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Brood Diseases of Bees

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Remarks on Bee Disease Investigations at Leeds

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REMARKS ON BEE DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS AT LEEDS

By W. HAMILTON

(County Bee Instructor for Yorkshire)

THE investigation into the problem of foul brood at Rothamsted has my full support. Before I came to Yorkshire in 1926 I had seen little or nothing of foul brood, and depended on my knowledge from books. These books were confusing, and when cases were found in the county from 1928 onwards the need for a fuller knowledge of the problem became apparent.

With the co-operation of Mr. Chalmers I saw the opportunity for a piece of useful research work, and in 1931 an investigation was commenced.

You have heard some of the details from Mr. Chalmers, and I might add that first no case of so-called European foul brood was encountered, although samples were received which had been diagnosed by experts as of that type.

It was soon seen where the confusion lay, as in the early and last stages of American foul brood the symptoms were similar to those describing European foul brood.

The taking of the queens from the diseased colonies and exchanging to healthy ones was interesting.

Another point of interest was the apparent difficulty in getting the disease to take hold of the colony unless a large infection was given. Further, there was the immunity of the control stocks which had stood, and still stand, among the diseased ones with not the slightest sign of the disease appearing. Also the fact that no precautions were taken in the handling of the healthy stocks after the diseased ones. The changing of quilts and combs was of course not practised, although it had been planned.

The disease is found in various parts of Yorkshire and almost always in isolated cases. Some of these cases have been traced to people buying bees from dealers in the South. Most of the dealers are careful not to send out disease, but in some cases they do not take proper precautions and buy bees for resale from doubtful sources.

From the samples which I see from time to time I am of the opinion that in many cases it is impossible to make satisfactory diagnosis of foul brood without microscopical examination and I sincerely hope that the research to be conducted at Rothamsted will result in the classifying of all the maladies or other troubles to which the brood of bees is subjected.