

The Council of National Beekeeping Associations of the United Kingdom (CONBA-UK)

CONBA-UK is a forum for the exchange of information between the national beekeeping organisations of the United Kingdom and it provides a platform from which a consensus of UK opinions on beekeeping matters can be taken forward to debate at National, European and International level.

The Association has had two meetings since my last report, one in October 2007 and one in April 2008, with a considerable amount of information and business conducted by email.

Protracted discussions have taken place regarding the cause of bee colony losses in the UK, EU, USA and Canada; DEFRA's ten year Bee Health Strategy and the need to have a large increase in funding for honeybee research.

After a period of exemplary service, David Salkild (WBKA) has relinquished his position as Treasurer and has been replaced by Martin Tovey (BBKA).

The Autumn meeting was held at Barnet College, London on 18th October, where the following business was transacted:

- discussion in advance of the DEFRA Bees Meeting;
- discussion on grossly inadequate research funding for beekeeping;
- report on COPA/COGECA meeting of October 2007;
- CCD, Imidacloprid and Fipronil, Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus, Nosema Ceranae, GMO's and bees under stress;
- status of honeybees – indigenous or non-indigenous;
- value of honeybees to the environment;
- nutritional labeling of honey;
- co-existence of conventional crops, livestock and GM crops;
- food sampling for the presence of GM;
- national programmes for beekeeping;
- Bee Health Advisory Panel – CSL experimenting with SH Beetle to investigate communication, identification of lures and traps, identification of toxic chemicals;
- DEFRA Bee Health Strategy for England and Wales;
- Apimondia

The Spring meeting was held at BBKA National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh on 18th April, where the following business was transacted:

- issues from the past meeting with DEFRA;
- Bee Health Strategy for England and Wales. Scotland and Ulster are producing their own strategy documents;
- assertion that honeybees are indigenous;
- report on COPA/COGECA meetings;
- honey sampling for residues;
- urgent need to extend the range of approved Varroa treatments;
- monitoring the possible causes and distribution of CCD;
- Bee Health Advisory Panel report;
- registration of beekeepers;
- Apimondia 2013;

- BBKA meetings with Lord Rooker and Stephen Hunter;
- BBKA research campaign;
- National Insect Week;
- food hygiene regulations.

Since the beginning of this new century, colony losses, mainly in winter and spring, have occurred on an increasing frequency. The cause(s) of these losses is not clear. Many factors have been suggested and, we hope, are being investigated, namely viruses taking a hold due to the stresses of moving bees and to the effects of Varroa; the effects of pyrethroids; Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus; Nosema ceranae; fungicides and synthetic insecticides; GM crops; electromagnetic fields; etc.

In Scotland there has been losses caused by faulty queen mating due to a prolonged period of bad weather in July 2007; dwindling due to a long, cool spring 2008; nosema apis; acarine and ineffective treatment of varroa. These are 'old' troubles, none of which can be attributed to CCD. The NBU are of the opinion that we do not yet have CCD on the UK. Time will tell if this is the case and if it is caused by one or a combination of the factors postulated in my previous paragraph. Never has there been a more urgent need for considerable funding to be dedicated to beekeeping research.

My two-year period as CONBA-UK Chairman ends at the conclusion of the October 2008 meeting, when Dinah Sweet (WBKA) will take the Chair.

Ian Craig, Chairman. October 2008