



August Newsletter

2026



Six live mites in one cell - just waiting to weaken and infect your
Winter bees

Photo: Matt Frost

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Welcome

Hot, hot, hot and no end in sight! The warm weather is now expected to extend for another week or two. Every time the forecast promises rain next week, it vanishes as we approach. I cannot remember when we last had a good rainfall; normally a hosepipe ban triggers immediate widespread flooding, but not this year!

I have very little nectar flow coming in now. The only bees I have bringing in forage are in garden settings, while countryside hives appear to have virtually nothing. I hope to clear my remaining supers as fast as I can process them, followed promptly by Autumn treatments to get the colonies in a strong position to rear healthy winter bees.

Varroa is approaching—or already at—its seasonal peak. During the Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) inspection at the Vale & Downland Apiary on 20th July, we found evidence of high *Varroa* numbers across most hives: Deformed Wing Virus (DWV), K-wing, and stunted bees. Many frames showed uncapped pupae where bees had investigated cell contents and cannibalized compromised pupae. Now is the time to review your *Varroa* treatment strategy. My advice: choose your treatment sooner rather than later, as popular options may quickly run out of stock.

After five years of writing this joint newsletter, this will be my final edition. I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. Thank you to everyone who has contributed ideas, articles, photos, or simply said hello along the way.

Best regards

John

Dates for your diary

<u>Newbury & District</u>
Sunday 23rd August, meeting at The Fox pub in Hermitage for bee chat and advice in preparation for the honey show Sunday 11th October, 2–4pm at Oare Apiary, Members Meeting (tbc) Tuesday 20th October, Guest speaker, details to follow
<u>Vale & Downland</u>
Every Saturday at Red Barn 1-2pm Beginners with bees, 2.30-4pm open members session (mornings when hot - please check for emails from us) Saturday 8th August, Members Session + Annual BBQ (details in V&D Section) Saturday 10th October, Fun Honey Show (includes AGM) Drayton VH
22nd - 24th October - National Honey Show

Seen around the internet

New Varroa Treatment on the way? An intriguing study explores using peptides isolated from spider venom to target Varroa mites. While still in early development, this research could pave the way for an eco-friendly, easy-to-use treatment.

- Read the full article:

<https://www.unisc.edu.au/about/unisc-news/news-archive/2026/july/how-spider-venoms-could-stop-deadly-varroa-mites-new-unisc-led-research>

- Instagram reel:

<https://www.instagram.com/reels/DaXOwVLJw4V/>



Professor Herzig, UniSC
holding a spider used for
venom extraction
© UniSC

Yellow Legged (Asian) Hornet Update for 2026 The National Bee Unit (NBU) rolling update is active. So far this season, there have been **62 confirmed sightings and 16 nests** recorded. Be aware that secondary nests typically form from mid-July onwards.

- NBU Update Page: <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/about-us/beekeeping-news/yellow-legged-hornet-2025-rolling-update-2>
- Mark your calendar: YLH Week is 7th - 13th September

Unexpectedly high (and bad) synergistic harm from Miticides and Herbicides A new study highlights that combined exposure to Flumethrin (a pyrethroid miticide) and Hexaconazole (a fungicide) in comb wax creates a significantly worse outcome for honeybee health than either chemical alone. Together, they disrupt gene expression, impairing energy metabolism and immune response.

- Summary article:

<https://beyondpesticides.org/dailynewsblog/2026/07/synergistic-effects-documented-for-multiple-pesticide-exposure-on-honey-bee-health/>

- (Parts of the) Academic paper:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2026.142902>

It is annoying that beekeepers can't freely access complete versions of academic papers without a university library subscription or similar.

Tips for August

- **Clear Supers & Treat:** Take off your ready supers and commence *Varroa* treatment promptly once supers are cleaned out - see next tip.
- **Wet Super Management:** Place extracted supers back on the same colony above a crownboard with a small access hole, so the bees clean them up. Remove after a week for storage.
- **Comb Protection:** Protect stacked stored supers against wax moth using acetic acid or sulphur burning strips. Freezing frames for 48 hours is another effective method to destroy wax moth eggs.
- **Monitor Colony Stores:** Nectar flows can drop rapidly this month. Keep a close eye on hive weights and feed syrup if stores are light.
- **Prevent Robbing:** Nectar dearth plus hungry wasps equal severe robbing risks. Reduce entrances down to two bee spaces if necessary to help guards defend the hive.
- **Treat for *Varroa*.** See article below for treatment options.
- **YLH** We are approaching peak season for secondary Yellow Legged Hornet nests, when hornets will aggressively hawk hive entrances for protein to feed their brood. Constant Vigilance!
- **Plan ahead for Winter** Time to start thinking about which hives you will take into Winter and which you will unite.



Wasps can become a nightmare very quickly - try and keep as strong colonies



The humble wax moth larvae can completely destroy your stored comb if you don't take precautions

You've gotta 'bee' in it to win it!

It's time to get prepping for The Honey Show at The Newbury Show



NDBKA Honey Show 2026 entries are now OPEN

We are running an Open class and Novice Class open to NDBKA and local Associations. For all the rules, classes and how to prepare you entries, [go to our website](#). The Honey Show is a fun, friendly competition which also brings a unique 'wow' factor to our display that the public find astonishing.

Remember - enter three or more classes and get a competitor's ticket to enter the Newbury Show for a day.

The Newbury Show – and our honey show - is our biggest NDBKA event. It takes place on **Saturday 19th September and Sunday 20th September** and is a brilliant chance for us to come together, celebrate and educate.

Tips and Tricks

Before taking the leap into the honey show, it's important to know what the judges are looking for – and avoid unnecessary disqualification. If it's your first time, or you're a seasoned competitor, here some useful guidelines to help put you in pole position for a prize.

Helpful links

- [Go to the guidelines.](#)
- [Learn more about honey show jar and lid standards](#)

NDBKA members meet at our Oare Association apiary

Fourteen of our members braved the heat to take a look at how our Oare Association bees were faring. We always kick our meetings off with a short talk to get the ball rolling, and Becca Hall covered winter stores, the differences between summer and winter bees, varroa treatments (at a general level) and wasps. We talked about the importance of recording any use of medicines, and to keep records for five years. The attached BeeBase med form is a useful guide.

Our aim when inspecting the hive is a hands-on approach and a sharing experience we can all learn from and enjoy no matter where we are on our beekeeping journey. A huge thanks for all the enthusiasm – it's no mean feat to inspect 13 hives in a heatwave! We broke up into small groups to divide and conquer. The colonies still have summer supers on which all needed to be taken off before we could get stuck into the inspection. The colonies certainly showed us they are hungry, and readily using brood and some super stores. We have some strong laying queens, some virgin queens (good spot Joanna!), a hiding queen (credit to Frankie and Alan) and some rather more forlorn-looking colonies unsure if they have a queen. We worked at understanding hive mentality to problem solve and support.

A top tip shared - spare crown boards or roof keep your supers covered whilst you are inspecting. This keeps the wonderful waft of honey a little more contained and away from wasps and other bees.

Next members meeting Sunday 23rd August

We have an area at The Fox pub booked at 3.30pm for a sit down social as part of this members' meeting (giving Ruth a break this month). This will follow a hands-on hive at 2pm, for those interested. At we'll convene in the pub, grab a drink and some food and have a sit down for a chat and a catch-up. This will include a discussion around the upcoming Honey Show, sharing tips from previous stewards' experiences with judges and answering questions about how to prepare your entries.

Members meetings – dates for the diary

Looking ahead, our monthly members' meetings will be held at our Oare apiary as usual. But if you'd like to host a future meeting at your own apiary, we'd love to hear from you! Hosting does not mean you need to lead the inspection yourself — we'll arrange for an experienced beekeeper to support and lead the session. It's simply a wonderful opportunity for members to visit different apiary setups, exchange ideas and learn from one another.

If you would be interested in hosting a session this season or next, please do [get in touch](#) — we would be delighted to hear from you.

Here are our final dates for the summer:

- Sunday 23rd August – we'll be meeting at The Fox pub in Hermitage for bee chat and advice in preparation for the honey show at The Newbury Show
- Sunday 11th October

Winter meeting series

Please add these dates to your diaries for our winter members meetings. They will be held at **Shaw Church Hall, Newbury from 7.30-9.30pm**. Please come along to meet and chat with fellow members, listen to some interesting talks, drink tea and eat cake!

- 20 October 2026 - With guest speaker - details to follow
- 17 November 2026 - AGM & guest speaker
- 15 December 2026 - Christmas Social
- 19 January 2027- With guest speaker - details to follow

- 16 February 2027- With guest speaker - details to follow
- 16 March 2027

Ready to extract? We have Association kit for hire!

We have some great equipment to make the job easy for you with options to suit beekeepers and their budgets!

The Manual

1. Manual extractor on its own - £15
2. Manual extractor bundle - £20
Includes:
 - Settling tank
 - Stainless steel double strainer
 - Electric uncapping knife
 - Uncapping fork
 - Electric uncapping tray

The Electric

1. Electric extractor on its own - £35
2. Electric extractor bundle - £40
Includes:
 - Settling tank
 - Stainless steel double strainer
 - Electric uncapping knife
 - Uncapping fork
 - Electric uncapping tray

If you'd like to hire any of the equipment, please reach out to **Andy Howard** at equipment@newburybeekeepers.org.uk or on **07824 429101**. Full instructions (should you need them) will be provided!

Volunteering at The Newbury Show

Volunteering for one of our events is a great way to meet the public and share your passion for and knowledge of beekeeping. If you can spare a morning or afternoon to help out, please reach out. If you'd like to get involved, let us know [by completing this short form](#) or emailing Becca at chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk.

Looking for green-fingered gardeners!



As part of promoting the symbiotic relationship between bees and flowers we aim to have a display of plants that flower in September outside our Newbury Show Marquee.



If you're green-fingered or know of gardeners who are, and could plant some seeds now, then donate the plants to the display, or even create a pot with a mix of flowers for selling at the event, please get in touch with Becca - chair@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

Sponsoring the Newbury Show



There is a fee for the marquee as well as historically a prize fund for our Honey Show. We have a sponsorship pack to give to local businesses who would then be able to have their logo displayed within our marquee and a gift of honey given. If you know a company who may like to support of Honey and Bee tent – engaging public in understanding bees then please email me for more details. Many thanks, Becca

Vale & Downland BKA - John Broadbent

Members Apiary Visit

This month, members visited Claire and Dave Parker's property near Garsington. Claire practices natural beekeeping using Warré and Top-Bar hives, while Dave manages standard British Nationals. They have also created an impressive 2.3-acre wildflower meadow, so we knew this was going to be an interesting visit.

Claire had prepared a number of activities for us. Firstly, we had a honey tasting - Claire wanted to know if we could distinguish between honey from her Warre hive (extracted from brood frames), a rural hive and a more urban hive. The result was that only 3 people got all 3 correct, but most, or nearly most, guessed which each was.



Surveying the wild
flower meadow



Inspecting the Warre hive..

After a talk on how to create a wildflower meadow, we split into pairs to do a comparative insect count in the wildflower meadow, a wildflower area in the garden and the formal garden area. In each area respectively, in a 10-minute period, we found 20, 56 and 60 insects. These results may seem counterintuitive until you consider that we are in the middle of a drought. The meadow was bone dry, while the garden was well watered.

We then watched while Claire opened up the Warre and top-bar hives for us to view. The Warre is a French design that uses small, one-size boxes. As the colony expands you add new boxes at the bottom and then eventually take boxes off the top to harvest honey. The combs are attached to the walls, so the comb is destroyed as part of the harvesting (much like when beekeepers used skeps)

I found an interesting article on Warre hives and an informative video here:

<https://www.perfectbee.com/beekeeping-articles/a-detailed-look-at-the-warre-beehive> (warning! This is an American site!)

I wonder how a bee inspector checks through a Warre hive without destroying it?

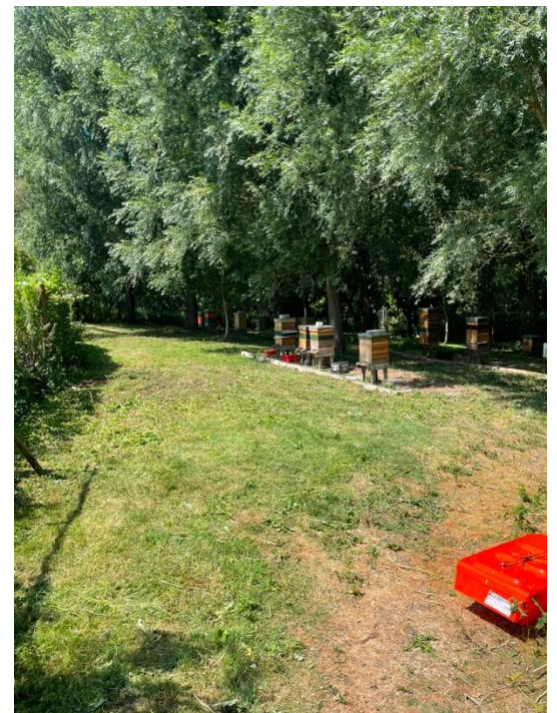
Afterwards we had tea and lots of cake and savouries. Thank you to Claire and Dave for hosting us and to everyone who came along

Apiary Update

On the 14th of July we received an email from Seasonal Bee Inspector Nika Obydzinski asking to come and inspect the Association's bees on Monday 20th July. I was particularly excited about this as, with 3 members taking their Honeybee Health assessment 4 days later, this was an ideal opportunity for them to see a professional level full



As always, we finished with tea and cake



The Association apiary was super tidy in preparation for the SBI inspection (and HBH). Thanks Matt.

disease inspection and to ask any questions on bee health that they wanted clarifying. We also opened this up to the general membership (limited numbers, first come first served due to space available around a hive). The HBH candidates had Nika to themselves for the first 40 minutes and were then joined by another 7 members. I was pleasantly surprised by how many people wanted to attend and apologies to those who responded after all places were filled.

We soon got into a smooth production line - members removed supers from the next hive to be inspected and replaced those on hives once inspection of a hive was complete. As well as speeding things up, it saved Nika from having to lift off and replace 50 - 60 supers. 21 colonies were fully inspected in about 2 ½ hours - an average of 7 ½ minutes each, including time spent on demonstrations and questions.



Nika showed us how to do a full disease inspection

As we progressed through the colonies, Nika pointed to evidence of a building *Varroa* load; we had a little visible DWV, some K-wing and some stunted bees. One of the biggest giveaways was the number of uncapped brood cells where the house bees had uncapped cells to investigate and even started to cannibalise some of the pupae.

The HBH candidates each carried out a disease inspection of a hive under Nika's supervision and were able to ask questions. All hives were given a clean bill of health apart from the obvious *Varroa* levels and one hive with a mild case of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus. Several members commented afterwards about how useful they had found the session and how they were going to do their inspections differently from now on.

A couple of notes:

- Thanks to Matt Frost for cutting down all the undergrowth before the inspection, this helped greatly (and also looked good for HBH later in the week)
- Bee Inspectors don't worry about queens. They very briefly check frames as they come out, but don't worry about shaking them into the box. "They are pretty robust"

- I have always wondered how I would get on if I had to destroy a hive at the Inspector's direction. I know the land owner at one site I'm at wouldn't allow me to dig a 1m pit. Nika explained that this often happens and they will arrange for combs/boxes to be bagged up and taken to an incinerator. This was happening with all cases at the moment as the countryside was simply too dry to burn colonies in the open.

Nika was keen to explain that she sees beekeeping as a partnership between Inspector and Beekeeper and that we shouldn't hesitate to contact her if we have any doubts about the health of any of our bees. Nika can be contacted at nika.obydsinski@apha.gov.uk or on 07435 738063. A photo showing what you are concerned about helps a lot. Thanks, Nika, for a really interesting session at the apiary.

Training and Education

Well done to Matt Frost and Alan Gray, who both got Credit for their Basic Assessments. Well deserved. Well done to our 3 Honeybee Health candidates - fingers crossed for good results. That concludes this year's practical assessments. Please do think about taking your beekeeping that bit further next year. The Winter period is the ideal time to do some learning for either a practical or written (Module) exam. For further details, please email education@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk

Steventon School beekeepers conducted their last bee inspection of the term just before breaking up for the Summer holidays. We have had to cancel 3 sessions this term due to the extreme heat (kids really struggle in bee suits at 30C+!) We intend to hold a few more sessions when they return in September for those that missed out.



Paul demonstrates a shook swarm to the HBH examiner



Sheenagh leads the kids to the hive for the last school inspection of the term

Extractor Hire

A quick reminder that you can hire the Association's manual extractor for only £1 per day. Please phone Gillian Taylor on 01235 751646 to arrange pickup and return from Childrey. Please remember, it must be returned in a clean condition.

Varroa treatments, the options

A lot of Vale members have been asking what treatment to use for Varroa. This is a really difficult question as it falls into the classic "It depends" category. Selecting a treatment depends on daily ambient temperatures, brood presence, and whether supers are in place. Only use authorised treatments and follow the instructions exactly.

If you just want a recommendation and have no supers except, maybe, a feed super then any of these will be fine:

- Apiguard
- Apilife Var
- Thymovar
- Formic Pro

I recommend downloading and reading the NBU's "*Managing Varroa*", which has the following Table on page 26:

Table 1: Varroacides authorised for use in honey bee colonies in the United Kingdom

Name	Active ingredient	Mode of application	When to apply	Significant features
Apiguard (Vita Europe)	Thymol	Place open tray above brood nest	Spring or late summer; for 14 days (repeat x1)	Ensure OMFs are closed. Most effective when outside temp >15°C and <40°C
Apilife Var (Chemicals LAIF)	Thymol	Break tablet into 4 pieces and place in corners of the brood box	Spring or late summer; for 7 to 10 days (repeat up to 4x)	Ensure OMFs are closed. Most effective when outside temp >15°C and <30°C
Thymovar (Andermatt BioVet)	Thymol	Cut one strip into two and place on top bars of frames but not above brood nest	Spring or late summer; for 3 to 4 weeks (repeat x1)	Ensure OMFs are closed. Most effective when outside temp >15°C and <30°C
Formic pro (NOD Apiaries)	Formic acid	Place strips on top bars near the outer edges of the brood nest	May to August	Ensure colony is well ventilated and contains >6 frames of bees. Do not use when outside temps exceed 30°C
Api-Bioxal (Chemicals LAIF)	Oxalic acid	Trickling: 5ml per frame space of bees Sublimation: Use 2.3 g	Winter & broodless periods	Lethal to open brood. Ensure outside temp is over 3°C. Very effective
Oxuvar (Andermatt BioVet)	Oxalic acid	Trickling: 5ml per frame space of bees Spraying: 4 to 5 sprays per side of frame	Winter & broodless periods	Lethal to open brood. Ensure outside temp is over 3°C. Very effective
OxyBee (Veto Pharma)	Oxalic acid	Trickling: 5ml per frame space of bees	Winter & broodless periods	Lethal to open brood. Ensure outside temp is over 3°C. Very effective
DANY's Bienenwohl powder (DANY Bienenwohl GmbH)	Oxalic acid	Trickling: 5ml per frame space of bees	Winter & broodless periods	Lethal to open brood. Ensure outside temp is over 3°C. Very effective
Varroxal (Andermatt BioVet)	Oxalic acid	Trickling: 3-6 ml per frame space of bees Spraying: 2-4 ml per side of frame Sublimation: Use 2 g	Winter & broodless periods	Sublimation: 2 to 10°C Trickling: above 15°C Spraying: above 8°C
VarroMed (BeeVital)	Formic acid and oxalic acid	Trickle between brood frames; 5 ml per frame space	Spring, autumn or winter	Ensure outside temp is over 3°C

My advice is to avoid synthetic miticides, which mites can become resistant to and which hang about in wax, so I have removed them from the table.

The NBU '*Managing Varroa*' booklet can be downloaded from here:

https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/assets/PDFs/3_Resources_for_beekeepers/Advisory_leaflets/APHA_Managing_Varroa_2020_ELECTRONIC_ONLY-1.pdf

Some thoughts/points:

- Oxalic treatments are best used for your Winter trickle (around Christmas) when there is little, or no brood and all the mites are on adult bees. Oxalic acid trickle can damage or kill uncapped larvae.
- Thymol, Formic acid and Oxalic acid are all naturally occurring chemicals. While Thymol is absorbed by wax, the level drops considerably within a few weeks. Oxalic acid and formic acid are not absorbed. So all good.
- They all have pros and cons. Before buying, go to the seller's website and carefully read the instructions. Be careful if you just google the treatment. If you download the USA instructions for Formic Pro, it will appear that you can use with supers on. That is not the case in the UK.
- Read the withdrawal period noted in the instructions carefully. You should not leave supers on while a treatment is active (unless it is a feed super for the bees and not for human consumption). Once you have completed a treatment and taken it off, you can generally add a super straight away if a flow starts.

TL:DR What will I use? Formic Pro.

Detail: The treatment is complete in 1 week as it is the only treatment that kills mites in sealed cells. If a flow starts I can add supers after a week. With other treatments I can't put supers on for 4+ weeks. You have to be very careful to abide by the temperature limits. Although there is a warning that it can affect, or even kill the Queen, I have used it for several years and never had this. I can also accept a slight risk to a queen as I have more hives than I want - if I lose a queen it is not a catastrophe. If you run 1 or 2 hives, one of the other treatments may be more suitable. (Hagens Bees have a 10-dose pack of Formic Pro, expiry 11/ 26 on sale for £44.75 plus £5.95 postage, Thornes have it for £56, expiry 11/26 pickup from a Thornes shop to save postage)

Beekeeper retiring ☹

Stewart Loukes has contacted me to let me know that he will be retiring from beekeeping due to health issues at the end of the year. At the end of the season, he will have colonies, WBC hives and all the beekeeping gear for sale. We'll put an email out when he has created an inventory of his equipment. I'm sure you all join me in wishing Stewart all the best for the future.

Malcolm Hutt/Bill Mattingley

Malcolm is helping with selling Bill Mattingley's kit:
Various bee suits, electronic scales, white sheets and baskets for swarm collection, Burco boiler, SS Settling tank (15 dia, 28 high) with tap, SS Settling tank (12 dia, 24 high) with filter and tap. Lots of other equipment.
Contact Malcolm at 2 Church Path, Stanford, SN7 8LS 07860739589

Andrew Smith

Colony of bees on commercial frames, 2025 queen £50
2 Commercial supers with frames and drawn comb £25 each

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.