
THE BEE LINE

The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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Cold Winter Stings Beekeepers

By Mary Moss

Here in Oregon, beekeepers have had to cope with very wet spring weather. Statistics on actual losses of bees, crops, etc. have not yet been compiled. However, maybe we're not doing so badly after all. Take a look at what happened in the Midwest . . .

During this past winter, Indiana beekeepers lost about half of their 8,000 bee colonies, according to David Barrickman, President of the Indiana Beekeepers Association. This group represents about 600 beekeepers in the state, many in Northwest Indiana.

Replacing lost bees is likely to cost beekeepers a quarter of a million dollars, Barrickman noted. The loss in honey sales and pollination fees could amount to another \$500,000.

Unknown is the cost in lost production of fruits and vegetables reliant on bee pollination for survival. Greg Hunt, entomology professor at Purdue University in West Lafayette, said, "They're very important for certain crops—blueberries, cucumbers, fruit trees."

Nationwide in 2000, the value of increased crop yields that could be attributed to honeybees was \$14.6 billion, Hunt said. "The value of crops that are highly dependent on bees in Indiana is in the tens of millions of dollars," he added.

What killed the bees were months of relentlessly cold temperatures that upset the somewhat fragile existence inside the hive. Most winters, especially in central and southern Indiana, bring only two to three weeks of steady cold, giving bees time to leave the cluster and gather more honey.

This past (winter), it got cold in November and stayed frozen, Barrick explained. "The bees starved to death just inches from the food."

Over the winter Barrickman lost about 35 percent of the 150 colonies he keeps near his home in Anderson, Indiana. "It's a great loss," he said. "I've had to go to southern Alabama to pick up bees to bring back to Indiana."

Another Indiana beekeeper, Bob Kress, lost between 40 and 50 of the 250 colonies he keeps throughout Porter County, including some that pollinate 600 acres of pickles for the H.J. Heinz Company.

Kress stands to lose some of the \$30-a-hive pollination fees he earns during the height of pollination season in late summer, not to mention (cont. on page 2)

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Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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To join the OSBA, complete the membership application in this issue and send with payment to: George Steffensen, PO Box 956, Grants Pass, OR 97528.

Editorial Offices: Send news, announcements, letters, comments and advertising to: Diane Varner, Editor
PO Box 123 Yamhill, OR 97148-0123
Tel. 503-662-4559 Fax 503-662-4594
e-mail Raybee@bandwidth.net

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A reminder from your editor that when you or your association experience changes due to moving, elections, change of meeting time and/or place, you need to notify the OSBA in **two** different ways to effectively get your message across. Send it to the BeeLine editor at the address above, **and** send it to the WebMaster for inclusion on the current OSBA web page (see page 10 in each month's issue for the WebMaster's contact information).



Happy Father's Day June 15th

(cont. from page 1)

income from the sale of honey, both for consumption and for a line of honey-based cosmetics he markets. Kress and his wife are currently in the process of replacing what they lost.

Beekeepers all over the country will surely be looking to summer for relief from the cold and moisture. Of course, very high temperatures bring their own set of problems. With Mother Nature at the helm, you just never know.

Industry Committee Formed to Develop Honey Standard of Identity

From the National Honey Board

Representatives of honey and beekeeping industry organizations were recently invited to serve on an industry-wide committee to develop a standard of identity for honey. The FDA has approved standards of identity for many foods to promote honesty and fair dealing in the interest of consumers. A standard of identity contains requirements for composition of a food and the name of the food that meets those requirements. It defines what may be in the food and what cannot be in the food using the prescribed name. The goal of the committee is the develop an industry-supported standard of identity for honey and submit it to the FDA for review and approval.

Although much work towards a standard of identity has been accomplished in past years by industry members, the committee's work is not expected to be simple. International standards (such as CODEX) must be taken into consideration and any petition submitted to the FDA must have the full support of the industry.

For more information contact Bruce Boynton of the National Honey Board at 800-553-7162.

Beekeeping in Western Oregon

By Harry Vanderpool, WVBA

June - Crops in bloom producing nectar and/or pollen: berries, vetch, spearmint, radish, mustard, clover. Others: honey locust, poison oak, pyracantha.

- Nectar flow is at its peak this month in the Willamette Valley. Watch your honey supers closely; they can be filled rapidly when conditions are right. Studies have shown that supering ahead of the need for space, increases honey production in colonies.
- If you have comb to draw, and can sacrifice a bit of honey production, this is the month to make it happen. You can place supers with frames of foundation on your largest colonies, and they will quickly produce the prettiest comb you can imagine.
- Replace old dark or damaged comb and replace them with frames of foundation.
- Buy some queens and start up some small nucs. Queens can sometimes be in short supply late in the year. Requeening late in the year can be testy also. Starting small nucs now, will cover your late queen problems. You say that you don't have any nuc boxes?
- Buy nuc boxes. Put them to work.
- Examine colonies every ten to fourteen days.
- If you find hives with the beginnings of swarming tendency, remove the queen cells and rotate brood boxes. Pull a couple of frames of sealed brood and fortify weaker hives. Place foundation in their place. Give those juveniles a serious job to do; draw wax!
- If you find sealed queen cells of good confirmation, place the frame with the cells in a nuc box with a frame of feed, and a frame of pollen. Shake as many young bees into the nuc as you can from the parent hive. Make sure you do not shake the parent queen into the nuc! Stuff some grass into the entrance and set it aside in your yard or in an area with drone populations. Check the nuc every 14 days for eggs. Track these queens for vigor. Just do not make this your *primary* source for queens.
- Provide a steady supply of water.

- Ventilate your hives. Your honey will dry faster, and the bees will not expend as much energy cooling a crowded hive if there is adequate ventilation.
- Continue to be on the lookout for American Foulbrood.
- Start sampling colonies for mite load. www.greatlakesipm.com has the good old sticky boards that you need for a very reasonable price.
- Take a walk through your honey house and take an inventory of chores and supplies that you will need soon.
- Respect yourself and others in the beekeeping community by your attendance at your regional association's monthly meeting.

Famous Beekeeper Honored with Historical Marker

By Mary Moss

The Rev. Lorenzo Langstroth, widely acknowledged as the Father of American Beekeeping, was remembered on May 10, 2003, with a historical marker. It was unveiled in front of the brick Langstroth Cottage, located at 303 Patterson Avenue on the campus of Miami University.

A spokeswoman for the event, Marna Evans, said that Langstroth Cottage is unchanged externally from the days when the family lived there. "It's a real treasure."

From 1858 to 1887, Langstroth lived in the simple, two-story Greek Revival cottage with his wife, Anne, and their three children. In his garden, he experimented with beehives, and established an apiary on 10 surrounding acres. Langstroth shipped Italian queen bees across the United States and around the world.

The cottage was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. It became a National Historic Landmark in 1982.

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News from the Honey Board

Two proposed rules re: Bioterrorism Act issued:

One rule would establish procedures governing the FDA's authority to administratively detain an article of food when there is credible evidence or information that such food presents a threat of serious adverse health consequences or death to humans or animals. The other would require that domestic persons (and certain foreign holding facilities) who manufacture, process, pack, transport, distribute, receive, hold, or import food intended for human or animal consumption in the US must establish and maintain records sufficient to identify the immediate previous source and immediate subsequent recipient of such food. See www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2003/NEW00902.

Americans' eating habits changes as result of war:

Reports show that the war in Iraq has had a direct result on Americans' waistlines – we are eating up to 20% more calories per day since the war started. The National Marketing Institute released a survey stating that more than a third of US consumers say that they gained weight during the first three months of 2003. Two basic reasons for this sudden change in our eating habits are that eating food is comforting and can reduce stress, and that we watch more TV during a crisis.

Food Forethought Foundation's Earth Day Column

Forwarded from Phyllis Shoemake

Farmers are as much a part of the environment as honey bees. We've all admired the natural beauty of a honey bee flying from plant to plant, pollinating flowers. That interaction between the honey bee and the flower symbolizes what Earth Day is all about.

What a lot of people don't realize is that pollination by definition is the fertilization of the flowering plant. When you think of pollination that way, farmers are like big honey bees. While flying from flower to flower may seem like an enjoyable way to spend the day, honey bees don't fertilize

flowers just for fun. They do it to produce honey, just as farmers fertilize apple orchards, strawberry patches and fields of corn, wheat, potatoes and other crops to produce food.

As you celebrate Earth Day on April 22, remember that farmers are just as much a part of nature as honeybees. In addition to their jobs of fertilizing plants and producing more than 200 varieties of food crops, American farmers are the worker bees who actually get out in the fields nurturing plants, creating wildlife habitat and implementing conservation practices that help reduce soil erosion and keep water in our rivers clean.

A study by the Conservation Technology Information center found that a decline in soil erosion resulting from implementation of no-till farming practices is saving nearly 1 billion tons of soil annually from washing into the nation's rivers and streams.

American farmers also provide food and habitat for 75% of the nation's wildlife – more than all the national forests, parks and wilderness areas combined. Each year more than nine billion trees are reseeded on America's farmlands, according to information compiled by Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation.

While extremists sit around like queen bees complaining about the environment and the loss of rainforests, farmers and agricultural researchers are working hard to develop and employ genetically engineered crops and other products so we can grow more crops with less land.

Scott McKinnie, executive director of Far West Agribusiness Association, said honey bees and genetic engineering scientists also have a lot in common. "A honey bee is a scientist without a lab coat," McKinnie said. As bees fly from flower to flower spreading pollen, they also do some crossbreeding in the process, which benefits plant species by transferring improved traits that give new plants an improved chance to survive, he said.

Human scientists have been using similar crossbreeding techniques for more than a century, and more recently via the DNA molecules, to transfer traits that help plants survive and provide healthy food to an ever-growing population, McKinnie said.

The United Nations agrees that products improved through genetic engineering offers the best hope of feeding a projected two billion surge in global population over the next 25 years. The alternatives are to let two billion people starve or plow under two-thirds of the world's remaining rain forests. That's Food Forethought.

Contact: Scott McKinnie 509-465-5055

Polystyrene Hive Report

Reprinted with permission from UC Apiaries newsletter and Dr. Eric Mussen

The relatively new, high density foam (polystyrene) hives have been on the market for awhile. The following are some observations made by beekeeper Rudy Gelderblom on his hive in Calgary, Alberta, as reported in the August 2002 edition of Hivelights, published by the Canadian Honey Council.

He purchased a "complete unit" comprised of a bottom board, two deep boxes and a lid. The bottom board was about 50% open (a rectangular hole in the floor) with a piece of screen stapled below it. Rudy painted the hive to eliminate UV damage to the plastic. Worried about ventilation, Rudy cut an old deep super into a three inch high rim which he placed under the cover.

The bees did fine during their first year on plastic foundation and produced a 40 pound honey crop. They wintered well with no additional insulation.

However, the hive did have its deficiencies. The staples meant to hold the screen below the bottom board did not hold. Mice could have gained entry very readily. Also, the bottom board is wider

than the hive boxes, making the colony very difficult to handle with a hand cart.

One might guess that the boxes would slide apart from each other. At least the company stated that they were easy to separate. Rudy found that in an area with plenty of propolis, there was no separating the boxes without damaging them. Rudy had to "lay the hive on its side and apply considerable force to the hive tool." This is too much of a beating for the hives to last very long. A piece of canvas between the upper box and lid prevented this problem.

The foam hive is fairly delicate in some respects. An inadvertently dropped 2x6 broke two dovetails off the side of one of the assembled boxes.

Rudy also wondered about cleaning up after a bout with AFB. As he said, "putting a torch to a polystyrene hive might present a problem." His final word of advice: "I would recommend just buying the boxes and building the lid and bottom board yourself."

Helpful Hints

From Southcentral Alaska Beekeepers Association newsletter

1. A little petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on the frames where they touch the frame rest will keep the frames from being glued down with propolis. They won't glue supers together either if it is put between hive bodies but they may slide around a whole lot easier making them susceptible to wind damage.
2. If you have grass or weeds in your bee yard, grab a couple of handfuls and "wash" your hands with them before you open up the hive. The crushed plants will mask the odor of your hands and you will get stung less often.

California Almond Industry

Reprinted with permission from UC Apiaries newsletter and Dr. Eric Mussen

While the stock market may not be doing so well, the almond industry appears to be quite

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healthy. In the May/June 2002 issue of Almond Facts there are some interesting graphs showing historical trends. Almond production outside of California has increased by about 50% over the last 50 years. California production has increased about 200% during those years, with a big jump in the 1980's, and increased to its first billion pound crop last season.

The lion's share of the acreage was planted during or before 1981. There was a bit of a spurt in planting in the mid 1990's, but not so much since 2000. It appears that the bearing acreage peaked in 2001 at 530,000 acres and is slipping back to around 510,000 acres this year.

In total almond production, the top counties in descending order were Kern, Stanislaus, Fresno, Merced, Madera, Butte, San Joaquin, Colusa, Glenn and Tulare.

Have you seen the new almond products? Two ounce "Tube Packs" have come onto the market, for one-hand eating. Smokehouse Nut Thins are a new cracker in natural food stores. And Almond Breeze (almond based non-dairy beverage) has been fortified with soy protein. It was a consumer demand, but they wanted no part of the traditional "...chalky, soy aftertaste."

California "Bee Keeper" Arrested in Theft of Hives

*Article from March 15, 2003 Modesto Bee,
forwarded by Dirk Olsen*

Merced County sheriff's deputies arrested a part-time beekeeper this week for allegedly keeping other people's bees full time.

Alfredo Daniel Suarez, 39, of Atwater was arrested at the Squaw Valley fire station in Fresno County. Suarez had been assigned there as a captain with the California Department of Forestry, said Merced County Sheriff's detective Frank Swiggart.

Swiggart said he suspects Suarez of stealing 244 beehives starting in November. The hives came

from Merced, Fresno, Madera, Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties, and from Oregon, Washington and Montana.

Swiggart said officers who arrested Suarez reported finding dead bees in the back of his vehicle. He was booked on investigation of possession of stolen property and held of \$50,000 bail.

Suarez worked four days a week for CDF and tended bees in his off hours, Swiggart said.

This month, a Merced County ag inspector came across hundreds of hives in the Merced County orchard where Suarez allegedly was keeping the stolen hives.

The inspector did not know the hives were stolen. Among the hive brands – burned or stenciled on the wooded boxes – he saw the brand of a Dos Palos beekeeper.

The inspector went back and told his friend, "hey, your bees are looking good over there in Winton," Swiggart said. The apiarist wasn't keeping bees in Winton, triggering the investigation.

Of the 296 hives in the orchard, 244 were stolen, Swiggart said. The stolen hives have a combined worth of \$30,477, authorities said.

Rental fees vary from \$15 to \$50, according to Clyde Frings, a Modesto-area beekeepers.

Bees are easy to steal because they are normally moved at night, when the insects have returned to their hives, authorities said.

"If someone is out in an orchard...at night loading bees into a truck, nobody is going to question it. It looks normal," Swiggart said.

Thymol-Based Acaricides

Reprinted with permission from UC Apiaries newsletter and Dr. Eric Mussen

Canadian researchers A.P. Melathoupoulos and J. Gates conducted experiments with two commercial formulations of thymol for Varroa control. API LIFE VAR is sold as a “tablet” (about the size of a playing card and much thicker) impregnated with 7.4 g. thymol, 1.6 g. euclayptus oil, 0.4 g. menthol and 0.4 g. camphor. Apiguard is a gel formulation containing 25% thymol by weight. Despite statements to the contrary, Apiguard released about 23 g. of thymol the first day and about 7 the next couple of days before settling down to liberating about 0.5 g. per day. API LIFE VAR liberated about 1 g. the first day, 0.5 g. the next two days and settling in to releasing about 0.3 g. per day.

Apiguard was associated with reduced brood and bees at one site treated in September, but not at a second site. API LIFE VAR was similar to the control, in respect to its effect on bees.

Neither thymol treatment knocked down mites as quickly as Apistan strips. Mite levels went way down with all three treatments and the mites had not recovered to any extent by the next April.

We know that the mites are chemically fragile. All we have to do is develop good systems of delivery and many of the “soft, organic or essential” chemicals should provide good Varroa control.

When will these treatments become available to us? If the products are sold as pesticides, with claims of value in mite control, then they will have to be registered with the US EPA and with CalEPA (CA DPR) before we can buy and use them legally. Materials with that registration, like Apistan, can be used by whoever finds a place to purchase them. In California, that place would have to have a pesticide resale license.

A Section 18 registration is the type that we have for Checkmite+, requiring obtaining a permit to use the product and filing periodic use reports. There is one more type of registration that a product may have – a 24-C or special local needs (SLN)

registration. Usually, a county agricultural commissioner requests that type of registration for a limited time use of a specific material to take care of an immediate problem for which there is no currently registered, functional chemical solution.