

Dear Members,

Where I live in the north, this is most likely to be the last month that the bees can increase their stores, Himalayan Balsam will be finishing as will most flowers, just leaving the Ivy for foragers. I hope that everyone's bees are well stocked for winter and that this year the winter will be less damp, but is that a pipe dream??

We have had notification of an outbreak of EFB in Middlesex, this is recurring in certain areas and is considered to be a hot spot by the Bee Inspectors.

Please look on Bee Base to see where this is recorded and take special care for your own bees.

One worry expressed by Middlesex is the fact that there are many beekeepers who are not members of any association and may not have registered on Bee Base. There is also a worry about new beekeepers trying to keep costs down by purchasing used equipment which may carry the disease and be unaware of how to sterilise this equipment before they use it.

If you do know of anyone in your area who keeps bees but is not a member, perhaps they could be approached to at least get registered on Bee Base so that they can receive help and also be aware of local problems.

Another item raised by Middlesex, and I thank them for this, is the fact that restaurants, cafes and hotels may use honey in their products or just as a spread, how do they dispose of those containers, it is not enough just to recycle, the containers must be washed out to prevent the bees from foraging from honey which is not off their hive.

In Middlesex there were also 5 cases of AFB recorded last year, can we all be aware of this and try to be especially hygienic with our bees, hives and other equipment.

This problem is also now an item for the next Executive Committee of Trustees meeting and the BBKA will do all it can to support this. We do use our web site to inform people of items but perhaps we need to do more in the public arena to make people aware that their actions could be bad for our pollinators.

The hunt for Asian hornets at this time of year is not only important it is vital, but it is also important that you have your mobile phone with you so that you can photograph the insect. Please, please do watch your own hives for hovering hornets, waiting for your bees to come home. If you do see a hornet, or think what you have seen is a hornet, please photograph it and send it to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk if it is confirmed that you have sighted an Asian Hornet the authorities will take over and give support.

If we can find the nests before the existing queens start to lay next year's queens, we stand a chance, but if we miss a colony, then a further ten or so queens from this year will survive the winter and start all over again.

A really good hard cold spell may help, but with global warming it is likely to be damp rather than cold this coming winter.

The National Honey show will take place next month, the 24th October through to the 26th October 2019. This show attracts exhibits from all over the country, the judges have an enormous task trying to make sure that the best exhibits are the winners in each class, I have stewarded at this show and will again this year, it is an education to do this, you learn so much about the honey, mead, wax, even the baking of cakes. Some of the judges are even able to tell you what flower or fruit the bees have harvested for the honey in the jars, what fantastic knowledge and experience those judges need to get this important job completed.

You may have realised that we need more Honey Judges, but to qualify to be a judge it is a very long training period. One of the essentials is that you have to have been a steward at many Honey Shows and the trainee has no way of knowing where all the honey shows are being held. Can I please ask that if you are going to have a honey show, and are able to accommodate a steward that you make contact with Claire at head office and she will put your honey show on the web site, her email address is claire.hartry@bbka.org.uk

You need to include the name of the branch, the venue, the date of course and also the judge you have chosen. This will enable the trainees to the judge and the branch to see if you would welcome their services. May I thank you in advance for helping us in this way.

As well as the honey show there are lectures and a full trade show, there are also stands showing the experience of other beekeeping branches and associations, it is such a learning curve just to walk round the show.

The BBKA will have a stand there, as the National Honey Show is an independent organisation, but one that we willingly support.

There will also be a stand for the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB) to show what we have previously achieved and to try to encourage the young beekeepers to enter for next year.

It is important to us all that the skill of beekeeping is passed on to the next generations, they are the ones of the future who will hopefully make sure that our honey bees survive in the future. Please do go and look at what the IMYB team have done, they are led by Simon Cavit, who was a trustee till this year but has taken this role of IMYB Manager forward, we owe a debt of gratitude for his involvement in this as do the youngsters who represent the BBKA in this global competition.

It amazes me how many beekeepers give their time without thought of reward, I like the other Trustees, make up that number, but looking around the country, the associations and branches have a multitude of members giving their valuable time year after year. Here is a heartfelt thank you from me to all those volunteers who help us to keep our honey bees alive and safe.

Margaret Wilson