

The NIHBS/NUIG native Irish honey bee breeding programme

Commitment, Continuity and Support

Dear beekeepers,

2017 marks the 3rd full year of the breeding programme and if the programme is to succeed to protect our Amm population, develop better bees for beekeepers and to reduce use of chemicals then we need to make further improvements to the work programme.

If you would like to continue with the breeding programme we ask you please for your Commitment, Continuity and Support

A. The Commitment to conduct sugar shaker tests twice a year during the dates below, in subsequent years, and to submit the reports to NUIG.

B. We need Continuity in the colonies that are assessed so we can see how they fare. Therefore, we ask that you use the same colonies for each test both during this year and in subsequent years. If a colony dies, record the reason as best as you can determine, let us know in the report and, if you can, start using a replacement colony so that the numbers remain up.

C. Support each other with replacement queens/bees if a beekeeper loses a colony where they attempted not treating for Varroa but the colony failed. This is also a message that can be put to good use in the beekeeping community outside those of you who are taking part. Can your friend/BKA help with replacements?

Finally

If colonies that show less than 2% Varroa continue to be treated, then this programme will not work. Some beekeepers look at a high mite drop on the bottom board of low Varroa colonies and decide to treat. However it is possible that the high mite drop may be a consequence of the bees ability to control the mite via hygienic and grooming behaviours. **Thus these colonies may not need chemical treatment.**

Another idea to bear in mind is to consider withholding treatment of swarms that you take from established feral colonies. If these colonies have survived untreated for 2 or more years without replacement they will have some form of resistance to Varroa. Why treat these bees? There is a likelihood they also form part of the solution to the Varroa problem.

The sampling dates are:

1 - Between the 6th and 21st of May but before anti-Varroa treatment.

2 – Between the 12th and 27th of August but before anti-Varroa treatment.

Thank you