# January Checklist

**Points to ponder:**

- Make frequent visits to apiaries particularly in windy, wet weather.
- Check stands, straps, mouse guards, woodpecker protection
- Ensure that entrances are clear.
- Check food. Heft hives and treat for varroa if necessary.
- Assess early forage.
- Finish repairing/painting equipment.

**The new year**

The start of a new year, the colony7 is re-awakening and the queen start laying again sometime this month. Providing of course the queen actually stopped laying throughout the mild winters we now experience. The workers get more active and keep the temperature around 33$^{o}$ in the centre of the hive instead of the minimum temperature of 20$^{o.}$ Outside it may be about zero so the bees will be generating a lot of heat and using a great deal of the honey stores. Now is the time to check what remaining stores in the hive as they will be used rapidly and we must ensure that the colony does starve

**Check the stores**

Hefting the hive will help to establish whether the bees have enough food for the bees to live on. If a hive appears to be light then a pad of candy placed immediately over the brood on the top bars will help enormously Watch the entrance to see if the workers flying to collect pollen and they can be seen returning with pollen loads to the hive will help to confirm that the queen is still present and laying eggs. No fresh pollen intake can mean that there are problems in the hive and the queen may have died or the number of bees in the colony is fewer than required to build the colony successfully once winter is over.

**Varroa**

January is also a good time to treat the bees with oxalic acid as a control for varroa. When there is no brood in the nest all the mites are in the phoretic stage existing on the adult bees. This is where they are most vulnerable to oxalic acid. Two points to adhere to are

- To use a properly formulated medicine and follow the instructions; do not over- or under-dose the colony
- apply the medication when there is a minimum quantity of sealed brood in the colony and complete the individual medicine records for each colony treated

The mites will stay on the bees until just before the fresh larvae are sealed in their cells with brood cappings. Therefore the time chosen to apply oxalic acid should be within a week of the end of a cold snap. Left too late the mites will be in sealed cells and will be unaffected by oxalic acid. If possible apply oxalic acid on a warm and sunny day; this is not always possible but the ideal situation is when the bees inside the hive have broken the cluster and are moving freely. This helps the acid to get distributed through the nest and onto all the bees.

January is a good time to check your spare equipment if you have not done so and ensure it is cleaned and ready for use. If you have not done so scrape all the comb off hive parts and queen excluders, crown boards etc. then using a gas blowtorch or equivalent electrical paint scraper to lightly scorch the inside of all the components. It is a good time to paint the outside with a wood preservative or water soluble paint so that the hive parts have time to breathe and dry before they are used. You do not want to be using any hive in their old, dirty state.