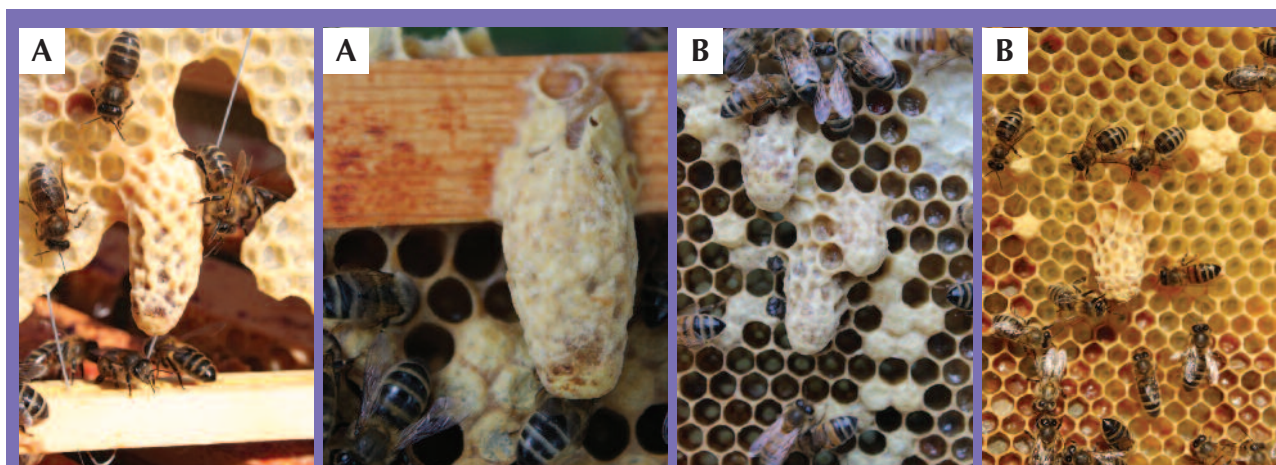


Patterson's Page

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Very often during the summer something happens in a colony that you do not expect. At a meeting of the Wisborough Green Division of the West Sussex BKA on 15 April 2017 the situation in one colony was interesting. As the Apiary Manager, I was called over by the demonstrator in one group because there were 'queen cells and the queen had gone'. Can you work out what might have happened from the information given below?



The photos here, although not taken of the incident, illustrate in other hives the types of cell we saw during our inspection on 15 April. A. These two photos show superseded cells, similar to those described below. B. These two photos show sealed emergency cells similar to those described below.

The colony had last been inspected on 1 April, fourteen days earlier, when the over-wintered, clipped and marked queen was laying. There were no queen cells reported. On inspection, on 15 April, the following was observed:

- A fairly full colony that, although not bursting with bees, needed supering.
- Two sealed queen cells built close together on the side of a top bar of the same frame. Neither looked very good: one was long, the other, although normal length, was a bit 'squashed', with no sign of damage during inspection. They were both fairly well dimpled. (See A above for examples of such cells found in other colonies. It was unfortunate that we were unable to photograph the frames that we inspected but these photos illustrate the sort of cells we found.)
- About six sealed emergency cells (See B above for examples of such cells found in other colonies.)
- No emerged queen cells.
- No unsealed brood. The sealed brood looked good, with good

pattern and no obvious ramping down in egg-laying by the queen. The youngest sealed worker brood was in the 'pink eye' stage.

As an experienced beekeeper I immediately spotted there was something wrong. When teaching, I try to get beekeepers to think things through, because they have to do this with their own bees at home, which is what I did with this group before discussing it. I have seen a number of similar situations in recent years, so what do readers think might have happened?

On page 288 I offer some possible explanations.