

## JUNE

June should be a beautiful, sunny month with plentiful forage to help our colonies build up well and fill supers – time to book the extractor and order extra jars and labels! Well yes, but the hot, dry and windy weather in May brought everything forward and the bees have been busy and have built up fast, meaning honey aplenty and swarming to match.

June can bring abundance and anxiety in equal measure... we have all heard of the 'June gap'. In some areas there may still be a gap in flowering between the spring flowers such as sycamore, blackthorn, hawthorn and oilseed rape, and the start of the summer flowers such as lime, clover, blackberry and sweet chestnut. There is a strong chance that we will see a proper June gap this year and beekeepers need to be vigilant, as always, that there is sufficient food in the hive to carry the colony through, especially if we have a spell of bad weather. This is a particularly important consideration when deciding to take off honey: last year colonies were left starving when poor weather prevented them from replenishing stores after the oilseed rape honey harvest was taken off. Please be mindful of forage and weather conditions and leave some honey for the bees.

Expanding colonies mean more brood to host varroa so be sure to monitor any fall. Despite our best efforts to prevent or control swarming our colonies may still swarm if we haven't at least kept up with the need for more space for the bees to store nectar during a strong flow. If there has been any appreciable acreage of oilseed rape in the vicinity of your hives you will need to extract the honey before it sets in the comb. Those of us on the swarm collectors list will have our skeps and swarm collecting kit permanently in our vehicles. June's a busy month!

### June Summary

Continue weekly inspections and undertake swarm control if required.

If inspections reveal that food stores are low, feed 1:1 syrup in a contact feeder, if there are no supers on, or fondant. Remember to only feed in the evening and to reduce the hive entrance to avoid robbing.

Add another super when the current one is almost full of bees, not honey.

Extract oilseed rape honey as soon as the bees start capping it and if no droplets fly out of uncapped cells when you quickly shake the frame.

Mark any new queens with the years designated Colour

Monitor for varroa: an average daily mite fall of 10 or more means the colony is in trouble and needs treating. MAQS can be used with honey supers on.

Continue monitoring for Asian hornets in your apiary: baits should now be protein-based and offered in an open dish to avoid bycatch; weight the dish with a pebble.

And finally... Enjoy your beekeeping and be ready to learn from the bees... Remember the Green Cross Code? Stop, look and listen! It's a good one to apply each time you visit your apiary...

**Stop** and ask yourself what your intention is today: have you got the right equipment with you, enough time and the right conditions to carry it out?

**Look** at your hives, your bees and the surroundings – does everything look normal, are the bees flying, taking in pollen, forming a blanket on the front of the hive?

**Listen** to the sounds – contented humming or angry buzzing? Time spent observing your bees is even more valuable than reading about them – as any experienced beekeeper will tell you, *the bees don't read the books...*