

This is the third in the series of 'Read the comb' that appeared in the Devon Beekeepers Association journal - 'Beekeeping'.

Examining a brood chamber comb and deducing the recent and present condition of the colony is a vital skill. We invite you to examine the comb below, make an assessment and consider the implications for the colony.

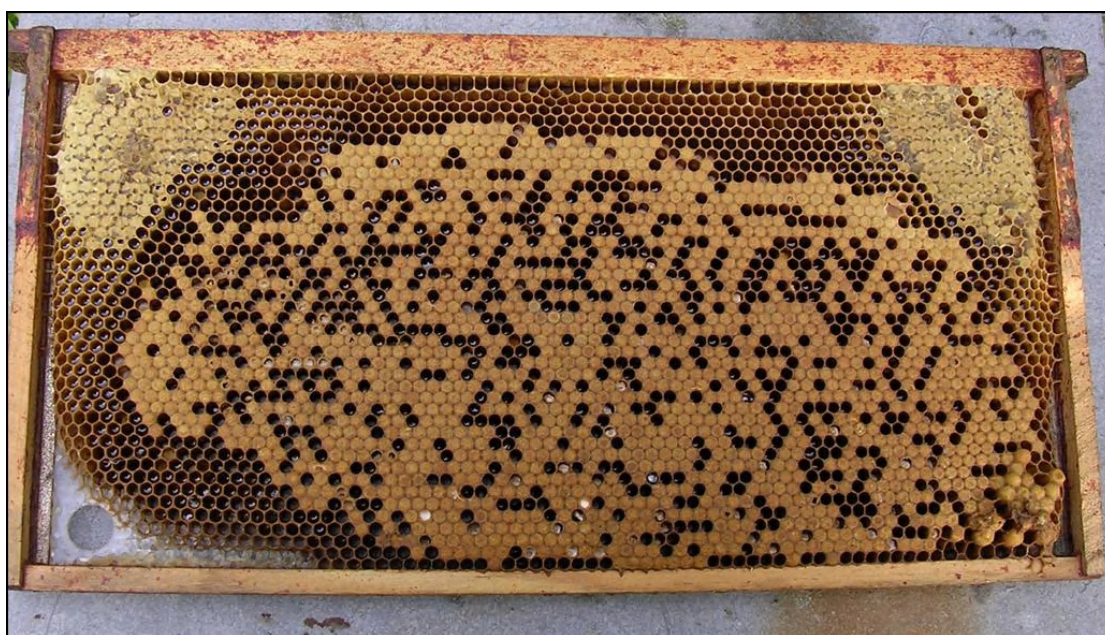


photo 'Pollinator'

Read the analysis below to see if you agree with our contributor 'Pollinator':

This frame is sad and interesting. The interesting part first. The foundation was built on a plastic midrib - popular in USA. There is a pre-formed pop hole for bees to pass easily to the opposite side of the comb. The colony has made a reasonable job of drawing out the foundation. It is a Langstroth deep frame. There is a supply of sealed stores and some uncapped honey too. Space is available for pollen but there doesn't seem to be much stored. The queen has laid consistently and well but here is the sad bit. Far too much brood has been decapped and thrown out. The house bees are still doing it as shown by the many cells with tiny perforations not yet enlarged. (Not easy to see at this level of photo-reduction). A closer look at this frame is urgent to diagnose the cause but even in this picture several white chalky textured larvae are visible. Dried larvae with yellow tips are also visible. Classic and extensive chalk brood infection is indicated. For confirmation, use a cocktail stick or tweezers to extract a suspect larva. The queen, although fertile, has to be replaced as soon as possible.