, have food and the bees are flying could be very helpful. **Please follow the Government guidelines, we are asked to avoid social contact and unnecessary travel.** This will mean considering carefully the swarm collection service and applying appropriate safeguards.

I have contacted Defra for advice on the position of beekeepers visiting their bees if the country moves into a more intensive 'lock down'. At the moment bees will be considered as livestock and can be tended accordingly but we are following Government advice and need to address possible future directions. I have also been in contact with Alpha and the All Party Parliamentary Group and I am writing to the Minister of Environment asking about the position of beekeepers visiting bees I have also suggested that should there be a sugar shortage beekeepers have an allowance (as I believe they had in the war). This may seem extreme but we need to be thinking now, just in case.

There are actions that the beekeeper can take to give their bees the best chance of survival and the most important is to feed them. Ensure they have plenty of food for any inclement weather, we can have snow in May and cold, wet weather at any time may mean they starve. If you are concerned about visiting your bees put fondant above your supers, the bees will use it if they need it. If you do not have fondant then use syrup even if you have one or two supers on. They may move it to the supers which would mean you can't sell it as honey but you will still have your bees and also food for the Autumn/Winter. We do not know how long this severe situation will last.

We will endeavour to give more information through our website and BBKA social media. Beebase will also be posting information.

I hope this situation passes quickly and is not as severe as is now being portrayed.

Anne Rowberry

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