



Photo: Oilseed rape fields in Shenmore by Belinda Dale

May 2019

WVBKA Charity Registration  
Number: 517008



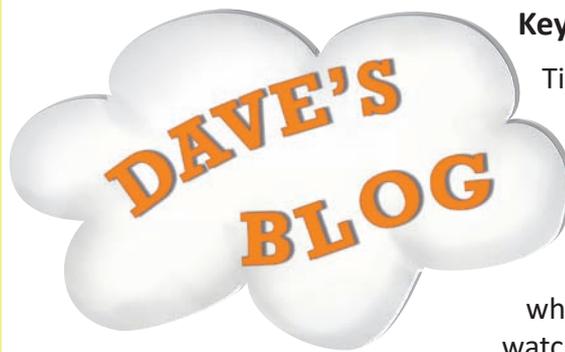
### Diary Dates 2019

- May 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Malvern Spring Show
- May 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Beginners Course, Shenmore 2.00pm
- May 31<sup>st</sup> Apiary Meeting details TBC
- June 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Beginners Course, Shenmore, 2.00pm
- June 4<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting, Moccas 7.30pm

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Queen Colour of the Year  
2019 is: **GREEN**



### May Notes

Most if not all colonies will have gained in strength and numbers during the course of April. The next thing on the horizon will be the development of swarming, this for many beekeepers is a contentious issue and I believe will always be that way. Simply put, it is the natural process of bees to provide themselves with a new queen. The ultimate outcome of this natural procedure is for the colony to divide into two or more separate colonies. This is a perfectly normal state of affairs and understanding this is the key to having some kind of control. Now let me say right at the start that there are many different ways to bring about control. Division is what the bees are going to do naturally; the beekeeper may well have other ideas such as taking nucs to reduce the strength or splitting them into two or more colonies. All of these procedures are following to some extent, the natural process of division.

### Key to reproduction control

Timing is absolutely paramount. If this is left too late you may well have a situation that is not under your control. Even if you time it correctly there will be failures – so

what should you do? Simply by watching the development and choosing the appropriate time to carry out any division is the key to any reproduction. Basically put, if you are examining your colony and you find eggs in play cups with a little bit of moisture, and I mean eggs not larvae, then that is the earliest sign you may see. From then on you get approximately nine days before those cells are sealed.

So what is happening to the queen during that period? She is being slimmed down ready to take flight. This is predetermined by the bees and is happening as a natural progression which makes finding the queen very difficult indeed. If you have a colony with 40,000 bees, even with a smaller number, she is very difficult to find.

### So what do you think I'm saying here?

The earlier you carry out any swarm control the better. The queen will not be slimmed down as she will still be in the proper egg laying state. Early means when you first see the egg in the cup. Dividing the colony can be done in several different ways.

*continued on page 2...*

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My preferred way is to choose the brood complete with eggs, brushing the bees off the combs and placing them in a clean brood box. The queen will be left in the bottom box. Having chosen most of the sealed brood and the eggs which are already in the cups is an ideal time to carry this out. The brood chamber is then placed back on the original brood chamber with an excluder. The bees will quickly occupy the combs again resulting in most being nurse bees to look after the brood, that is when it can be removed. Remember the queen is still in the bottom brood chamber. If this is done carefully you will be left with a brood box with young bees that will go on and feed the eggs/larvae to its conclusion when it has been moved to a new site. I hear you say 'that sounds easy'. I have been using this system for many years and by and large it results in a nice new queen.

### Caveats

It is recommended by most that you should reduce the queen cells choosing two, well-fed, open cells. Don't forget the parent colony as they may well still throw up more queen cups requiring you to divide even further. After carrying out this procedure to reduce the queen cells to two, please do not interfere for at least one calendar month. You cannot do any good by poking around in brood boxes when there are queen cells or virgin queens present. In fact it is an absolute waste of time if you have carried things out correctly in the first place. So, apart from providing sufficient food to last them through this period, leave them alone as more queens are lost by premature interfering. This is just one of many ways to bring some control on colony reproduction.

Dave

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