



BEEKEEPERS NEWS

Issue No. 44

May 2020

April Roundup

April has been a strange month, both in general and here at Thornes.

Approximately 15% of our staff are currently furloughed or absent due to the Corona virus, although I am thankful to say we have had no confirmed cases here at Thornes. A normal April would be busy, but one with less staff has made the production even more challenging. We have streamlined our products, concentrating on the items the beekeeper really needs now. This seems to be working and we are pleased to say that the majority of orders are being despatched between one and four days. This includes all the basics such as frames, foundation, hive parts, clothing etc.

Our branches have remained closed the entire month. We decided not to encourage unnecessary travel but to concentrate instead on sending orders out.

However, we have now just started operating a 'Click (or phone) and Collect' service at our Rand and Newburgh stores. Simply call us with your order and pay over the phone. We will leave your order outside our shop door on a convenient day for you to collect.

We will be offering this service at our Devon branch from Monday 4th May and our Windsor branch from Tuesday 12th May.

Look out for emails regarding this service from our Stockbridge branch.

Our staff have really risen to the challenge. Whilst observing social distancing they are working incredibly hard and I think that shows by how quickly the orders are being despatched. Whilst we are continuously answering emails and taking phone calls, we would still like to encourage you to order via our website if at all possible - www.thorne.co.uk. However, if you cannot do this then of course we are happy to help you via the telephone on **01673 858555**.

The carriers we use are also experiencing challenging times. Please bear with them as they deliver your equipment, it may take just a little longer than usual.

We are pleased to prioritise NHS workers and carers. Please let us know if you are working on the frontline and we will despatch your order as quickly as we possibly can.

Finally, a little shout out to our sewing department and our restaurant. Normally at this time of year the sewing department are helping in other parts of the factory, sorting or packing frames or foundation for

example. Not this year.....instead we are proud to be producing scrubs and scrub bags for the local hospitals and care homes. Collet and Jamie-Lee are doing a fantastic job with material we have sourced especially for scrubs from our usual textile suppliers. The picture below shows Collett and Jamie-Lee hard at work.



Our local community group is operating a Meals on Wheels service twice a week, delivering to the vulnerable or self-isolating. We are delighted to help and are making a dessert every Wednesday.

The picture shows Dawn (who works in our restaurant) with some delicious Banoffee Tartlets she is about to deliver.

Ask the Expert – Found a Queen Cell?

What do you do when you find your first queen cell of the year?

Many will just rub it out (to stop them swarming) and check next week to see if they really meant it!

This action can cause more issues than it stops. The first queen cell of the year is done under no unnatural pressures, and will probably be the best queen they produce this year. It may be a supersedure cell or a swarm cell.

If you set the colony back by destroying this cell, their response may be heavier and rushed, in the form of many more cells, of slightly dubious quality, rushed and not started from an egg, and hence not as well developed. The queens hatched from these will not be as well developed and may not mate as well as the first Queen would have done, they are more likely to go off lay and fail more quickly in the future.

So why don't you make a nucleus with the old queen, and let the Queen cell in the main colony hatch out and get mated (if there are more than 2 cells reduce to 2). If for some reason the mating fails (weather) or you don't like the brood patten, you always have mum left in the nucleus that you can re-unite the colony with.

Doing it this way you have a spare if you need it, and its two hives that shouldn't swarm and give you any issues for the rest of the season.

Equipment Focus...

The Wingate Excluder

This just might be the season to try out this new excluder. Some seasons just take off with nectar everywhere, bees bubbling over in nucs and not enough equipment.



This excluder will hopefully alleviate some pressure. Made from a slotted steel excluder and 6mm birch ply with a 6mm bee space one side, flush on the other side, it will fit all BS nuc boxes including polystyrene. It enables a conventional super to be placed on top to give your bees that extra bit of room and curtail any swarming instinct. Lateral support may be required in an exposed position.

National size only and costs £16.80.

[Buy now](#)

May Special Offer – 10 Slot Frame Spacing Tool

This month why not try out a new gadget that makes spacing your frames much easier without using plastic/metal ends or castellations. Made for National hives with 10 frames. Simply place the spacing tool over your top bars and press down.

420mm long. Made from 1mm thick stainless steel sheet. Normal cost is £6 but for May we have 25% off at £4.50.



Look out for some similar Warre spacing tools later in the season.

[Buy now](#)

Beekeeping Blog

April 2020

Despite all the restrictions with regard to social distancing, we are still managing to get out with the bees. They will not wait for us! This is an important time of year for the bees as they begin to think about swarming, so it is crucial that we continue to inspect them.

The brilliant weather we had over what would normally be the Easter holidays has given the bees a much needed boost. You can see in this picture that they are building out towards the edges of the boxes, (even on hives with double brood boxes) and that there are plenty of bees in them.



Therefore, as the colonies are expanding and possibly looking to swarm, one job this month has been to check for swarm cells, which luckily, we have not found. But we

will! We did spot a couple of play cups, which gives an indication that the bees are preparing to swarm, but they did not have any eggs or larvae in them at the time. We will continue to check for swarm cells until swarm season is over because we do not want to lose any bees!

As mentioned in a previous article, there is not a whole lot growing in the fields here at Rand as we had such a wet autumn and winter. This has meant that we have had to give the bees a bit of extra food, to make sure that they do not starve. We don't normally have to feed so much in April as oil seed rape is pretty much guaranteed here. This year it is a different story...that's beekeeping for you!



With the nectar that the bees have collected however, plus some of the syrup of course, the bees have been busy building upon the foundation frames added to the colonies to give them more room. This picture shows a lovely frame of newly drawn wax, where the queen will hopefully start laying some eggs and help the colony to expand further.

We are really getting into beekeeping season now, so we are making sure to take concise but accurate records and inspect as often as

is needed – not too little, not too often...there is always a balance. Next month we will, fingers crossed, continue to see an increase in activity and will be ready to take lots of nucs off the colonies!

Bees for Development Update



This month we offer you the opportunity to win these beautiful tools - a transplanting trowel and a hand rake made by world-famous Sneeboer. Simply enter via the link below.

Entry is open to everyone - whether an existing reader of this Newsletter or newcomer to Bees for Development. The tools will be sent to the winner directly from the foundry in Holland.

Worth over £75, this is a really attractive prize for any gardener. Closing date midnight 15th May 2020. T&C apply.

[Enter Now](#)

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