

JULY

In July our colonies should be at maximum strength to take full advantage of the summer flowers. We beekeepers need to keep pace with them to ensure that they have enough room to store nectar and pollen and that the queens have room to lay.

Up here in the north of the County we have a good show of bramble, clover and rosebay willowherb. Also, the lime has just come in to flower, though with a cool and windy spell forecast it remains to be seen how good a flow we can expect. We had a definite June gap up here but we have field beans locally, which kept my bees nicely busy.

There is less urgency to remove and extract honey now as the oilseed rape is over, and we can afford to wait until the frames are sealed before removing them. Before adding another super it's a good idea to check the ones already on and to maximise space by rearranging frames and even boxes, at the same time moving uncapped or partially capped frames to the middle of the super for the bees to complete: they work in a chimney fashion so will go straight up the centre of the hive, ignoring the outer frames unless they need them. This year my bees have been very quick to fill supers but quite slow to cap frames: curious, but according to *Beecraft* it seems I'm not the only one to find this.

With the main honey harvest of the year in mind you may find you need to order extra equipment, foundation, jars or labels.

There have been very few reports of possible Asian hornet incursion into the UK but we must remain alert to the possibility of overwintered queens attempting to set up colonies. Any such queens will be confined to the nest now but workers will be seen hawking outside hives so remain vigilant, set up bait stations and keep checking trees in your vicinity for possible secondary nests.

We also need to maintain our vigilance where colony health is concerned and to be alert to signs of robbing by stronger colonies and by wasps. Yes, it's time to make some wasp traps...

July Summary

Continue to add supers ahead of the bees' requirements when the lower box is full of bees not honey.

Carry out detailed inspections on colonies that have not been split and take action if you find queen cells.

Remove and extract sealed frames of honey and put the empties back in the evening for the bees to clean out. Always return them to the hives they came from and try not to leave bits of sticky comb lying about in the apiary.

Reduce entrances to avoid the risk of robbing by bees and wasps.

Make wasp traps – see guidance online from BBKA, National Bee Unit, Dave Cushman, et al.

Continue to monitor the daily varroa drop and take action if the count is above 10.

Make sure you have equipment, jars and labels organised for your honey harvest.

Leave your bait hive out a bit longer, there may still be swarms about.

Look out for Asian hornet workers hawking outside your hives; baits should be protein-based, e.g. cat food, tuna, prawns; observe bait stations and change bait often.

Check trees for large secondary Asian hornet nests.

Keep watching, learning, and asking questions.