

Additional Q&A for Disease Recognition webinar 25 February 2021

Q - What can you do, if anything, to save a hive that has CBPV?

A - Move the infected hive from its stand and place a sterilised floor, brood box, crown board and roof on the stand. Take the infected colony approximately 20m away (or as far as you can) and go through and find the queen, cage her and put her in the clean hive. Then shake every frame into the air so the bees come off the frame. The bees with CBPV can't fly, so they will fall in the grass (or put down some newspaper to collect them and burn them later). The healthy bees will return to the clean hive. Return the frames of brood to the clean hive as larvae/pupae will not be infected, and release the queen, then return any supers. The hive can also be left without a floor to allow CBPV bees to fall out the bottom.

Q - Could you outline the protocols from the inspectorate if you have AFB or EFB i.e. standstill times etc?

A - The apiary with the infected colony in will be put on standstill. All your other apiaries will be inspected. Treatment or destruction of the infected colony(s) will take place within 10 days. All the colonies in the infected apiary will be reinspected after 6 weeks (2 brood cycles) and, if clear, the standstill will be lifted. If more foulbrood is found the apiary will remain on standstill until a clear inspection.

Q - How do you sterilise a polyhive or is it just incinerated?

A - Poly hives can be soaked in a bleach solution to sterilise. There is more information, including mixing ratios, on Beebase.

Q - What should you feed bees now?

A - Normally I'd say candy in Feb, but it's warm now and for the next week or so, so syrup in a contact feeder should be fine. Just be aware that syrup will trigger the queen to lay more, so the colony will grow more quickly.

Q - I put my extractor out for the bees to clean when I have finished. Is this wrong?

A - It's not best practice as it can spread disease and encourage robbing. Ideally you should clean honey extraction equipment with hot soapy water as you would with kitchen equipment.

Q - Any advice on preventing Nosema?

A - General apiary and hive hygiene will help to prevent the spread of nosema. Regularly changing combs can reduce the amount of nosema in a colony. Feeding invert syrup will

help with symptoms as it is more easily digested by the bees and will have a low HMF content, as opposed to sugar syrup which can be overheated and cause dysentery. In extreme cases allow the colony to die out, clean up and restock, as some strains are more susceptible than others.

Q - Don't you think that all supers etc should be cleaned etc before being stored at the end of the season?

A - Ideally yes, and they could be fumigated with acetic acid, but that's not always possible!

Q - Should associations be supplied with AFB/EFB Lateral Flow Devices?

A - As foulbroods are statutory notifiable diseases you need to contact the National Bee Unit/Bee Inspector if you suspect you have one. The service we offer is free and associations would need to purchase LFDs. You also need to test the correct larvae in an infected hive, which bee inspectors are trained to recognise. If the wrong larvae is selected in a hive with foulbrood you could get a negative result. So no, I don't think there would be any benefit in associations having a supply of LFDs. LFDs are not totally infallible, sometimes we have to send suspect combs to the lab, so diagnosis is best left to the inspectorate.

Q - Had baldbrood last year. Treated - oxalic acid - Sept and Jan. Propose Bailey comb change spring. Agree?

A - Baldbrood is not really a disease and the bees develop normally. It's genetic so I doubt comb change will help in this instance. It looks odd, but don't worry about it.

Q - To what extent is the queen to blame (for disease) and to what extent is it the environment or beekeeper? E.g. chalkbrood can be remedied by ensuring good ventilation, sunshine and a strong colony. Worry that the answer to all ills is to requeen.

A - It differs for each disease. Chalkbrood is a good example of either, genetic and environmental. Agree that the generic response of "just change the queen" is often not helpful and you should first consider environmental issues such as damp, chilling brood etc. For severe cases refreshing the wax will certainly help although not eradicate.

Q - I treated all my bees with Apivar late summer and followed with Api-bioxal sublimation in December. I've been monitoring all my colonies last 4 weeks and mostly no varroa drop, except 1 colony is consistently dropping 6 mites per week. What do you advise?

A - I wouldn't treat the colony at the moment but keep an eye on it. Once the season gets going and the bees are more active, measure the varroa drop again and, if still a bit high,

then be ready with a treatment, perhaps one of the Thymol treatments. It may be that the colony you mention is stronger, has more brood, therefore is producing proportionately more mites.

Q - What was the main method of control used for the recent mid-Wales outbreak of EFB - shook swarm or destruction?

A - Primarily shook swarms on all but weak colonies (which were destroyed) and also shaking whole apiaries.

Q - I thought CBPV was associated with poor weather

A - CBPV is associated with poor weather when the colony is expanding rapidly in late spring and then suddenly confined by a spell of bad weather. If bees are short of space and rubbing against each other and the virus is present, it can spread rapidly in these conditions. This can be exacerbated by taking off a crop of spring honey and replacing the super(s) with foundation which the bees will not readily draw out if there is no honey flow.

Q - I've read that native bees are more susceptible to chalkbrood. If true, should we requeen with queens from imported strains?

A - I've not heard or noticed that myself but there is often a genetic element to chalkbrood so requeening may help but it needn't necessarily be a different strain of bee. Generally speaking, we prefer to avoid imported bees!

Q - Thanks! Yes, that's the conundrum - do the advantages of local bees trump likely problems with chalkbrood. Any treatment other than requeening?

A - Added ventilation and the regular replacement of combs can help to reduce the amount of chalk brood in a hive. No other real treatment for Chalkbrood, but fresh comb will certainly help. A shook swarm (at the right time of year) is good for this, as well as lots of other things. And of course, considering environmental issues such as dampness.

Q - If we had a case of EFB or AFB, who do we contact please?

A - Your local Seasonal Bee Inspector or the National Bee Unit. Contact details, together with a postcode SBI finder is on the contacts page on Beebase, the National Bee Unit's website. SBI details are online during the active season, otherwise contact your RBI during the winter months.

