

## Honeybee Husbandry Survey 2014/15

### Summary

This is the seventh consecutive survey of beekeeping husbandry issues in Northern Ireland. A questionnaire survey was sent out hardcopy to beekeeping associations and an online copy made available on the AFBI website. 96 beekeepers in total responded.

Overwintering colony losses due to death and queen problems averaged 19%. Comparable 2014/15 surveys from England, Scotland, Wales and Rol gave 18%\*, 13%\*, 12%\* and 19%\* losses, respectively. 43% of NI beekeepers surveyed reported no losses.

Table 1. Regional overwintering colony losses in Northern Ireland for 2015.

| <i>County</i> | <i>Production colonies live before winter</i> | <i>Colonies lost due to death/queen problems</i> | <i>% loss</i> |
|---------------|---|--|---------------|
| Antrim        | 89  | 10   | 11            |
| Armagh        | 55  | 8  | 14            |
| Down          | 279   | 44   | 16            |
| Fermanagh     | 68  | 19   | 28            |
| Londonderry   | 38  | 16   | 42            |
| Tyrone        | 37  | 9  | 24            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>566</b>                                    | <b>106</b>                                       | <b>19</b>     |

Table 2. Annual overwintering losses in Northern Ireland for the past 7 years.

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Colony loss</i> |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 2009        | 23%                |
| 2010        | 13%                |
| 2011        | 16%                |
| 2012        | 19%                |
| 2013        | 43%                |
| 2014        | 9%                 |
| 2015        | 19%                |



Of the 106 colonies lost, 72 colonies were found to be dead after winter 2014-2015. The main reasons given were finding dead workers in cells while food was present in the hive (48 colonies) and lost for unknown reasons (32 colonies).

The number of production colonies increased from 387 in Spring 2014 to 472 in Spring 2015.

34 colonies were lost due to queen problems while 171 of the wintered colonies were weak but queenright after winter 2014-2015. 392 beekeepers' wintered colonies had a new queen in 2014. 7 beekeepers imported queens from GB or Rol, 1 beekeeper imported from Italy. 50 beekeepers observed normal queen problems in their colonies in 2014 compared to what they usually had while 16 beekeepers noticed more queen problems. 24 beekeepers felt that compared to their colonies with old queens, their colonies with new queens had survived winter better whereas 9 beekeepers thought that colonies with new queens had survived winter worse.

90 out of the 96 beekeepers surveyed treated their colonies for Varroa. The most popular treatment was Oxalic acid used by 53% of those surveyed followed by Thymol (47%). Mite away quick strips (MAQS) were used by 23%.

\* Data provided by the Europe-wide COLOSS project.