



February Newsletter

2026



***Crown of gold and black,
Ruling over all my heart,
Long live the Queen Bee***

Long term readers will know how much I love a Valentine's Haiku.....

Contents

Welcome

Dates for your diary

Seen around the internet

Tips for February

BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting - Report

Newbury & District BKA - Louisa Houghton

Vale & Downland BKA News - John Broadbent

Somerset Yellow-legged Asian Hornet conference - John Broadbent

Adverts

Welcome

February is the worst month for beekeepers. The old season seems a long time ago, yet the new season is agonisingly different. By now, you will have an idea of how your bees are faring. I don't feel the Winter has been unusually warm or cold, or wet or dry. A bit nondescript really. But...Winter loss reports have started coming in and some beekeepers have already lost several hives. I worry about these reports for a couple of reasons: several say they did an Autumn treatment as usual and a Winter oxalic trickle

(on survivors) and that the hives appeared to have a good amount of stores left. Often the reports indicate very few bees left behind and nothing to indicate what has happened. At least with problems like isolation starvation, the signs are pretty obvious - hundreds of dead bees, head down in empty comb trying to get the last of the available stores. My second worry is that we haven't yet got to the worst period - around late Feb/March, when the stores are gone yet the bees are becoming active and there is nothing to bring in. Keep hefting everyone!

This month we have association news, a short report from the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting held in January and a report from the Somerset Yellow-legged Asian Hornet conference, held on 24th Jan.

Regardless of the time of year and what is happening, every beekeeper I know is very stoic and very keen to make things as good for their bees as they can. It will soon be Spring!

John

Dates for your diary

<u>Newbury & District</u>
First Tuesday of the month, 7:30pm-9:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Shaw cum Donnington RG14 2DR 3rd Feb - Single source honey tasting with Ben Tichband 3rd March - Managing swarming season with Stephen Greer 7th April - Pests & Predators with Adrian Connington 7th March - Frame building - 11am - 1pm St Mary's Church Hall
<u>Vale & Downland</u>
Venues to be confirmed - from 7.30pm unless stated otherwise Friday 20th February - Asian Hornet Update & Spring Trapping - AHAT Team Friday 27th March - Talk tbc (awaiting confirmation) Saturday 28th March - Red Barn Build Day
Saturday 21 February - The Beekeeping Show, Telford 25th Jan - Bookings open for the Spring Convention Workshops 17th - 19th April BBKA Spring Convention

Seen around the internet

I watched a zoom talk by Professor Giles Budge of Newcastle University this week on “An Introduction to BEE- GUARDS and how to get involved”. This was arranged by Cambridgeshire Beekeeping Association. I had never heard of this work - mostly in the EU, but Prof Giles is involved with some of the work packages (mainly WP 6 from what I could tell) in the UK. His particular interest is with tools to predict the future spread of invasive pests and developing protocols for mitigation. This will be particularly important should (when?) *Tropilaelaps* arrive. The barcode will take you to a youtube video from Giles about *Tropilaelaps* mites



More information about the BEE-GUARDS program here: www.beeguards.eu

Giles also mentioned a site I hadn't heard of before: WikiBeedia. It's a bit rough around the edges but hopes to develop into the number one encyclopedia on honeybees. Worth keeping an eye on as they develop it further (don't forget to select 'English').



https://wikibeedia.miraheze.org/wiki/Main_Page

Tips for February

My top tips for Feb:

- Heft and feed fondant when needed
- Leave the bees alone unless adding feed or clearing dead bees from the entrance
- Check mouseguards and woodpecker guards are correctly positioned
- Check hives are well strapped or weighted down and visit after storms to check
- The Thames Valley is quite damp in Feb - if you use open mesh floors keep inspection trays out and make sure hive is tilted slightly forward so condensation above the brood runs to the front and down rather than dripping on the brood
 - If the tray is out air can circulate and you can also look and see what has fallen down and out of the hive - if you see fresh lines of wax, you know that

either stores are being uncapped or new bees are emerging - lots of cappings means lots of bees and activity

- **Forage Watch:** There is actually quite a lot for bees to collect pollen from just now.

Snowdrops (Galanthus): Plentiful; bees use them for early pollen.

Hazel Catkins: Provide yellow pollen.

Crocus & Hellebores: Starting to pop up in gardens.

Winter Aconite: Bright yellow ground cover.

BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting

This year's Annual Delegate Meeting was held on 10th January. Delegates could attend via zoom or in person: most now attend on line.

Compared to some years, this year's meeting was fairly tame. Nothing too controversial was listed on the agenda. However, an inordinate amount of time was wasted deciding who would Chair the meeting. 45 minutes of time. I'll say no more except it was incoming President Diane Drinkwater (It was always going to be).

- Apiculture Se Maxime Dedit Certificates were awarded to:
 - John Hendrie
 - Norman Carreck
 - Ray Green

(I'll be honest, I have no idea on the origin of this award - but these are well known beekeepers!)

- Honorary Fellowships were awarded to:
 - Celia Davis
 - Stephen Barnes
- Diane Drinkwater was elected as President. She can only serve for one year as she will then have done 8 years continuously as a BBKA trustee, which is the maximum you can do in one go without a break.
- There were 5 nominations for new Trustees and 5 places. All were elected (Nobody local to us).

- There were 2 nominations for the Exam Board and 3 places. Both were elected, including Jenny Morgan who did the V&D Honey Bee Health Assessments last year and is a good choice (!)

The following propositions were considered:

	Nominating Association	Seconding Association	Brief Summary of Proposition
1	BBKA Board of Trustees		Increase to capitation fees.
2	Lincolnshire	Nottinghamshire	Share best practices, resources & training materials for key volunteer roles within associations.
3	Kendal & S. Westmorland	Cumbria	Standardised operating practices for YLAH coordinators
4	Kendal & S. Westmorland	Cumbria	Monthly online meeting for YLAH coordinators
5	Lancashire & NW	Harrogate & Ripon	The BBKA remains an Association of Associations.

All passed, although some were happening anyway. The capitation increase was much discussed, and I think a fair point was made that most goods and services are increased in cost broadly in line with inflation and we should apply the same logic to BBKA fees. Given that all their costs rise (and they are forecasting slight deficits) I think this is a reasonable stance. The BBKA Trustees had asked for a big increase in Direct and Specialist member fees, but this was turned down and a smaller increase agreed. The fee you and I pay as Registered Members will increase from £23 to £24 from 1 Oct 2026. Given we get the insurance and a monthly magazine I think this is good value (nearly half goes in postage of the magazine!). I also find it quite amusing that some of those who argue most strongly against annual increases are some of the first to load the BBKA with extra tasks that cost money. Surely, they can see the connection between amount of work and cost.

Newbury & District BKA - Louisa Houghton & Rebecca Hall

Newbury Beekeepers buzzing with events and education opportunities for 2026

It was great to welcome New Year smiles at our first NDBKA members' meeting of 2026. Our meetings continue to bring together beekeepers of all experience levels, including Associate members from other Associations.

A warm welcome to our newest beekeepers who have recently completed the beginner theory course and are



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already getting involved — we're delighted to have you with us. Thank you to Ruth and everyone who helps with refreshments and clear-up.
If you have feedback or ideas for speakers or topics, please email Yvonne at programmes@newburybeekeepers.org.uk or Becca at chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

Contacting Us

We have updated our NDBKA Committee email addresses to help keep communications manageable and separate from personal emails. Below are the email addresses for contacting Committee members.

Becca Hall (Chair NDBKA)	chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Stephen Greer (Secretary NDBKA)	secretary@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Julia Roberts (Membership Secretary)	membership@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Ben Tichband (Treasurer)	treasurer@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Yvonne Horner: (Education and Programme Secretary)	programmes@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Andrew Fromant (YLAH Coordinator)	ylhornets@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Mark Weller (Swarm line Coordinator)	swarms@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Louisa Houghton (Equipment hire)	equipmenthire@newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Louisa Houghton & Stephen Greer (Communications leads)	info@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

Supporting public events

As a registered charity, Newbury and District Beekeepers Association has a strong commitment to education and public engagement. Our charitable aims include:

- Promoting and developing beekeeping as an enjoyable and beneficial activity
- Providing information to the public on beekeeping and swarm collection
- Visiting schools and supporting the science curriculum through education about apiculture
- Liaising with national beekeeping authorities on good practice, disease control, and environmental matters

One of the most successful and enjoyable ways we meet these aims is by attending spring and summer fairs and shows. With our gazebo, observation hive, and children's activities, these events are a fantastic opportunity to spark curiosity about honeybees, explain how people can get started in beekeeping, and welcome new members into the Association. They also allow us to promote good beekeeping practice and show just how friendly and approachable NDBKA is.

Of course, attending events relies entirely on volunteers — members willing to spend some time chatting to the public, helping with children's activities, and generally sharing their enthusiasm for beekeeping. I'm very aware how busy life can be, and that weekends are precious. From my own experience, though, these events are always genuinely enjoyable. In between talking to visitors and getting messy making seed bombs, I've found time to quiz more experienced beekeepers, share enthusiasm with beginners, and pick up ideas that have improved my own practice — all while enjoying the feel-good factor of sharing our passion with non-beekeepers.

We currently have three events planned for 2026, and I would be incredibly grateful for the peace of mind of knowing we have enough volunteers to support them. Members

of all experience levels are very welcome, whether you can offer a full day or just a few hours.

Please could you complete this [Google Form](#) or email chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk to let us know any time you are able to help at the following events:

- **World Bee Day** – Thatcham Discovery Centre, Saturday 16th May 2026
- **Swallowfield Show**– Sunday 30th August and Monday 31st August 2026
The Swallowfield Show is a not-for-profit, family friendly event run by volunteers and members of the Swallowfield Horticultural Society for the benefit of the community and to raise funds for local charities.
- **Newbury Show** – Saturday 19th September and Sunday 20th September 2026

Thank you very much for considering supporting these events and helping NDBKA continue its educational work. Your time and enthusiasm really do make a difference.

Rebecca Hall

Chair of Newbury and District Beekeepers Association

Build your beekeeping skills - BBKA modules and assessments

Thinking of improving your beekeeping skills? Now is the time to register for this year's BBKA modules and assessments this year if you don't want to miss your chance. Check out the table below to see all the available courses. There are a wide range of topics across both written and practical exams and there's definitely something for everyone.

BBKA Basic

You don't have to complete this to move onto other modules, but it's a great place to start. It's also recommended that you've kept bees for two seasons.

There are two parts to the module:

1. Opening and manipulating a colony of bees. You'll be asked to identify various features of the hive and the colony.
2. Verbal questions about the types of topics covered in the beginners' course, for example swarming, pests, diseases etc.

N.B; This course is fully booked for 2026, but if you're interested in taking it, please email me (**Yvonne Horner** at programmes@newburybeekeepers.org.uk) to find out more about future courses and dates.

Other BBKA Modules

There are an additional eight modules available. For more information and a syllabus, please reach out at programmes@newburybeekeepers.org.uk.

The modules can be taken in any order, but Module eight must be taken last. Exams are held on dates set by the BBKA and there are normally two per year (March and November). You can take the exam remotely if you have access to a computer, the BBKA will give you log-on information in advance to test your connection. Alternatively,

you can attend in person to sit the exams. You can take more than one module at a time but as there is a time window within which to complete the exams, I would suggest not doing more than two, as this will allow you time for a break between modules.

The modules do require study time - you will need to prepare in advance as they are closed book exams. If you are interested in any of these modules please contact me and I can help you register and complete your online registration form that will be sent to you.

Last but not least there are some BBKA practical modules available. These include:

- Honeybee health certificate
- General husbandry
- Advanced husbandry

Courses and dates

	Applications Open	Applications Close	Date of Assessment/Exam	Pre-requisites	Fee	Notes
Junior Assessment	1st January 2026	30th April 2026	Last assessment date 31st August.	Must be under 18 years old	£0	Held in small groups.
Basic Assessment	1st January 2026	30th April 2026	Last assessment date 31st August.	Recommended to have kept bees for one year *	£35	*Different rules apply for Direct Members. Please contact members@bbka.org.uk for more information.
Honey Bee Health Assessment	1st January 2026	30th April 2026	Last assessment date 31st August.	Must have passed the Basic Assessment.	£25	Cannot be taken after passing the General Husbandry Assessment.
General Husbandry Assessment	1st January 2026	28th February 2026	Assessment by mutual agreement of candidate and assessors.	Recommended to have kept bees for five years and to have passed the Honey Bee Health Assessment.	£100	Held at apiary of candidate.
Advanced Husbandry Assessment	1st January 2026	28th February 2026	9-12 July 2026 depending on numbers.	Must have passed the General Husbandry Certificate prior to or during 2024.	£300*	Held at BBKA apiary, Stoneleigh. *£150 refund of fees if assessment is passed in 2026.
Bee Breeding Assessment	1st January 2026	28th February 2026	Assessment by mutual agreement of candidate and assessors.	Must have passed the Basic Assessment.	£100	Held at apiary of candidate.
Microscopy Assessment	1st January 2026	30th June 2026	26-27 September 2026 depending on numbers.	Must have passed the Basic Assessment.	£90	Held at BBKA HQ, Stoneleigh.
Show Judge Assessment	1st January 2026	31st December 2026	Interim judging assessments by mutual agreement of candidate and assessor. Final assessed judging at National Honey Show in October after all parts of portfolio completed.	Must hold the Basic Certificate and Module 1 and 2 OR the General Husbandry Certificate. Must have completed a number of stewarding experiences and hold 30+ valid prize cards.	£45	For more information or to apply please contact sec.exams@bbka.org.uk.
Written Examinations - March 2026	1st January 2026	8th February 2026	21st March - Supplementary modules excluded	Recommended to have kept bees for one year.	£50 per Module	* Module 3 will be charged at £10 as a trial to encourage uptake of this exam.
Written Examinations - November 2026	1st July 2026	30th September 2026	14th November - All modules offered			

If any of these are of interest, please let me know!

Yvonne Horner

programmes@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

2026 speaker series is the bees' knees

All events are held at St Mary's Church, Shaw-Cum-Donnington, RG14 2DR from 7.30pm – 9.30pm.

Single source honey tasting with Ben Tichband – February 3rd

Come along and learn more around single source honeys from Ben's collection and there'll be the chance to have a taste too!

Managing swarming season with Stephen Greer – March 3rd

How to manage a successful swarming season in your apiaries. What to do if you find a swarm and need to call the Swarm Line, as well as useful information around how you can sign up to be coordinators, collectors and receivers of swarms.

Pest and Predators with Adrian Connington - April 7th

A look at some of the most prevalent predators threatening apiaries, how they attack, and what defences bees and beekeepers can put up to repel invaders.

Don't miss your chance to have fun – and a cuppa - frame building!

On **Saturday 7th March from 11.00am – 1.00pm** we'll be hosting our annual frame building morning at St Mary's Church Hall, Shaw Cum-Donnington *RG14 2DR*.

This is a lovely, informal get together where you can come along with your unmade frames and sit with other members, hammering away and chatting. It's loud, but it's fun! And if you don't have your own kit, we always have some to spare, along with loads of help, advice and cups of tea.

Whodunnit? The case of the Winter Bee murders

We kicked off January with a Murder Mystery when Dylan Gussman joined us from the Meon Valley BKA in Hampshire and got everyone buzzing with clues. Dylan challenged us to solve the mystery of the colonies which didn't survive winter. The talk took us through the stages of investigating the reasons for a colony's death, looking at suspects in the crime, motives and clues.

Dylan's talk opened looking at how bees overwinter and the fact that overwinter bees are physiologically different from the workers that are seen in the colony in the spring and summer because they have to live for months compared with the short six-week lifespan of a normal worker bee.

The Victims

Winter bees are reared through the autumn, and they're born with larger fat bodies – nutrient-rich organs that can store energy. A key product produced in these organs is vitellogenin, this has been identified the substance that helps queens live so long. Vitellogenin is like magic. It's secret of the winter bee. It slows down the ageing process of the honeybee and contributes to their longer lifespan.

Honeybees gather food and store it to help them survive winter, and when the weather starts to get cold, they form a cluster, tightly packed with the queen at the core. The cluster reduces the surface area of bees exposed to the colder outside temperatures and making sure as little heat as possible is lost. In the cluster, the outer mantle layer acts as a heat shield that keeps the heat inside the cluster, whilst bees inside will vibrate their flight muscles to generate heat.

Ideally, the bees will remain in their cluster for the duration of winter, rather than venturing forth. It's expensive and takes precious energy for the bees to have to reform the cluster as they'll need to bring the cluster back up to the ideal temperature rather than just maintain it. As temperature in the colony drops, the bees eat more food so that they can produce heat.

The big question is, what causes bees to die in winter?

The Suspects

When you realise a colony has died it is advisable to carry out your autopsy immediately. If you can't, then block up the entrance until you're ready. No specialist kit is required but taking a few standard tools is good practice. Forceps can be used to pull out potential larvae, a magnifying glass to look at cell contents, or a matchstick to conduct a ropiness test. Bring a bin bag to dispose of frames or hive contents as this prevents robbing. You will want to take photos of everything as these can be used to share with other beekeepers to gain secondary opinions.

It may also be a good idea to bring along a fellow beekeeper. They can provide moral support or hold things for you, whilst also helping you come to a conclusion. Know where your bee inspectors' number is if you get out of your depth.

There are several stages and clues to help determine the colony's cause of death.

Looking for clues

Clue One – Your records

The first thing to do is to look through your records and re-live the previous year of the colony. Did it seem weak over the summer when it should have been prosperous? Did it have enough stores going into winter? What was the queen's egg laying rate like in autumn? The more information you have prior to going out into the apiary the better.

Clue Two – External signs

Our post-mortem begins on the outside of the hive as this is the first place to look for clues. Hive damage can be caused by environmental factors such as storms or leaking. Was your kit in a fit state to allow the colony to overwinter? Predators like woodpeckers can bore holes into the hives. The colony needs an undisturbed nest that is dry and sheltered from the elements to overwinter, and this breach in the hive will not do your bees any favours.

Observe the hive entrance for brown splattering, this is dysentery. Whilst Nosema may not have been the killer it gives an insight into overall colony health.

Knowing the timing of when a colony has died is not an easy thing to track as you may still be seeing bees fly in and out of the entrance for some time after it has died. The reason behind this is that this colony is being robbed rather than an active colony living within the hive. This is why it is important to check your hives frequently throughout the winter.

Clue Three - Dead bees outside the hive

In a healthy state, when a bee dies they are thrown out of the colony by another worker to avoid them piling up inside. Therefore, it is perfectly natural to see small piles of dead bees outside from time to time, this is more obvious if you don't have the hives situated on grass as it slows down the rate of decomposition. It is a good sign, especially if these piles only grow slowly as it shows the colony is healthy and functioning normally.

However, large piles of bees is usually a sign of two different killers. In the summer the most common cause of this is poisoning from pesticides. Foragers coming back to the hive die on their return and leave a carpet of dead bees in front of the hive. Likewise, if

there is an overall dwindling in the colony it may be that the foragers are going off and dying out foraging rather than returning to the colony.

Clue Four - Position and size of cluster

You may find a small cluster within the colony, and often these are small which suggests there were too few bees in the colony to survive. Small clusters struggle to regulate their temperature so often spiral out of control quickly where some bees die, so have fewer bees to heat the cluster and thus more bees die. If they were far away from the stores which are on the outside frames this is a sign of isolation starvation.

Larger clusters benefit from being spread over more combs so can access greater food reserves, whereas smaller clusters will not be able to reach all of the stored honey. Further proof that the colony was starving is bees with their heads inside of cells indicate that they were starving. Clusters with more bees can move around the brood nest in search of stores

Clue Five – Abnormal cell contents

The queen will stop laying over winter if the temperature gets cold enough, or if she fails – both of these result in there being no cell contents at all to examine, which is a clue in itself. With warmer winters it is become less likely that there are broodless periods over winter. If there is brood, is it raised and bumpy signifying a drone laying queen – she ran out of sperm over winter and the colony failed. Keep a close eye for abnormalities that that need examining further.

Clue Six – Piles of dead bees inside the hive

This suggests that the cause of death has been so quick the colony has not been able to keep up with removing corpses from the hive. Large piles of dead bees in their thousands implies that they died in large numbers over a short period of time and overwhelmed the colony. The main culprit that causes this is varroa, but individual bees can be identified for other abnormalities

Coming to terms with colony loss

Losing a colony isn't easy and you might experience a range of emotions when carrying out a postmortem and for some time after.

Denial – You may deny that it is your fault, that nothing could be done about the colony loss. Avoidance may be a part of your coping strategy when you don't go and carry out the post-mortem but this makes the process harder due to degradation.

Anger – Some beekeepers become angry and look for excuses or try and find something to blame. Always remember that you aren't a bad beekeeper for losing a colony and see it as a lesson to learn from.

Depression – You may start to think beekeeping isn't for you and it's time to give up. But don't!

Acceptance – Things start to look brighter. Perhaps you have made up the numbers in the apiary by splitting or buying new stock. What is key is that you have learnt from your mistakes.

Avoiding deaths in the winter

Health

Varroa is a bee killer. Treating for mites early is key. No single treatment is more important. The autumn treatment ensures the varroa numbers are not too high to cause unhealthy bees at the beginning of the overwinter process whilst the winter treatment is essential to keep the varroa levels low so that when the number of bees reared begins to increase the colony is not overwhelmed. Both are as important as the other.

Make sure your queens are strong, keep a close eye on their laying pattern and ability in their second year. Will they carry on over the winter, are they producing good calm bees? Do they need replacing?

Food

The average colony needs 20-30kg of stores to survive the winter. This is the equivalent to a super and three brood frames roughly. All feeding should be done by early October so it can be sealed off and will not ferment as this can cause dysentery. If you need to feed later on than this, fondant should be used.

Isolation starvation must be one of the most disappointing ways for a colony to fail over winter. There may have been stores present, but the cluster was too small to move to access them. Isolation starvation isn't really a cause of death just a symptom of a high varroa load leading to spring dwindling. If there was zero varroa then the cluster often would have remained large enough to migrate around the box to the stores.

On a mild day, open up the hive and assess where the cluster is and if they have access to all the food. If they do not, then move the frames of stores and score them. This can be repeated fortnightly if you are concerned. Dummy boards are also a good way to shuffle the frames around. Stores on the outer edges of the brood nest can be shuffled closer to the cluster. The main thing to do is to not disturb the cluster otherwise it could be detrimental to the colony.

Warm and dry

Heat escaping from the cluster causes the movement of warm moist air to move upwards and be replaced by the cold dry air from the bottom. Ventilation helps to remove some of the excess water vapour (and carbon dioxide), and for those of us who use mesh floors this tends to be all that is required.

The placement of insulation must be strategic. Water vapour condenses on the coldest surface so if you insulate the sides of your hive but not the roof, the metal lid becomes the coolest spot and water will drip down onto your bees. Insulation above the colony is more important than the walls.

Foiling the culprits

There are all sorts of pests, pathogens and diseases out there to kill your colony, but with effective management these murderers can be foiled. The first step in understanding how to tackle them, is to spot the early signs and know how they cause a colony's demise.

Stopping all losses is impossible, we have to be ready for failure. What's most important is that while losing a colony is tough, but there are loads of different ways to support overwintering. Do what you know works, and if it isn't working try something

new. Above all, use each colony loss as a way to gain knowledge on what to do better next time.

Vale & Downland BKA - John Broadbent

A short update this month.

Beginners' Course

This year's Beginners' course has begun and I'm pleased to report they are an excellent bunch. We have done two weeks now and nobody has withdrawn, although one member has had to go to North America for work for a few weeks - we'll try and catch him up when he returns.



John B tries to explain
bee space..

February Talk - All Things Asian Hornet

The talk on Feb 20th is all about the Asian Hornet - Simon Rogers and I went to the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Conference in Bridgwater (see report below) to learn all we could about what is happening with the Asian Hornet in the UK (this week a nest was found in Wrexham). The aim at our meeting will be to get to the bottom of what is going on, what you need to know, what kit is available to help us fight off these insects and what we need to do as an association. When they arrive, it will take a team effort by all of us to keep on top of it. We have distributed traps previously to members of the AHAT Team and will be reviewing our policy on this over the next couple of weeks. We may put a call out for more team members or for more members to take part in Spring monitoring/trapping. I have already bought a 5l container of Trappit for the Hornet Team. Please do come along to the talk to let us know what you think and to offer your help if you can. More emails to come on this important issue.

Assessments The window for applying to do the Basic Assessment this year is now open (as is Honey Bee Health). If you want to do either please drop me an email and I will send you a link to the application. The Assn will provide training for those who want it.

Module Success. Congratulations to Andrew Smith who passed his Module 6 exam with flying colours. Just 2 more to go and he will have his advanced theory certificate. Well done Andrew.

PÄRKLA Storage Bags update You may remember previous comments about using Ikea **PÄRKLA** bags to store supers in over winter. They are exactly the right size. Now Paul Hatcher has emailed to let me know they are now available in 2 sizes, and the new size fits a brood box. Hey also only cost £2 each.

<https://www.ikea.com/gb/en/p/paerkla-storage-case-00601105/>



© Ikea

So how have they performed? The ones I have used with supers stacked in my garage have performed well and they have kept the supers nice and clean and kept bugs out. As an experiment, I left one out in the garden over winter to see what happens when used outside. I have found the water has got in and the frames have gone mouldy - so not recommended! Paul also found you have to be sure you have treated for waxmoth properly - otherwise you will find a bag full of moths. It's also worth checking occasionally, just in case some waxmoth larvae survived your treatment.

Somerset Asian Hornet Conference 24th Jan - John Broadbent

At 0630 on 24th Jan, Simon Rogers and I set off to Somerset for an Asian Hornet Conference held by the South West Beekeepers Forum at The Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgewater.

The topics covered included:

- Latest research and monitoring updates (UK NBU + Belgium).
- The hornet's lifecycle and environmental impact.
- Practical tracking skills.
- Bee protection methods (electric harps, muselieres).
- Using the "See It! Snap It! App It!".
- And lots of other topics..



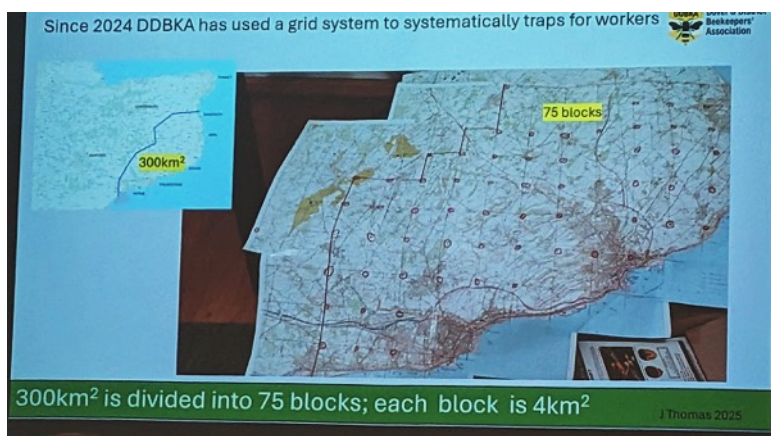
Asian Hornet at a monitoring bait station
© Somerset Beekeepers Assn

I wasn't sure what to expect, but a crowded conference hall with more than 250 delegates was not it - this is a serious topic that has clearly captured Beekeepers' attention.

The conference consisted of a series of lectures, breakout 'lecturettes' dealing with specific issues and displays of equipment and books as well as a good display by the NBU. The talks were uniformly good and well received, The standouts for me were the NBU's Anabel Lewis 'Yellow Legged Hornet update 2025', Dominique Soete 'Monitoring, impact and control of *Vespa velutina* in Flanders, Belgium' and Jackie Thomas who gave an impassioned (and much more upbeat than I was expecting) account of how Dover & District Beekeepers Assn responded to and fought back against an almost overnight and massive incursion of the Yellow Legged Hornets into their area.

We will be giving a lot of the detail at our Asian Hornet talk on 20th Feb (Newbury members welcome), so I'll save most of the detail for then, but I'll just list a few of the themes that emerged over the day:

- The term Asian Hornet is no longer used, instead use Yellow-legged Hornet (YLH) or Yellow Legged Asian Hornet. We need to be consistent from now to avoid confusing the public.
- Once established, numbers can rocket. Even with an intensive eradication effort, Jersey has gone from 2015 0 Queens and 0 Nests to 2025 1,376 Queens and 580 nests. For reference, Jersey is about 1.5 times size of Oxford.



'Military' level planning is required

the

- These insects can be very dangerous, at some point someone is going to be very badly hurt, hopefully not a child.
- This isn't something that the majority can just sit back and watch a few hardworking volunteers sort out. It's just too big once it arrives. For example, Dover BKA has an expectation that every able-bodied beekeeper in the association will be part of the YLH response.
- Adjacent associations have to work together with agreed areas of responsibility, and each do their bit, or else eradicated hornets will soon be replaced by new arrivals leaking in from an area which isn't pulling it weight.
- The response requires a 'military' type organisation to coordinate and manage effort.
- Clear communication and an agreed plan (preferably voted on by members) is needed.
- The response requires funding and involvement from non-beekeepers, including local councils.
- AI powered monitoring stations that can identify YLH are here or nearly here as well as tagging technology that can help rapid location of nests.
- In short - We still have time to plan and prepare, but we need everyone to play their part. There are large areas of France and Spain where beekeeping is no longer viable....

SO, please do come along on 20th Feb to hear what we have to say and see our initial strategy. Newbury members welcome as we will need to work together on this.

Adverts

Jen & Matt - Selling a colony and kit

V&D BKA Members Matt and Jen are looking to give up beekeeping, after getting their first hive under the tutelage of V&DBKA in 2018. They currently have one complete hive of bees, with a blue queen, that is overwintering in Benson. The list of extra kit is too long to list here but includes 3 Thorne's National Hives (complete including 2 supers and frames). A 9-frame manual stainless-steel extractor, Nuc, Snelgrove Board, honey

buckets, feeders, mouse guards, 8oz jars, home made solar wax melter and 2 home-made stands (one single, one for 5 hives)

The full list is here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16c1RGsLYNfkmHRaiEBwDNOXAvjLNT28uW5fo2WxUzsA/edit?usp=sharing>"

Contact Jen by email: jennyshelton@hotmail.co.uk

Ben Tichband - SIPA Honey Bees Limited

We have Buckfast mated queens, virgins, Nucleus and full colonies for sale. We can supply on National or 14x12, alternatively as packages for top bar and other hive types. All our bees are raised in our own West Berkshire apiaries. We offer a 10% discount to members of NDBKA and VDBKA. info@honeybeenucs.co.uk

John Belcher

Please call John Belcher on 01189842321 or 07929586037 or email johnthebeeman8@gmail.com for bees, hive equipment, extraction supplies, feed, and general requirements for beekeeping, mostly in stock in Pangbourne RG8 7LB or available online from supplier.

Beckys Beezzzs Ltd

Nucs of bees, UK Bred mated queens, beekeeping equipment, bee feed & treatments beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk 01264 351104

Please note: All Newbury & Vale members can place an advert free of charge for up to 3 months. Adverts should preferably be 5 lines or less.