

# Leiston Beekeepers' Newsletter

January issue 2013

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## It's "Official"

### Neonicotinoid Pesticide - imidacloprid - labelled as an "unacceptable" danger to bees

The world's most widely used pesticide has been officially labelled an "unacceptable" danger to bees feeding on flowering crops. Is this the death knell for the whole neonicotinoid pesticide family? The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has recognised the weakness of the 'safe use tests' of pesticide on honeybees carried out by chemical companies. EFSA have described these safety tests as "**simplistic and of major concern**". They do not take into account the sub lethal effects (pollen and nectar collected from treated plants have been found to contain low concentrations of neonicotinoid) on adult bees and larval brood. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has stressed there is no recorded evidence of any danger to bees from neonicotinoids. The government's Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into bee health has recently found failings in the 'safe use tests' regime. They also found that only honeybees were tested despite 90% of pollination being performed by different species, such as bumblebees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths and others. Even the National Farmers Union, who argue that there is no need for a change of approach to neonicotinoids, told MPs: "It is well known that the current pesticide .. *'safe use tests'*.. systems for bees were not developed to assess systemic pesticides".

**Do we now know the cause of insect decline in the farmed environment?** All insects are wild pollinators of the countryside providing food for all wildlife and ourselves. Rothamsted Research has been carrying out an insect survey in agricultural arable fields for many years. The results have shown that the levels of insects trapped and recorded remained fairly stable from 1973 until 2002 but since then have recorded considerable declines particularly of moths that have dropped by 30%. Although Rothamsted make no claims as to the reason for these declines other than a possible link to global warming they illustrate the serious declining populations of all farmland insects. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds conducted a car number plate 'insect splat' test in 2004 throughout the country and recorded an average splat rate on a number plate of one insect splat per five miles driven. Anybody over the age of forty will remember on a summer evening drive having their car windscreens being plastered with insects.

**A neonicotinoid treated seed** is systemic and the pesticide enters the cells of the growing plant, its fruit, flowers and leaves breaking down into metabolites that magnify, and strengthen its effects on the nervous system of the insects that eat the plant and kills them. These metabolites are also found in the nectar and pollen of these same plants. Bees and other beneficial insects collect this nectar and pollen for food and feed it to their larval brood. EFSA now believes pollen and nectar collected from treated plants are a danger to bees. It is known that only a small percentage of the seed treatment is taken up by the plant with the remainder staying in the soil and water for up to three years. This residue will be taken up by field margin flowers, hedgerow plant life and affect worms and other soil invertebrates. Neonicotinoid pesticides were first approved for use in the United Kingdom in 1991 and have been used extensively since 2001 particularly on oil seed rape. Oil seed rape is of great interest to bees and its seed to birdlife with sparrows being particularly vulnerable. Birds will also suffer harm by eating worms taken from contaminated soil as will frogs and aquatic life in field edge ditches.

**What happens now?** A spokesman for Defra said: "This (EFSA) research will be examined by the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides and their advice will be considered by ministers. If it is concluded that restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids are necessary, they will be brought in." The spokesman said the results of new government field studies were expected imminently. We await their, and the BBKA's considered view.....**Watch this space!!**

**Stop Press** - Before the next issue of the newsletter Penny will be sending out a 'call to arms' for a working party to clean and prepare the apiary and equipment for the coming season. Let's hope the rain stops soon with sunny days to follow....Editor

## Special Event

come along and hear

**Roger Patterson**

talk

Sunday 7th April 2013

2 until 4pm

## **QUEEN PERFORMANCE**

An overview of the current queen problems

At

**The Fromus Centre**

Seaman Avenue

Saxmundham IP17 1DZ

## **Have you paid your subs yet?**

To ensure valid membership and insurances you need to pay the subscription by the end of February 2013. You may of course pay at the **AGM** on the 16 February - see details below.

Leiston & District  
Beekeepers' Association

## **AGM**

Saturday 16th February

2013

2.30pm

**United Reformed Church**

Chapel Road

**Saxmundham, IP17 1BJ**

(Bring your subscription along if you have already not paid)

**Suffolk Beekeepers' Association**

## **AGM**

Wednesday 6th March

2013

7.30pm

**United Reformed Church**

Chapel Road Saxmundham, IP17 1BJ

Jane Moseley - Operations Director and General Secretary of the BBKA will give a talk to the AGM

## **What is a winter honey bee?**

Winter bees live for six months. Unlike their hard working summer sisters as they do not use up their fat resources in brood rearing until the following spring. As the flowering season comes to an end and there is no nectar and, more importantly, no pollen available, brood rearing in the colony rapidly drops off. When it becomes too cold for the bees to fly, at below 10degC in Oct/Nov, about 8000 winter bees form a tight cluster in and around the combs. Their metabolic rate slows right down and they maintain their temperature at just the level that allows them to keep alive - about 14degC - with minimal movement and food consumption. If the temperature gets colder the cluster contracts to maintain heat and if warmer it expands to lose heat and maintain the temperature of 14degC. The bees keep warm by some at the centre of the cluster eating a little of the stored honey which metabolises to produce heat that radiates through the cluster. As the days begin to lengthen in January, the queen is fed and she starts to lay eggs at the centre of the cluster, where the temperature must be maintained at 35degC. The eggs hatch into larvae and the worker bees begin to feed these larvae with royal jelly, honey and pollen from stores collected in the previous season. There is a need for water at this time as the stored honey from the previous season is too concentrated for the bees and larva to eat and it needs to be diluted. Water may be collected from outside if the temperature allows or can be collected from condensation on the hive walls and used to dilute the stored honey. There is no nectar or pollen available outside. These worker bees rapidly age from this brood rearing and by early spring all the winter bees will die but will have been replaced by this early brood rearing. When fresh pollen becomes available from the early flowers - aconites, snowdrops, pussy willow - brood rearing will increase rapidly and from early spring until mid June the population of the colony will explode to about 50,000 bees.

## **CBKA ONE DAY MEETING, 9 MARCH 2013**

### **"INSIGHTS INTO THE VARROA MITE"**

at

**Chesterton Community College, Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NY**

### **PROGRAMME**

9.15 a.m. REGISTRATION AND FREE COFFEE;  
TRADE STANDS OPEN

10.00 a.m. MEETING BEGINS:

Dr. Stephen Martin

10.05 a.m. "Crossing continents - The history of Varroa"

Ricky Kather

10.55 a.m. "Silent Invasion - Insights into Varroa's life inside a bee colony"

11.45 a.m. LUNCH; TRADE STANDS OPEN (UNTIL 1.30 p.m.)

Dr. Giles Budge

1.30 p.m. "RNAi: A potential new tool for Varroa management".

Dr. Max Watkins

2.20 p.m. "Keeping Our Bees Alive"

3.10 p.m. Discussion/Question time

Close 4.00 p.m.

Ticket price £24 can be obtained from:-

David J. Abson, 6, Ascham Lane, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire, CB22 4NT - (please include a stamped addressed envelope)

A great day out

An excellent lunch and a great start to the season!

## PLYWOOD HIVES/HIVE PARTS FOR SALE



Dear Leiston & District Beekeepers

I am a member of L&DBKA (3 years), who, through a contact at work, has found someone who will make various good quality beehive parts at very reasonable prices. If you need any new hives or hive parts the following items are available.

Part	£
Roof (6'' or 4'' deep)	15
Supers	12
Brood Boxes	
* National	15
* Commercial	16
* 14 x 12	16
Open Mesh Floor Bases (with landing slope)	20
Feeder	20
Nucleus - National	25
Nucleus - 14x 12/Commercial	27
Crown Boards (2 x Porter Escapes/centre hole)	10

\* Hive parts are made of exterior plywood and are assembled and painted (fungicide, undercoat, topcoat) or can be provided flat/unpainted if required

\* Nucleus boxes have a mesh floor and come assembled and painted

\* Delivery time is approx. 1 week

\* Items can be delivered if required (by arrangement) or picked up at L&DBKA weekly apiary meetings or from Saxmundham.

**PLEASE SPECIFY TOP OR BOTTOM BEE SPACE WHEN ORDERING**

Please contact me with any questions and to place an order

Ralph Butcher, Saxmundham. Telephone: 01728 605961 / 07724 042805.

Email: [ralphb40@hotmail.com](mailto:ralphb40@hotmail.com) (please cc [r.butcher@fugro.com](mailto:r.butcher@fugro.com))