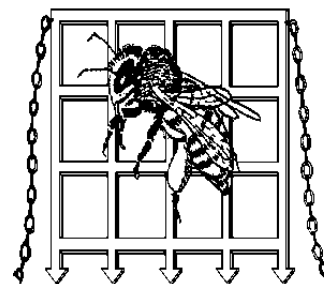


Romsey & District Beekeepers' Association

February 2022 Newsletter



Meeting on 23rd February ON ZOOM at 7:15

We welcome master beekeeper Dave Bonner to our February Zoom meeting for a talk with a difference: the difference that Bees Abroad makes to communities that live in poverty, and the difference between beekeeping in temperate climates with precision-cut wooden hives and hot climates with home-made top bar hives.

Dave has travelled to Uganda with Bees Abroad many times, introducing villagers to beekeeping with Kenyan top bar hives that can be made out whatever is at hand, so that they can make a living from selling hive products.

He will be sharing his experiences via Zoom. You will be sent the link a few days before the talk.

Bees Abroad is a charity that involves expert beekeepers and practitioners, providing equipment, training and support to create sustainable, self-funding small businesses in the poorest communities.

Bees Abroad is a not-for-profit charity currently running 40 projects in 12 countries. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Master of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers are patrons.

Please visit <https://beesabroad.org.uk/> for more information about this worthwhile charity.

Hungry Bees

The NBU issued a warning to all beekeepers at the start of the year. December was unusually mild, so our colonies were late in clustering. Active bees consume stores, so some colonies may suffer from a lack of food.

They advise that we continue checking our bees regularly for stores, by hefting and/or taking a quick peek under the crown board on a warm afternoon. If the bees are up around the feed hole, they may need fondant.

The NBU warning advised that, once feeding has been started and a colony has been stimulated, we must continue to supplement their stores until the bees can forage freely in Spring. We should bear in mind that old winter bees will be dying off but there will be few new foragers taking their place for some time yet.

At a Glance

Saturday 5th February – Asian Hornet conference (Zoom) 10:00am till 4:30pm

Wednesday 23rd February at 7:15 – our monthly meeting on Zoom – Dave Bonner from Bees Abroad

8th – 10th April 2022 – BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University, TF10 8NB

19 March 2022 – BBKA module exams, in person and online

Wednesday 23rd March at 7:15 – Monthly meeting on Zoom – Brigit Strawbridge Howard – “Dancing with bees”

Saturday 10th September – The Romsey Show at Broadlands

27th to 29th October – National Honey Show at Sandown Park



Hooray for hellebores – heralds of spring?

R&DBKA Membership

You are reminded that annual subscriptions became due on January 1st. BBKA's system makes renewal easy. Janelle, our honorary secretary, has sent all those who were members in 2021 a link for renewal, with instructions for BACS payment.

Subscriptions have risen slightly this year but still represent excellent value:

BBKA has increased their capitation fee by £5 this year, their first increase in many years. That fee covers 12 copies of BBKA News delivered to your home, and third party public and product liability insurance.

BDI (Bee Disease Insurance) remains at £2 for registered members, covering up to 3 colonies. Please estimate the number of swarms and splits you are likely to acquire and add the additional BDI fee. Partner members' subscriptions do not include BDI premiums because the registered member at the same address should ensure that all colonies are covered. For more information about BDI please go to <https://www.beediseasesinsurance.co.uk/>.

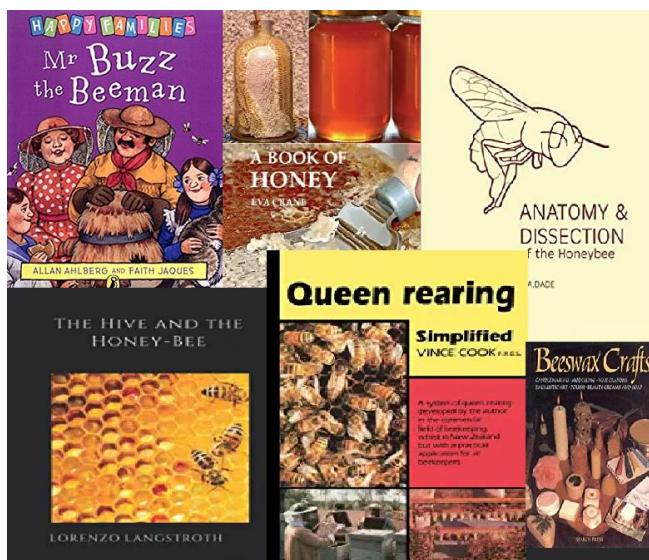
It's a small price to pay for all those benefits; the friendship of fellow beekeepers is thrown in for free.

HBA Library

Avril, the librarian for Hampshire Beekeepers' Association library, sent a reminder recently with information about this wonderful resource that we have in our county.

The Library is housed in The Sustainability Centre, Droxford Road [GU32 1HR](#). If you would like to visit, please contact Avril. Most of the books can be borrowed but old, rare or fragile volumes must be read in situ. The Sustainability Centre also has a café.

Please note that all borrowed items must be returned to Avril; not left with staff at the Centre nor passed on to others.



Images: Amazon

Avril, a volunteer, could not be more helpful. During the pandemic, she kept the library as open as possible by arranging delivery and pick-up so that no-one was deprived of reading material. There are books for everyone: technical, biography, autobiography, photography, geography, chemistry, physics, art, folklore, medicine, history, archaeology, picture books, children's books, fiction and much more. The catalogue is kept up to date with donations from beekeepers and new publications purchased with HBA funds.

If you lack the patience to scan the catalogue, tell Avril what you would like and she will present you with a list of suitable books.

Whether you read for entertainment, to improve your beekeeping (and doesn't everyone have scope for that?) or to study for exams, the HBA library is there for all of us. You can see the catalogue, and the terms and conditions at <http://hampshirebeekeepers.org.uk/library-service/>.

Pesticides Again

Bees are hitting the headlines again – “A pesticide which can harm bees has been approved for use in 2022” according to a BBC news page: www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-59995387. The pesticide is thiamethoxam, which is aimed at controlling yellow virus in sugar beets grown in the UK.

Thiamethoxam is one of the neonicotinoids that were banned in the EU (including UK at the time) in 2018, apart from use in closed greenhouses. Last year and this, the UK government partially lifted the ban, allowing its use on a temporary basis: only if necessary and once the virus had reached a specified threshold. It is a neuro-toxic pesticide, so it is not lethal but has a profound adverse effect on bees’ ability to respond to the environment.

Farmers who use this pesticide will be forbidden from growing flowering plants for 32 months after the sugar beet crop, but the government admits that its use will always pose a threat to bees, birds and other wildlife.



Myzus persicae – the main culprit
Image: Wikipedia

Yellow virus develops very quickly and can reduce sugar beet yields by 50%. It is spread by aphids that feed on the crops, not unlike Varroa mites spreading deformed wing and other viruses. If the UK sugar crop is halved, we will be reliant on imports and that’s not ideal. Will imports be from countries that use these pesticides?

Work continues to produce seed that is tolerant to this and other viruses. The plants are at their most vulnerable as seedlings, developing better resistance as adult plants.

Aphids have natural predators; ladybirds, for example. If you spot clusters of ladybirds in your hive roofs, gently brush them into a container and relocate them to a warm, dry pile of dead leaves or an out-house.

The use of neonicotinoids remains an emotive issue. On the one hand, we as beekeepers want to do all we can to protect our bees. Equally, other insect species will be harmed if this pesticide is used, and its residues will linger on the land and in water.

It was not used last year because the cold winter kept yellow virus manageable. Perhaps we will be in the same situation this year.

Report on HBA Zoom talk by John Geden – “Small Hive Beetle and Tropilaelaps”

John Lauwerys, HBA chair, introduced John Geden, who was appointed as the Regional Bee Inspector for Central England towards the end of last year. He reminded us that HBA had submitted a proposition to BBKA’s Annual Delegate Meeting that BBKA should re-affirm its complete opposition to the import of honey bees, including individual queens, from overseas countries; and that BBKA executive committee should lobby Government to introduce a complete ban on the import of honey bees. The Small Hive Beetle persists in south-west Italy, an area from which British bee suppliers have frequently imported queens in the past.



Image: John Geden

John introduced himself as a bee farmer, living on Hayling Island. He learned his craft from John Cossburn who then taught beekeeping at Sparsholt College in the early 90s. Prior to that he spent 32 years in the British Army, Hampshire Police and National Crime Agency.

“Central England” is a large area, covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, and Wiltshire. It has 7,301 current beekeepers (4,045 non-current) with 9,892 apiaries on which there are 35,371 colonies of honey bees. He has help from 8 seasonal bee inspectors (SBIs) from March till September. That’s a big workload!

Aethina tumida, the Small Hive Beetle (SHB)

The female beetle can lay up to 2,000 eggs. An egg hatches into a larva 2-6 days after being laid, and the larvae eat their way through brood, consuming bee eggs, larvae, honey and pollen leaving slimy faeces behind. The heat that they generate melts wax so the comb becomes a mess of dripping, fermented honey.



Image: BeeBase



Image: BeeBase

The image above shows a wax moth larva at the top with an SHB larva under.

The SHB larva has 3 pairs of legs at its head end; the wax moth has legs along the underside of its body. The SHB larva has a row of small spines along its back.

Fully-grown larvae crawl out of the hive and bury into soil nearby to pupate.

Once established, the small hive beetle is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible to eradicate. The queen of an infested colony will stop laying and the colony will collapse.

John thinks back to the time when the Varroa mite was a new arrival in the UK; despite attempts to remove it, we have now learned to live with it. 20,000 infested colonies have been destroyed in USA causing huge financial losses. It is endemic in Australia and even Canada, so most of the UK would be at risk once the beetle arrived.

Small hive beetle was found in Calabria, in south-west Italy in September 2014. It spread quickly to 68 apiaries and, despite best efforts, it is still present.

Small hive beetle is a notifiable pest under UK legislation. All imports of bees are subject to official inspection protocols. UK has not imported “packages” of bees for a few years. Imported queens must be taken out of their cages, and the attendants sent with the cage to the NBU laboratory.

We can check all the corners of our frames and hives. Adult beetles, with their club-like antennae, tend to gather on the hive floor in warmer weather, but cluster on the comb when cold. SHB eggs are even smaller than bee eggs, so are difficult to spot. We can consider using a beetle trap; many are available but instructions are available on the NBU website to make a cheap one from corrugated cardboard. Download the NBU pamphlet on SHB and go to page 23.



Small hive beetle. Image: NBU

- ★ ALWAYS examine the trap inside a polythene bag so that beetles cannot escape

Good hygiene practices will always help.

John paused for questions:

- Is the NBU import process robust? Every system has frailties. As it stands, it works well but if imports were to increase the staff at NBU would not cope. A colony could potentially hitch a ride on the underside of a container ship.
- Would placing hives on concrete slabs help? It would not prevent beetles from entering. It might slow down larvae's journey to germinate in the soil, but not stop it.
- Were bees imported last year or this? Legislation changed with Brexit in January 2021 but the NBU is aware that one bee supplier used a loophole to import from southern Italy through Northern Ireland and on to UK mainland (Bee Equipment, based in Kent).
- Can the beetles fly? Yes, but not very far.
- How about placing hive stands in water baths as a deterrent? Same as concrete slabs.

Janelle pointed out that larvae could be pupating in the soil around imported plants.

Tropilaelaps (*T.claraea* and *T. mercedesae*)

This is another notifiable pest, not yet present in the UK. It is 1mm long, 0.5mm wide; reddish brown with 2 antennae and 3 pairs of legs.

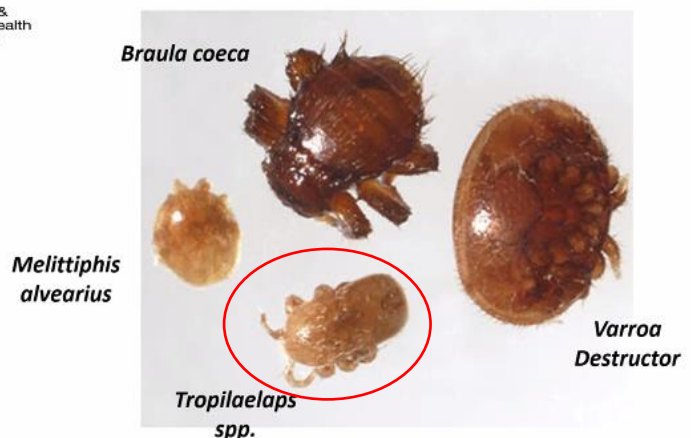
Seeing it against the Varroa mite – which is also small – illustrates how difficult it is to detect. They cannot be seen with the naked eye

It is a sub-tropical insect but has been found in north China so could potentially become a global threat. *Tropilaelaps* has a lifecycle similar to *Varroa destructor* but the reproductive rate is 25 times higher. The mite cannot survive on adult bees; it feeds from larval haemolymph so is dependent on sealed brood for survival. *Tropilaelaps* scurries across the brood much faster than the slow Varroa mite.

The damage caused is similar to that caused by Varroa, so checking floor debris and using open mesh floors will help. Scrape the floor debris into methylated spirits, so that mites float to the surface. Many of the acaricides currently available to beekeepers will kill *Tropilaelaps*.

John turned to actions that the NBU is taking to minimise risks from imported bees. Although the small hive beetle and *Tropilaelaps* have not arrived in the UK, the NBU identified potential entry points in 2003 such as airports, freight ports, honey and wax importers, fruit and vegetable wholesales, plant importers, landfill sites and zoos. They then identified and liaised with beekeepers who had apiaries close to those locations, to set up a network of “sentinel apiaries”. Beekeepers at those apiaries collect samples of floor debris twice a year and send them to the NBU for analysis. John said that BBKA News printed a good article about sentinel apiaries in November 2018; go to bbkanews.com/ to read it.

The NBU also makes contingency plans for exotic pests. Those plans are available to view on BeeBase. They include declaring a “statutory infected area” (SIA) which will be a minimum of 16km radius. Movements to and from an SIA will be restricted; and that would include bees, equipment, honey and wax. Contingency plans are reviewed and practised regularly.



John reminded us to keep looking out for the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*). We should download the BeeBase app and use monitoring traps ... but not at our apiaries! Traps at home are effective. Monitoring traps must be emptied daily so that non-target species are not affected. A monitoring trap put in place towards the end of February could attract a newly-emerged queen or early worker hornets. We should allow shrubs and weeds to grow in front of hive entrances so that an Asian hornet's attempts at hawking are thwarted. We should be especially vigilant close to water sources and in urban areas.

John reminded us that we should register on BeeBase if we have not already done so, and keep our information up to date. BeeBase is free and secure. Registering helps the NBU to protect bees and eradicate disease. Only those who register can be contacted if there is a threat from disease in a specific area. The public pages hold a wealth of information.

John Goss commented that he cannot see Varroa and would not see Tropilaelaps as he is red-green colour-blind. He has to trust his own experience and judgement when treating bees.

John Lauwerys brought the meeting to a close. It had been an excellent talk, and an opportunity to meet our RBI.

Imported Bees

Most – if not all – beekeeping experts advise us to avoid imported bees and queens. That is partly to encourage us all to raise our own, local, well-adapted bees and partly to cut the risks of importing small hive beetle, Tropilaelaps new strains of deformed wing virus, and more.

A new queen can be raised simply by putting a nice fat queen cell into a nuc box with young bees and food, and waiting for a few weeks. If you intend to buy queens or bees from a commercial supplier, read their website and ask questions. Most of the bee suppliers' websites warn that the weather in 2021 has had an adverse effect on the numbers of overwintered nucs that they can offer. "British-bred, overwintered" means that the queen emerged in 2021 in UK; but was her mother local or imported? Does it matter?

Bee suppliers' bees are often of a particular strain, bred for specific characteristics. The yellow-bodied *A. mellifera Ligustica* is known as a gentle, productive bee but it can struggle in our cold winters. The dark *A. mellifera mellifera* is closer to the native British black bee but it can be hard to handle (and not necessarily bred in UK). Daughters of pure-bred queens are often temperamental.



Image: Thornes

Checking websites of a few known suppliers, a 6-frame British Standard National nucleus of bees with an overwintered queen will cost somewhere between £280 and £335 – or more – in 2022. A pure-bred queen will cost at least £45.

We are told that local-bred "mongrel" bees are better suited to our environment. If you buy from a local beekeeper you will get a mish-mash of genes, but no responsible beekeeper would sell you sub-standard bees. A local beekeeper will be able to tell you all you need to know about the bees, and the workers will all be the daughters of the queen (suppliers sometimes sell "packages" which are boxes of workers from more than one colony with an introduced queen).

🐝 Beginners should note that bees are rarely, if ever, available to collect before May because the queen must prove her fecundity, the bees must prove their temper, and spring build-up must be well underway. We will operate a "Bees wanted and for sale" list again; details next month.

Association Community Apiary

The quiet months of January and February provide an ideal opportunity to catch up on those tasks we don't have time for, or put off, throughout the rest of the year.

Your Apiary Team are convening a working party on Sunday 20th February, commencing at 10:30. Here we can catch up on a range of equipment tasks and check our bees' stores.

If you have recently started beekeeping, particularly if last season was your first, please join us to learn some tips and techniques for how to ensure your equipment lasts you many years to come.

Equally, if you are more experienced and would like to share your knowledge, you would be very welcome! Please let Christine or Steve know at romseybeekeepers@gmail.com if you would like to attend.

(by Steve Pickard).

2022 HBA Propositions Adopted at BBKA ADM



At the BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting on 13th January, 2022, HBA proposed two of the three most significant propositions discussed by over sixty associations at the meeting. Both propositions were passed by large majorities and are now therefore adopted as BBKA policy.

The first proposition reinforces BBKA's opposition to the importation of honey bees. It was passed by 52 in favour and 12 against and is as follows:

- In light of the great threat to the UK's honey bees from the potential importation of non-native pests and diseases, BBKA re-affirms its complete opposition to the import of honey bees, including individual queens, from overseas countries and the ADM mandates the EC to lobby the Government to introduce a complete ban on the import of honey bees.

The second proposition calls on the Government to prepare a comprehensive plan to counter the spread of the Asian Hornet across the UK when it arrives in large numbers within the UK. This was passed by 62 delegates with just two opposed :-

- The BBKA should continue to support the NBU in eradication of Asian Hornet incursions. BBKA should call on the Government to prepare a comprehensive plan by the end of June 2022 for the implementation of a wide scale monitoring and control programme to counter the spread of the Asian Hornet across the UK should the National Bee Unit resources be overwhelmed by Asian Hornet incursions.

HBA represents Hampshire's beekeepers and its fourteen local associations at the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) Annual Delegate Meeting and can influence national policy on honey bees and beekeeping.

(by Janelle Quitman, HBA hon. secretary).

Message From BBKA:

BOOK NOW!



Spring 2022 Convention

Friday 8 - Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 April 2022
Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts. Bumper Trade Show Saturday 9th

Speakers and Tutors include; Marin Anastasov, Mark Barnett, Shirley and Richard Bond, Norman Carreck, Lars Chittka, Celia Davis, Joyce Nisbet, Juliet Osborne, Julian Parker, Sara Robb, Nigel Semmence, Jo Widdicombe, Geraldine Wright, and more...

For further information, **and to book** from 31st January
see the Spring Convention pages at www.bbka.org.uk

Report on Virtual Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 26th January 2022 at 7:30 p.m.

If you have been a member of this association for more than 2 years you will know that our annual general meetings are very social affairs where beekeepers come out of hibernation to meet up with their friends and talk about the year to come, cheese and crackers in one hand and a glass of something in the other. Hopefully this will be the last time we are obliged to begin our year online. A good number of members attended though, and – inevitably - there was a bit of bee chat towards the end.

Janelle hosted the meeting. Minutes of the previous AGM were agreed and our Chair and Treasurer presented their reports.

The officers, committee and non-committee positions for 2021 were accepted for the coming year.

Janelle had asked us to send in thoughts along the lines of “What you wish you knew in your first year of beekeeping”. Peter had read the hindsight that were submitted, forwarded to him by with names removed; some thought-provoking, some amusing. Peter’s choice for runner-up wished that he had known “that the zip on the front of my bee suit needs to be done up ALL THE WAY”.

The winning entry came from Sebastian, who wished “that he had bought local bees and inspected them first to check their temper before buying”. His first colony was bought blind from a supplier and the bees were bad tempered from the start. Sebastian wins a £5 Thornes’ voucher.

Peter commented on HBA’s 2 proposals that had both recently been accepted at BBKA’s annual delegate meeting. A ban on imports is in line with aims to raise our own local, well-adapted, mongrel queens. The Asian hornet nest found last autumn in Gosport could potentially have raised queens that are due to emerge from hibernation now.

The association swarm phone will continue as before, with members taking turns with answering calls, asking the right questions, and referring swarms to the closest swarm collector on our list. Romsey members who are able to collect swarms and would like to be on that list should contact Peter, but will need to have at least 2 years of active beekeeping experience, and preferably have passed the BBKA Basic Assessment.

Nick, who arranges our monthly meetings, is keen to hear from anyone who can offer to host a summer apiary meeting. The minimum requirement is one hive, but two or more would be even better. Apiary meetings draw members of all levels of experience. Hives are opened up, the bees inspected, and any manipulations deemed necessary are performed. It's a great opportunity for beekeepers with less experience to have their bees inspected and left in good shape. Everyone learns something at every apiary meeting. Please email to discuss and maybe offer your apiary.

Module Exams (from BBKA)

Module exams will be sat in the morning of 19th March 2022 and will be available in person and online. 80% of candidates now take the exams online.

Please note that the online registration process is compulsory prior to the online exam. The process of registering online is designed to make sure that candidates have the software they need installed and their computer is suitable and to give BBKA time to help candidates who are experiencing problems.

Some candidates had failed to register online in advance in previous module exams and this has caused a great deal of stress for candidates who often had technical problems and required extra support in the hours leading up to the exams and during the exam itself.

The Examinations Board has decided that the online registration process is compulsory and candidates who do not complete it before the deadline will not be allowed to proceed to take the exam.

The deadline for Module exams applications for March 19th is **7th Feb 2022**

Time to Put The Traps Out

Janelle pointed out that we should be monitoring, not trapping Asian hornets from now on, and especially this year because of the nest found at Gosport last autumn.

We can all make a simple monitoring trap and hang it where we can watch it daily.

A killing trap that is not emptied at least once a day would kill too many non-target species.

Also, if a hornet forages at a monitoring trap, you can study it, take a photo and upload it on the Asian hornet watch app (Android and iPhone). An insect that visits and gets its reward will return again and again.

If your suspect is confirmed as an Asian hornet, bee inspectors will arrive and watch its flight path to seek out and destroy the nest.

Dead hornets don't lead anyone back to their nest-mates.



Image: Tiverton bees

1. Honey jar with wick

You will need:

- Honey jar (or any plastic jar) with lid
- Wick
- Drill
- Attractant

To make:

1. Remove lid, make a hole in lid for wick and push wick through.
2. Part fill jar with attractant.
3. Replace lid.



Image: NBU

The wick in the NBU's instructions above can be a piece of cotton or a Jcloth; any fabric that will draw the liquid up and make the taste and smell available to insects.



Suterra is the ideal bait and Peter Hurst has supplies at £1 for 100ml. You will need to supply a small jar, such as the 1.5oz jam jars that you get with a cream tea.

Please contact him at hurst.romsey@gmail.com to arrange collection. The NBU website states "There are many variations of effective sugar baits, these include mixes of sugar and various types of dark beer or alcohol and even fruit juice baits for example apple juice. French beekeepers advise mixtures of dark beer, 25ml of strawberry dessert sauce and 25ml of orange liqueur are effective." Honey should not be used!

Key ID Features

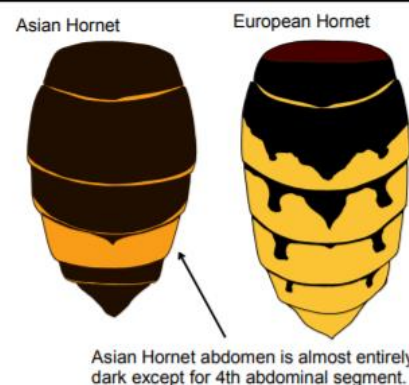
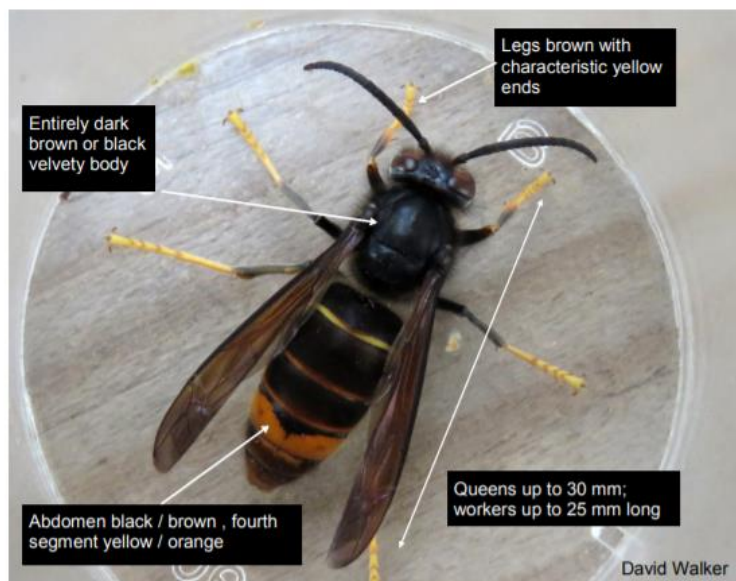


Image: Crown copyright, National Bee Unit (Beebase)

Not the Best Idea

As winter in the UK draws to a close, so does summer in the southern hemisphere.



Image: Google Maps

In Chile, bee farmers are frustrated by their government's inaction over a decade-long drought that has had a devastating effect on forage and water for their bees. One Santiago weather station recorded just 78mm of rain last year; the average annual rainfall for that location is 252mm.

The farmers want reforms and subsidies that will improve honey prices and make bee farming viable again. The Chilean government responded, saying that they have been providing aid for 20 of the worst-hit communities.

This did not satisfy some of the bee farmers so they staged a protest.

To prevent the police from breaking up their demonstration too soon, they arranged 60 hives of bees in front of the government building and let them fly.

Several policemen were stung and 4 beekeepers were arrested.

It was a reckless and irresponsible thing to do in a public place because of the high risk to passers-by of anaphylaxis.

It did, however, make the headlines and get their point across, while highlighting the urgency of dealing with global climate change.