

The Beekeeping Year Planner: Notes

This beekeeping year planner is based upon one developed in 2016 by Glyn Davies, BBKA Past President, Torbay BKA, and published in an adapted form by *BeeCraft* in 2020. The original, created by Glyn in association with the Devon Apicultural Research Group was intended to be downloadable and editable to local conditions. We thank Glyn for allowing us to publish this planner here using his original as guidance.

Inspections and Actions

Late autumn and winter (usually October to mid-March) when the temperatures are cold, only observe from the outside. Check that the hive is sound, protected from and undamaged by pests.

- **Feeding:** Heft (lift each side separately) or weigh it to assess the level of stores.¹ If the hive is light, feed fondant.
- **Varroa:** Monitor levels during November and early December, and if the count is high, treat with oxalic acid.²

Spring and summer. inspect more frequently. In particular check:

- **Feeding.**³
 - ◆ Spring: Assess stores, especially after poor weather, after comb replacement and when the rapidly expanding spring brood places stress on older winter bees, or in order to stimulate colonies for early nectar flows. Protein patties may also be considered.
 - ❖ Thin syrup 1.25 litres of water to 1kg white granulated sugar.
 - ◆ Early summer: During forage gaps.
 - ◆ Late summer: In preparation for winter.
 - ❖ Thick syrup 1.25 litres of water to 2kg white granulated sugar.
- **Space:** As the colony population increases, more space will be needed, so add supers or brood boxes. Cramped conditions can precipitate swarming.
- **Pests and Disease:** Perform regular brood,⁴ adult bee⁵ and *Varroa*⁶ checks. Treat *Varroa* as required (see Figures 1 & 2).⁷ Use association microscopy resources for *Nosema* checks. Wasps, mice, woodpeckers, wax moths and Asian hornets can all impact colonies.^{8,9}
- **Swarming:** Check regularly for signs of swarming⁶ and act to prevent or control.⁶
- **Splits, queen rearing and uniting.**
 - ◆ **Splits:** As colonies build up, they may be split as part of swarm control measures or to increase the number of colonies.
 - ◆ **Queen rearing:** This may be undertaken to replace queens, improve stock or provide young queens for winter.¹⁰
- **Honey:** This will usually be done during late spring for oilseed rape (OSR) crops and during summer for spring and summer main crops. Those taking their bees to the heather will have an additional crop.¹¹
- **Wax:** This can be reclaimed and recycled at any time of the year, but is often done during the less busy winter months.

Late summer and early autumn

- **Winter Preparations:** Strong, healthy, well-fed colonies overwinter best. Checking for 20kg of stores, possible supplementary feeding, pest and disease management and uniting unviable colonies are all important.

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<https://www.bbka.org.uk/listing/category/bbka-shop>

The National Bee Unit's BeeBase website has excellent leaflets, fact sheets and YouTube links. <https://nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>



Figure 1. Use a monitoring tray to check the *Varroa* mite drop and decide on the appropriate level of control needed.⁶

Brief references

1. *BBKA News*, December 2020, p420.
2. *BBKA News Integrated Pest Management Special Issue*, P21–22.
3. *BBKA News Feeding Honey Bees Special Issue*.
4. NBU *Common Pests, Diseases and Disorders of the Adult Honey Bee*.
5. NBU *Foulbrood Disease of Honey Bees*.
6. NBU *Managing Varroa*.
7. *BBKA News Swarming Special Issue*.
8. <https://nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>
9. *BBKA Healthy Hive Guide*.
10. *BBKA News Queen Rearing Special Issue*.
11. *BBKA News Honey Special Issue*.
12. VMD latest info: <https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/>

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Method	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open mesh floor												
Drone brood												
Queen comb trapping												
MAQS/Formic Pro												
Apiguard/ ApilifeVar/ Thymovar												
Apistan/Apitraz/ Apivar/ PolyVar Yellow												
Api-Bioxal/Oxuvar/Oxybee/ VarroaMed												

Figure 2. Examples of integrated control measures used throughout the year.^{6,12}