

EARLY SWARMING

I have been half expecting a lot of early swarming this Spring, this being due to the previous year's poor and somewhat erratic weather conditions and many queens not having been mated properly. This has manifested itself in two main ways.

It's the bees in a colony, not the queen that makes the decision to swarm and if the colony thinks the queen will not be able to lay much longer they have two choices either supercede her or if she has a month or two left just swarm off, that being the natural way for the bees to expand their numbers. However the weather is not, in my experience, the main reason for poor mating, it is the inability of the drones to be able to mate. One reason I believe for this is the amount of pesticides left lingering in the soil from, what are now, unlawful chemicals. These may well be drawn into today's plants visited by the bees and must have some adverse effect on both workers and drones, in fact the whole colony.

The main reason I believe is down to the BEEKEEPER who due to the dreadful paranoia spread about varroa keeps filling the hive with noxious chemicals, all of which we are given to believe are wonder cures, by whom? (The chemical companies? Who stands to gain most, the chemical companies?)

My reasoning being first we have no problem in mating queens on the West Coast where pesticides have not been used and treatment for varroa UN-necessary, but is a problem over here, so I haven't treated for varroa for three years now and have seen no increase in the infestation, but have seen many mites with body parts missing suggesting that the bees are fighting back.

Last year's mating success on the East was on a par with the West and to date the laying rate has been far beyond expectation, colonies being very strong although I have to admit that one of the big Langstroth poly colony is truly savage, but why complain when they're just completing their second super and the supers on those hives are 10 Langstroth brood frames each roughly 56 to 60lbs each super.

Yes the varroa mite will always make for drone brood and some drone brood will succumb to the mite but those that are not attacked seem to be able to perform their duties well. So perhaps we will not need to develop the 'Apis Viagra' after all.

A foot note to this is that we do control varroa by drone brood methods and I am in the process of experimenting with a new type of floor which is a lot different to the normal hive floor. Whilst neither open mesh or solid floor it may look the same but on closer scrutiny will show the specifications to be far from the norm.

The Monty Python floor, now for something completely different!