

Taking the BBKA Basic Assessment Examination

Advice and learning points, from the nine successful Warwick & Leamington branch 2008 examination candidates, compiled to help those planning to take the BBKA Basic Beekeeping Assessment Examination in future years...

What experience do I need?

- It is usual for a candidate to have kept bees for at least a beekeeping year in order to have experienced the full range of activities and issues.
- The number of bee colonies held is not important.

What preparation do I need to do?

- ✓ Syllabus – get a copy of the syllabus from the BBKA site and familiarise yourself with it thoroughly, for the examiner will test you across all of its sections [link to syllabus](#)
- ✓ Beginners course – whilst it's not essential to have attended our branch course (or indeed any other beginners' course) it is a valuable foundation
- ✓ Training Apiary – attend the meetings at the branch apiary; don't be shy – pick people's brains!
- ✓ Specialist sessions – try to attend, or organise, a get together of examination candidates together with more experienced beekeepers and work through the syllabus covering anything about which you are uncertain. The branch owns a BBKA CD which can be used to structure such sessions – but copyright prevents it from being published here.
- ✓ BBKA News - this quarterly newsletter contains a host of general articles, and three specific articles, which will help you to prepare for the examination.
- ✓ Other beekeeping journals – of course, other beekeeping publications, such as BeeCraft, will help you with information you need to take the examination
- ✓ Teach Yourself Beekeeping – this book, by Adrian and Clare Waring is particularly recommended by the 2008 candidates as a reference well suited to preparation for the examination, and indeed as a valuable reference for any beginner
- ✓ Spring Convention Lectures – as well as beekeeping bargains, there is a wealth of beekeeping wisdom on offer in the many interesting lectures and workshops
- ✓ Occasional events – from time to time regional events are held on a range of relevant topics, not aimed at examination passes, but at dissemination of good beekeeping practice and new research findings
- ✓ Your own research – the internet is bursting with information about beekeeping from UK beekeeping associations, international organisations and even YouTube videos
- ✓ Set of possible answers - the 2008 candidates and some more experienced colleagues have compiled model answers and guidance addressing all areas covered in the Basic Beekeeping Assessment syllabus [link to document](#)

Of course, it's not necessary to work your way through the whole of this list; this is merely a list of ways that you might gain the exposure you need to the information and experience you need.

What is the examination like?

- It is a verbal and practical examination of your beekeeping knowledge which takes about an hour
- It is something you should take very seriously; we each felt we had been really tested by the examiner
- Be your normal beekeeping self and act as you would with your own bees, eg don't be afraid to move into better light to see eggs if you need to
- Your examiner will drill down asking for more and more detail on a subject – go with it

- Our examiner asked each candidate very different questions, so don't rely on 'tip offs' given by candidates examined earlier the same day
- Your examiner will help you to reach the answer he is looking for; he wants you to pass
- You will need to take your own beekeeping suit, tool, smoker etc PLUS frame components (inc hammer & nails) for construction and an empty match box!

What are some of our specific recommendations?

- Make sure you demonstrate very gentle handling of the bees – he commented on that
- When on site, consult (and be seen to consult) the relevant hive notes if they are available
- Position the queen excluder in front of the hive to allow the queen to run back into the hive, should she be on it – he made a point of this to many of us
- Make sure you are strong on pest and disease management - esp how varroa transmit viruses
- Practice taking a sample of bees in a matchbox
- Know your honey labelling/producing regulations – we didn't