

Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus

The new bees came in early summer 2013. They looked well and behaved normally from the word go but there were always dead bees outside the hive every week, about half a dust pan full.

As time went on the behaviour altered. The bees seemed aggressive to each other, there was a lot of what looked like fighting. Dead bees were carried out and increasingly we saw bees dying on their backs under the hive. But, inside the hive the queen was laying well so the population stayed high.

We took off about 5 frames of honey leaving 2-3 on as the beginning of winter stores. Aggressive behaviour continued, as did deaths. The bees were not stocking up for the winter, or taking syrup so the hive was light. We contacted the bee inspector for our area. He asked questions on the phone and gave a preliminary diagnosis of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV). We'd never heard of it and there didn't seem to be much information on the web. He promised to come and after some persuading did arrive.

The inspector reported that he had lost 100 hives with CBPV. He commented that bees flying in cold weather is a symptom as is constant shaking of wings (we didn't have this). Other symptoms are: shiny bodies, strange behaviour and massive deaths. There is no remedy, drones pass it on. Sometimes the bees survive and sometimes they don't. It was suggested that we move our other hives away and if they did not survive, burn all frames and flame everything else. When he looked at them, the mesh floor was so thick with dead bees that no mesh was visible. We scraped it all out and moved our other hive away.

We looked at the hive again in early March. Most bees were dead on the frames as was the queen and supporting bees; only 50-100 bees remain. The hive is lost to this disease and we're hoping that it will not spread to our remaining thriving healthy hive.

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