**Asian Hornet – from First Hand Experience – Report**

By Richard Bradfield – Reigate Beekeepers Feb 17th, 2017

**A talk by David Kemp about the Asian Hornet was delivered at the SBKA Weybridge Division’s February Winter Meeting on 16th Feb 2017, to which members from all SBKA Divisions were invited.**

**A member of Guildford Division, David spends about half of his time in France, where he has first-hand experience of Asian hornets since they first arrived there in 2004.**

The extremely informative talk was based upon David’s 12 years of not only continuing to keep bees in the heart of the region in France where the Asian Hornets originally became established, but also the time he has spent observing their behaviour and having become the local ‘Asian Hornets Nest Remover’. Some key insights into beekeeping WITH the Asian Hornet provided during the illustrated talk are described here, structured around six measures that David believed beekeepers in the UK need to be taking NOW.

**Identification & Reporting.**

**Learn to recognise The Asian Hornet (Vespa velutina) and report sightings.**

Whilst much publicity is given to identification by the single orange segment of the abdomen and yellow legs, in practice when an Asian hornet is flying towards you, it just looks all black. However, its behaviour in flight does notably differentiate it from our native European hornet.

The Asian hornet moves very quickly in darting motions and also hovers, typically facing away from the entrance of a honey bee hive to intercept returning foragers …. whereas the European hornet meanders and does not hover.

The Queens are slightly longer than the workers, with no sting.

**Use Reduced Entrances ALL YEAR.**

**An entrance height no greater than 5.5mm prevents the Asian Hornet from entering the hives.**

The width of the opening could be greater than the width of the typical reduced opening provided by entrance blocks, but the hive does also need to be on a mesh floor, with the roof vents unobstructed, to ensure adequate hive ventilation.  These need to be in place throughout the year.

**Trapping, Trapping, Trapping.**

**The months of January, February, March, September, October and November are the most important for trapping.**

The queens emerge from hibernation from mid January to mid March, (two were seen in SW France in 2012 on Jan 18th), this being the most effective time to deploy the traps. In the early winter all the hornets die, except for 200 or more new queens who leave each nest and each finds a place to hibernate, before emerging in January or February … each of the 200+ potentially founding a new colony! Mid September to December is also, therefore, an effective time for trapping.

However, keep traps in place and charged all summer because even trapping worker hornets will have some degrading impact upon their feeding of larvae.

Hornet Traps fabricated as replacements of or additions to hive floors, of which the patented ApiShield Hornet Trap distributed by Vita Europe is one, are considered to have a number of significant drawbacks, principally:

* High cost per hive.
* Compromised mesh floor ventilation – precluding use of effective height restricted entrances.

Perhaps not un-expectantly then, bottle traps, either cheaply bought conical glass wasp traps, or made very EASILY and VERY CHEAPLY are now favoured; and are very effective.

**Hang or stand the bottle traps**, charged with beer (no added jam or honey) **at about head height and position about 2 meters in front of the hives. Deploy at least one trap per hive in your apiary.**

**Hive Position.**

**Leave grass, weeds and shrubs long, up to the height of the roof, particularly in front of the hive.**

This inhibits the hornets opportunity to hover close to the entrance to pick-off returning foragers who will otherwise also be arriving by more varied flight paths.

Place hives in irregular arrangement, particularly NOT in lines. Asian hornets patrol hive entrances very quickly if the hives are in lines.

**Hornet proof storage of supers.**

Store out-of-use supers, particularly if they contain used comb, so that they are bee and Hornet proof.

**Nest Destruction.**

**Consider SAFETY before and after.**

Initially, nests being found in France were usually high up in trees. But more recently, the Asian hornets behavior has been seen to be changing and nests are lower, and are often found within buildings, lofts and under eaves.

(Note that the Asian hornets found  in the UK (Tetbury) in Sept 2016 have been genetically identified as being a strain direct from China and not from the single strain spreading throughout France and its land border neighbours.

**DIY Bottle Traps**

*Designs and construction methods based upon notes provided by David Kemp at the talk venue (16 Feb 2017).*

**Construction of Trap (Option 1)**

1. Cut off the top of an empty, plastic 2 litre bottle about 1/3 of the way down.
2. Remove and discard the cap, then turn the top 1/3 section upside down (like a funnel), and fit it into the 2/3 (base) section. When the uppermost edges are level it helps to staple them together.
3. Add hanging strings or wire (pushed through small holes in the sides near the top) and charge the trap with a some beer.

**Construction of Trap (Option 2)**

1. Take an empty 2 litre plastic bottle, with the cap retained.
2. With a sharp knife, cut a horizontal slit about 4cms long in the side of the bottle, between 1/3 and 1/2 way down from the top; then make two vertical cuts down of about 1cm length, at each end of the horizontal cut (like a football goal post).
3. Fold the flap you have formed INWARDS, to form a platform inside the bottle, sloping a little downwards.
4. If you wish, add hanging strings or wire (as option 1), charge the trap with some beer, replace the cap.

**With thanks to David Kemp   ( davidkemp60@hotmail.com)  for a very informative and timely talk, and to Weybridge Division for arranging and inviting members from all Surrey’s divisions.**