

Disease Convener's Report.

Losses in winter 2010 – 2011 in most areas were higher than usual, partly due to the severe winter. Varroa remains a problem, if you do not manage it properly, you will lose your bees within a very few years, unless you live in a varroa free area. *Nosema ceranae* was found to be widespread in Scotland. The outbreak of foulbroods continued to be brought under control, but there still needs to be care in moving bees.

Foulbrood

American Foulbrood (AFB) and European Foulbrood (EFB) continued to be monitored and treated by the Scottish Government inspectors. The data kindly provided by the Scottish Government shows that the numbers of infected apiaries and colonies has decreased, markedly for AFB, less so for EFB, though I am informed that levels of infection are lower.

SG bee inspections	2009	2010	2011
No. of colonies inspected	2995	3157	3492
No. of apiaries inspected	257	213	208
No. of EFB positive colonies	310	71	126
No. of EFB positive apiaries	69	25	42
No. of AFB positive colonies	136	11	5
No. of AFB positive apiaries	38	8	3
No. of apiaries infected with both EFB and AFB	2	0	1



These figures reflect the difference between destruction of colonies infected with AFB and the use of shook swarm and other methods to control EFB, these being less effective than the use of antibiotics, though I am sure we would not want to return to the widespread use of OTC (oxytetracycline) for control of EFB.

All beekeepers in Scotland owe a debt of gratitude to the government inspectors.

Nosema

Nosema ceranae has been found to be widespread in England and Wales, and following the capability of SASA to distinguish it from *N. apis*, has been confirmed in Scotland, and may well be widespread here also. As there are no obvious symptoms of faeces on the frames, beekeepers may not be aware of its presence until they notice reductions in numbers of bees. The common name 'dwindling disease' is very apt, and it should be considered a possible cause when any colony is slow to build up. Fumidil will not be available after June 2012 at the latest, only other 'medicines' available are health products containing thymol, though regular changing of frames and good hygiene will help to decrease levels of Nosema, and other diseases, in the apiary.

Varroa

Varroa has been found on Lismore, and island between Oban and the Isle of Mull. There are reports of increasing levels of resistance to synthetic pyrethroids, and beekeepers are encouraged to test for resistance.

Veterinary Medicines Directive Meetings

One of the topics discussed at meetings of the Bee Group of the Veterinary Medicines Directive (VMD) was the new legislation covering sale of veterinary products for use on bees. This involves setting up a system for the provision of medicines, where only suitably qualified persons (SQPs) will be allowed to sell medicines. It covers what can presently be sold in UK as a bee medicine, or is authorised in the EU and can be legally imported, and includes provision to ascertain the safety of 'medicines' available outside the EU, which cannot be imported legally at present. However, it is legal to import and use certain products sold as 'hive cleaners', some of which claim to be effective against Varroa.

When SQPs and legislation are in place, bee medicines will be Veterinary Products, and labelling will need to show this. It will be necessary to have all dispensing (including after bulk buying by local associations) performed by an SQP and on registered premises.

Bees have to come under this legislation as they are food producers, and we are not alone, ducks, geese, rabbits and other 'small scale' food producers are being looked at in the same way.

Beekeepers are reminded that all medicines must be stored properly, and they must keep records of purchase, use and disposal for 5 years.

Honey Bee Bee Health Strategy Group Meetings

The Honey Bee Bee Health Strategy Group has continued to meet to discuss various items of bee health, including control measures for diseases, risks involved in imports of bees, the possible setting up sentinel apiaries at risk points, - sea and air ports, near honey importers and packing stations, and supermarket distribution centres, and safe sourcing of bees for new beekeepers.

SASA

SASA held a very successful Bee Diseases Day, with advice on identification and treatment of common diseases.

Diseases Convener, 25 January 2012