**Bee Advisor Blog**

**Buzzing after covid by The Bee Advisor. April 2023**

Well, covid eventually caught up with me in August and like many others I lost almost a week of normality. However, it’s been a couple of years of not having a normal life for most of us and certainly for beekeeping associations. Whilst many of us found ways of keeping in touch and we had a wonderful selection of webinars and online talks it feels good to meet in person and get back to talking bees with each other.

I started the position of SRUC Bee advisor in April 2022 and have thoroughly enjoyed working with our various partners especially the bee inspectors, meeting beekeepers, talking to associations and being involved in training and mentoring. I hope to write a regular blog to help keep beekeepers up to date with important issues and seasonal tips from the beekeeping world. I am really interested in what associations and beekeepers want so if you have something you would like me to write about please let me know. I hope to keep it informative & understandable. I will let you know what issues have been raised with me and advise on how we can work together to help improve these situations.

**Varroa**

Many have asked about varroa control. Make sure you use a VMD authorised product. I would suggest an amitraz product in autumn after the supers are off and oxalic acid trickle in winter as they are highly effective treatments recommended in Scotland, along with other integrated pest management techniques.

I have been asked about changes to varroa treatments such as Formic acid products. There is a supply issue with Maqs and this may not be resolved. The new formic pro product must not be used with supers on. My advice is to **always read the instructions** as they can change at any time. Varroa as always is a major issue for beekeepers in Scotland and I spent a weekend in Mull with Fiona and Mhairi from SASA and Phil MacInespie from the SBA to provide education on what varroa looked like, how to monitor for it and how to minimise its impact. The beekeepers on Mull are now monitoring their own situation and it looks like the North of the Island has no or little varroa as yet.

The Varroa working group has also met and we are working towards providing a varroa learning package specific to Scotland’s situation. There is also concern about varroa in remote areas of Scotland and in partnership with those involved in the Honeybee Health Strategy there are plans and discussions ongoing to tackle these issues.

**Honeybee Health plan**

You can see how the discussions are going in the implementation plan and minutes of the meetings which can be found in the link below.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-honey-bee-health-strategy-implementation-plan/>

The Honeybee Health Strategy was published and can be viewed below. Please do feedback to me your comments and ideas on this.

[The Honey Bee Health Strategy 2022 - 2032 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/honey-bee-health-strategy-2022-2032/)

**Honeybees and other pollinators**

Another issue has been, do honeybees impact negatively on other native bees? There are some studies beginning on this but no solid evidence of a negative impact. One thing I think we can all do on this is to plant for all pollinators and there are some wonderful positive projects in Scotland to inspire us all. One of those is the Nature Scot B-lines project and one I was very impressed with was the Irvine to Girvan nectar network. See the link below. <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/irvine-to-girvan-nectar-network/>

**BeeBase**

Some of you may be aware that beebase has a new look, a video for a guide around the new site can be found here <https://fb.watch/jGyNIOlJQK/>

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/> Soon there will be an updated section for beekeepers in Scotland.

**Honeybees in the news**

Please be aware that there are lots of headline grabbing articles that are not necessarily what they seem. For example, the recent article on how Sunflowers can help with varroa mites or the antibiotic to cure AFB. These can often sound exciting and positive but on closer look are not necessarily proven or beneficial. Further studies and verification of evidence often needs to be done in the case of the Sunflower article and in Scotland AFB is not such as big issue as it is in America and antibiotic VACCINATIONS are not approved treatments for bee disease in the UK.

**Beginners**

For beginners I would encourage you to continue to join beebase where there is lots of information to help you get started beekeeping. Also join and attend your local association meetings and courses and get advice from the more experienced. A mentor is always a good idea. Find your nearest association here. <https://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/about/affiliated-beekeeping-associations>

**BLOGS MANY ARE UK BASED HERE SCOTTISH OPTIONS**

Two Scottish blogs I would recommend are https://www.theapiarist.org/ and <https://www.beelistener.co.uk/>

**Other Information**

I have learned from this summer’s inspections that hygiene and biosecurity are extremely important and although much disease is spread by the beekeeper it is not a reflection on how good or bad a beekeeper is if they get it. The key is to follow best practice.

With regards issues with spraying pesticides there is a website farmers and beekeepers can join where the farmers will alert when spraying so beekeepers can take action to close or move their hives if needed. <https://beeconnected.org.uk/>

**Podcasts**

Please find attached links to the winter podcast and the new spring podcast. I have plans to do more on topics such as varroa and swarming and welcome contributors and suggestions for other bee health topics.

FLOW BETTER

Winter podcast

<https://player.captivate.fm/episode/b031e430-eb19-45d5-a439-57bb9a04792d>

Spring podcast

<https://player.captivate.fm/episode/31f89a0a-7262-46dd-bff3-3a572d9dc843>

**You tube videos**

With the wealth of information on the world wide web it can be difficult to know what information is accurate and backed up with experience and evidence. In order to help beekeepers, access suitable information quickly I have set up a You tube channel which you can only access with the link below. It has video clips on many different topics relevant to Scottish beekeepers on topics such as pollination, varroa, swarming, pests and diseases. They range from short 5-minute clips to some more detailed talks. This will be added to over time. Please do feedback on the usefulness of this and any suggestions.

[**https://www.youtube.com/@lorrainejohnston3882/playlists**](https://www.youtube.com/%40lorrainejohnston3882/playlists)

**WHILST SOME LIKE IT SOME PREFER BOOKS**

**Recommended reading/ research**

1. Varroa management: a practical guide on how to manage Varroa mites in honeybee colonies by Kirsty Stainton
2. Honey Bee Pests, Predators, and Diseases by Roger a Morse, Kim Flottum
3. Honey Bee Pests and Diseases: A Complete Guide to Prevention and Management by Robert Owen, Jean-Pierre Y Scheerlinck, Mark Stevenson.
4. The Honey Bee Inside Out. by Celia Davis

**Notifiable diseases REMINDER**

Report suspected European Foulbrood or American Foulbrood to**Bees\_mailbox@gov.scot**

It was a pleasure to visit and talk to such enthusiastic associations and I hope to keep in touch and see some of you at future events SUCH AS. Please do email me if there is anything Bee health wise, I can help you with.

Many Thanks Lorraine Johnston Lorraine.Johnston@sruc.ac.uk