

DARG DRONE LAYING QUEEN PROJECT 2016

This year the DARG DLQ project is accepting any queen for analysis. We are particularly interested in receiving apparently healthy queens but are being replaced, perhaps routinely as they have aged but showing no sign of excessive drone laying. Virgin queens are also acceptable.

Any beekeeper who thinks they have queen that might be useful to the project should contact a local collector included in the list below.

The contributed queen has to be kept alive and then killed and preserved as humanely and quickly as possible. Brief details of each queen's history will be requested. Beekeepers' personal details will not be part of the study, but in case further contact is needed the DARG survey asks directly or indirectly for the name and contact details of the contributing beekeeper.

Collection and Preservation

On being contacted by a beekeeper, the local collector will make arrangements to visit the apiary and determine that the donated queen is as described and cage her in the supplied cage with ideally a couple of workers and some candy. The cage should be secured, placed in the envelope provided together with the details sheet and posted or delivered as soon as convenient to :

Glyn Davies, Landscore, 30 Eastern Road, Ashburton. TQ13 7AR

Note that the envelope should be sealed with sellotape please for security.

Brief biographical details of each queen will be requested on the inevitable form. Queen cages with candy will be provided and postage costs repaid at the end of the season.

Processing

There are some differences in subsequent processing this time. The queen will be chilled to around 4C until completely comatose. She is then placed in a specimen tube of glutaraldehyde preservative at the same temperature. This quickly penetrates the queen's tissues. The tube is labelled with the queen's identity. Subsequently, the queen is cut over the last three segments and the spermatheca is carefully removed to a small tube of glutaraldehyde preservative to be sent to Abbey Veterinary Services, Newton Abbot for sectioning. The queen, minus her spermatheca, is placed in her original tube with ethanol as a preservative to be examined for virus infection at MBA Plymouth.

As modern tests for viral DNA are extremely sensitive, cross contamination has to be avoided by great care and single use of disposable gloves and dissection blades.

Precautions

The glutaraldehyde solution is not corrosive but mildly toxic. Care should be taken when handling apparatus that has been contaminated with it. Disposable gloves should be worn when appropriate, skin splashes washed immediately, fumes and vapours avoided.

Costs

The study is being supported financially by professional services being given freely and incidental expenses being met by DARG's Vita Award and Westland Countryside Stewards.

Enquiries

Further information and advice from Glyn Email. landscore@eclipse.co.uk.

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