

Bee Diseases and their Management



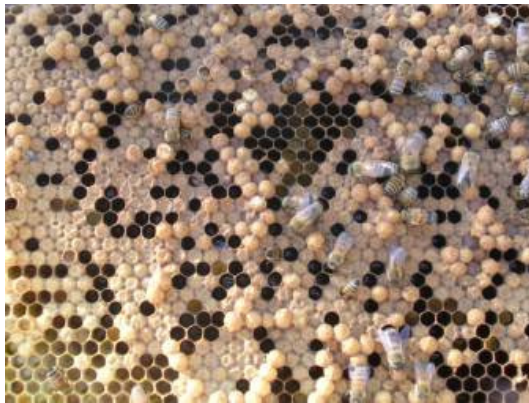
Abnormal Drone Laying (This is not a notifiable disease)

Drone cells are present in virtually all colonies during the summer months. The drone cells are easily recognised by their characteristic domed cappings and are usually found at the edge of the brood nest. Occasionally drone brood can be found in worker cells with or in place of worker brood and may be present as capped cells interspersed with vacant cells or cells at various stages of development.

There are two possible causes: a drone laying queen; or laying workers.

Queens that are coming to the end of their fertile life or are young and not properly mated will become drone layers. A queen-less colony with no young brood with which to raise a new queen may have workers which will develop functioning ovaries and begin to lay eggs. The eggs of both these cases will be unfertilised and will naturally develop as drones.

Recognition:



Drone brood is irregular and interspersed with normal worker brood, not restricted to the edge of the broodnest – queen not laying correctly.



Several eggs laid in one cell, often on the walls as well as at the bottom - laying workers. (Photo by kind permission Wm J. Mondjack, <http://www.mondjackapiaries.com/>)

Vectors

None

How to Manage Abnormal Drone Laying

Abnormal Drone Laying is not a serious disease, more of a condition existing in the colony. In normal circumstances it is easily recognised during routine hive inspections.

Please obtain an up to date copy of the FERA (CSL) 'Foul brood diseases of honey bees' booklet by visiting the FERA website or downloading direct from the EMBA website.

Detection

Hive Examination - Examination of brood frames during late spring and through the summer. Bees should be gently shaken from the frames to allow full inspection, abnormalities are then easily spotted.

Monitoring

Vigilance is important with all honeybee diseases and conditions such as Abnormal Drone Laying. Check all apiaries and colonies regularly for health and suspect any colonies that are not thriving where there is no already known reason. Colonies that die out should be examined thoroughly and sealed to prevent robbing and spread of any disease present.

Controls.....

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Controls

Colonies suffering from Abnormal Drone Laying may need to be re-queened.

Apiary Housekeeping:

- Always maintain a high level of hygiene in all your beekeeping practices
- Carry out methodical health inspections on a regular basis, checking for brood disease particularly in spring and autumn.
- Never transfer combs between colonies without checking for brood diseases
- Systematically replace old brood combs in your hives melting down the old comb to maintain clean and healthy brood.
- Never bring colonies or equipment into your apiary without establishing their origin, condition, and disease status.
- Sterilise any secondhand equipment or hive components before introducing them into your apiary
- Discourage drifting and robbing in the apiary
- Suspect stray swarm health until you know otherwise
- Report any incidence of disease or suspicious conditions immediately to your local association