

# The Reigate Way

2021

[Building on previous versions originally penned by Mike Hill](#)

The purpose of the Reigate way is to have some consistency in how we teach beekeeping and how we behave at Henfold that may be different to normal. We will also adopt the BBKA competence Framework so that those wishing to take exams will be on their journey with the correct set of knowledge, skills and understanding. We will strive to have our members understand what is happening in a colony so that they can make informed decisions and therefore take better actions.

## Health and Safety

There should be a qualified first aider on site and they should be identified with an armband. Members should be asked about allergies and recorded accordingly. Members should be told that antihistamines are available but it is their choice if they are used we recommend members bring their own medication. All members should be reminded about PPE and the lighting of smokers with no gloves or veils on either at the start of the year or on their first visit. This will also include a description of anaphylaxis and the location of the H&S poster with location and emergency telephone numbers. A H&S video will be prepared.

## Bad Backs

Hive boxes can be heavy and awkward to handle so it is important people learn to stand square on to the hive, not to lift with their backs but with their legs and to avoid twisting when carrying ie turn with feet not the waist.

## Apiary Hygiene

All colonies will have their own equipment pool and no equipment should be shared between colonies unless agreed by the apiary manager. All equipment should be cleaned before being returned to the appropriate section of the container. No personal equipment other than bee suits should be brought into the apiary. Personal bee suits should be washed if they have been used at another apiary. Fresh soda crystals solution will be provided each week to wash hive tools, bellows along with a gas torch for boxes, QEs etc

We use open mesh floors so that varroa fall out of the hive and ventilation is improved.

Whilst the whole apiary may be part of one single hygienic unit we still teach that each colony and hive is treated as it's own unit so that beginners adopt hygienic practices in their own apiaries.

Leather gloves are not to be worn and new disposable gloves used for each new inspection. We recommend the use of arm gauntlets. There should be no gaps between gloves and boots and the bee suit. We do not support gloveless inspecting.

## Opening and closing the Hive, supers and the warm way

Since members need to work from the back of the hive, frames will use the warm way, ie frames parallel with the entrance. So supers should be placed on the upturned roof at the front of the hive, never on the ground. It should be explained that returning bees may well go into the supers making inspection a little easier. When putting boxes back either place on an angle and turn holding opposite corners or use a wedge to minimise the number of squashed bees.

## Hive tools

Use of both the traditional and J tool should be explained. This will cover

- Correct ways to remove propolised roof and boxes to minimise disturbance of the bees ie break open each corner and twist gently, do not run tools along joints.
- Minimising movement across the frames, ie start on left if right handed and the right if left handed, try not to move the tool across the top of the frames. The idea is not to disturb the bees more than necessary
- Correct ways to lever frames apart, ie lever on the top bar as close to the side bar as possible. Hold the tool at the end not near the frame. You do not have to use a hive tool.

- Using the tools to move frames back into position by levering from the back of the box onto frames. Show the use of dummy frames to achieve the same.

### Double Brood Only

Whilst single brood can be very successful we want to be consistent across the apiary. Move the top box to a spare stand or roof and inspect the bottom box first and inspect the top box in its moved position. Use dummy frames to reduce to 8+8 total frames if necessary. Always make sure the number of frames in each box is the same. When returning the top brood box lightly smoke underneath to encourage the bees away from the bottom.

### Record Cards

These are kept for each colony with the other colony equipment. Make a record of the date, the amount of brood, stores, space and also if the colony is queen right and signs of swarming and disease. It is also important to record if the colony has been fed or treated in any way. The latter being a statutory requirement.

Always read the record card before moving to the colony and consider what equipment you might need for this inspection. Always have a reason for the inspection.

When putting a record card away consider if you have enough equipment for next week.

### Smokers and the entrance

When lighting a smoker do not wear gloves or a veil. Grass should be used to cool the smoke down. Colonies should be given a light smoking across, not into, the entrance and then wait for a minute or two before inspecting. Use this time to watch and listen to the bees. Are they more active than last week? Are they quiet or noisy? Why might that be?

### Swarm Control and prevention

The RBKA way is to use the Nucleus method. Refer to the BBKA leaflet<sup>1</sup> on this method which will be kept in the club library and on the club website.

Lack of space for brood and stores can lead to swarming so make sure space is routinely checked for at each inspection and recorded.

Always assume the bees may be preparing to swarm rather than supersedure. If open swarm cells are found carry out the Nucleus method as soon as possible and then reduce the number of swarm cells to one. More advanced beekeepers may also move cells to nuc boxes or apadiaz for increase.

### Varroa Monitoring and control

Monitor using both boards and drone traps and use the varroa calculator at the NBU website<sup>2</sup> to assess what action to take. Use icing sugar and drone trapping to reduce the varroa population. More experienced beekeepers should be shown how to use queen trapping too.

### BBKA and BeeBase

We expect all members to know about the BBKA and NBU websites and be registered on BeeBase

1 <https://www.bbka.org.uk/bbka-leaflets>

2 <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm>