Happy New Year!

The Beeyard Report:
It’s over. The bees are in bed for the winter.
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Time To Think About Package Bees Again.
Ads on pg. 2
The Buzz Newsletter Article Submissions and IHPA Memberships

Please send submissions, classified ads, and photos to Alex W. Ebert by email to TheBuzz@ABuzzAboutBees.com or by mail to The Buzz, c/o Phil Ebert, 14808 S. 102nd Ave. E., Lynnville, IA 50153. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month to be included in the following month’s newsletter. The Buzz is a monthly newsletter published by the Iowa Honey Producers Association which is an affiliate of the Iowa State Horticultural Society. IHPA Membership is only $10 annually. To join IHPA and receive your complimentary member subscription to The Buzz Newsletter, please contact Gordon Powell, IHPA Treasurer, 4012 54th St., Des Moines, IA 50310 Phone: (515) 278-1762
Greetings from the President of the IHPA

Dear Honey Producers,

Happy New Year, 2007! The New Year brings many changes. One of the most difficult is remembering to write 2007 instead of 2006 on documents or checks. Just as I consistently remember to use the 2007 date, it will be time to make another change. Time flies all too quickly.

The National beekeeping organizations have finished their conventions. I certainly hope that some of you had the time to attend one of the meetings. There is a wealth of information given at these meetings. Remember to join the American Honey Producers Association or the American Beekeeping Federation to receive valuable information throughout the year. Use the information provided last month to access the joining requirements. A beekeeper can never have too much information to stay ahead of problems.

Speaking of meetings and contests, the International Mead Festival is going to be held on February 8th and 9th in Colorado. I know of at least one of our members that entered mead in the home brewer’s contest. Dr. Marion Ellis of Lincoln, NE entered some of his mead in the 2006 contest. I remember hearing that one of the winners was from Iowa City last year. If you would like more information about attending, please contact www.meadfest.com. The festival will be held in Denver this year. If you enjoy tasting mead, this is the place for you. Commercial Meaderies from all over the world compete for awards. The home brew competition is in its second year. Mike and I enjoy a winter get-away and celebrate Valentine’s Day while attending this event.

I don’t know about your area of the state, but in our area we need some moisture. There have been several grass fires requiring more than two fire departments to extinguish them. Most of them are around I-80, but some have been in CRP ground. Our future honey crop depends on at least a little moisture to make enough food for the honey bees.

Winter months are the perfect time to spend pouring through all of the seed catalogs or beekeeping catalogs that you have stockpiled. Mike and I tried several new vegetables at the markets last year and they were well received. It is time to decide if we want to provide any more new and different items for the upcoming season. I always enjoy looking at the gorgeous photos in the catalog and then marvel at the actual product in our garden! Sometimes it doesn’t even look like the same product. Oh well, it is fun to dream. Make a list of the new equipment or replacement items that you are going to need this spring and get them ordered or repaired. Mike always spends time reading and re-reading his pile of magazines to make sure he has the correct plans in place. Work on replacing your foundation and repairing any broken hive boxes that you have. We all know spring is right around the corner and it is creeping up quickly.

Another winter project is deciding whether you will expand your operation or try to hold your own. Do you need more queens? Do you need more equipment? Do you need to order packages for your honey business? Now is the time to be planning. There is contact information in the BUZZ. Or you can use the information found in the national magazines: BEE CULTURE or AMERICAN BEE JOURNAL or SPEEDY BEE. Talk to other beekeepers in your local groups. Maybe you could do a mass order and save some money. I know that the Central Iowa Beekeepers pool an order for queens from members. Contact a local queen breeder.

The Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers are having their conference in Marshalltown on January 26th and 27th at the Best Western Regency Inn. They are stressing pollination by honey bees at this meeting. We will have representation at this meeting. For information call (515) 465-5992. Another publication to subscribe to for information would be THE IOWA HORTICULTURIST magazine. For information go to www.iowahort.org. There is a great deal of information in this magazine and the IHPA is an affiliate member of the Iowa Horticultural Society. The magazine subscription rate is $15.00. A contact phone number is Mike Bevins at IDALS, (515) 242-5043.

Look at the label on your copy of the BUZZ. It will have your expiration date. If you don’t renew your membership, you will not keep receiving the BUZZ. The information was provided to you last month. To renew your beekeeping magazines, use the forms in the December BUZZ to get the organization discount. It is your responsibility to renew your magazines, not the IHPA.

We would like to welcome Mr. Bill Northey as the new Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with Mr. Northey as the department of agriculture is reorganized. A copy of the BUZZ is sent to the Agriculture department. Welcome Mr. Northey.

The weather has been incredible. I don’t know what is around the corner, but I’m sure it will involve cold and snow. Stay warm, read some catalogs and magazines and dream of warmer weather. Before we know it, it will be time to get to work.

Sincerely,

Donna Brahms, IHPA President
The Beeyard Report

It’s over. The bees are in bed for the winter. I finished up on Nov 27th. Some are light. Some have too many mites. Some have both problems. We have done everything we can do. The warm days in November were a gift. We finally got the bees to take syrup. It’s hard to say what we will have alive in the spring. Two years ago, even the ones I left for dead came through the winter. Last year we lost 15% to 20% but the ones we had left all had bees boiling out of them. We were able to make increase and still had bees to sell. We are going into winter this year with slightly more colonies but losses are going to be much higher.

I don’t think I have ever looked at colonies at the end of November before. When it gets this late, it’s normally cold. We just wrap them up and hope we aren’t wrapping a lot of dead ones. Every colony I took a frame out of had brood. Some of the big colonies had a full frame. Even the lame little colonies with two or three frames of bees had a patch of brood. Bees were bringing in something that looked like pollen all through November. Most of it was a light yellow with a gray cast but there was also some orange stuff. I saw some gardens in Monteza that still had broccoli blooming in November. One of the gardeners told me he had seen bees on it. I am having a hard time believing what I saw was actually pollen. I’m wondering if it came out of a feed bunk or somewhere they were grinding grain. Has anybody else seen this?

We are taking somewhere around 525 colonies into winter. I had thought that we had around 750 at the end of May. Then I found out we had counted three yards twice. We were closer to 675. That means we averaged about 120#/colony. I picked up around 70 colonies in the fall that had crashed from mites. The others we lost to queen failure. The loss would be greater but we made up part of it with the bees from our mating yard. That yard started out with four breeder colonies and 25 mating nucs with a frame of bees in each of them. By the time we were done consolidating it at the end of the year, we had 18 doubles, four singles and 18 nucs. I think the nucs will probably go as a sacrifice to the gods of winter. The last set of queens came way too late. The age distribution of the bees on the nucs wasn’t right.

I can allow myself to be tired now. As I was coming home from finishing the last yard, it started to rain. It seemed like a symbolic finish. It felt really good. From the middle of December to the middle of January, I have some down time. All I have to do is take care of is my delivery route and think about bringing order to the chaos that develops around the place during the year. After the first of the year, we will start to make some financial projections and plan for the new season.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!!!

Surprise Cupcakes

1 Package chocolate (or any flavor) cake mix
1 8oz. Package cream cheese
1/3 Cup Iowa Honey
1 Egg
1 Cup Milk chocolate chips
1/2 Cup chopped pecans


Recipe from Donna Brahms
IHPA Annual Meeting Submission

Salted Nut Roll Bars

1 Yellow cake mix
1 Egg
1/3 Cups miniature marshmallows
2/3 Cups Iowa Honey
1/4 Cup Butter
1 10oz. Package peanut butter chips
2 Cups crispy rice cereal
2 Cups salted peanuts

Mix cake mix, egg and 1/3 cup butter together. Pat into a greased 9x13 inch pan. Bake at 350º for 15 minutes. Top with marshmallows; bake until puffy and lightly browned, 5-10 minutes. Melt honey, butter and chips in microwave. Stir together cereal, peanuts and melted mixture. Evenly spoon over the marshmallow layer. When cool, cut into bars.

Recipe from Donna Brahms
IHPA Annual Meeting Submission
Featured Beekeeper of the Month

This month’s featured beekeeper is Ivan Rickers. He lives in Westside, IA. This is his story.

I first became involved with honeybees when I was fourteen. My oldest brother bought the bees off an old beekeeper who had died and I took them over. We purchased three 3lb. packages of bees and I believe the cost was five dollars each. In 1957 I bought 300 colonies and extracting equipment from John Kruger at Deloit, Iowa. I learned my beekeeping from him and Herald Partello at Boone, Iowa and the state bee inspectors Glen Stanley, Bill Shawler and Larry Greiner. Over the years I increased my colony count to between 800 and 900 colonies. In the early ears my wife helped some with the bees but then she became allergic and that ended that. When my boys got old enough they helped in the bees along with my oldest daughter.

Our management system consisted of bringing power houses through the winter and evening them up to 5 frames each by the first of May and making 5 or 6 or 7 frame nucs from the excess brood. We also made 2 queen colonies in 5 yards starting with 1 frame nuc over single screens. This made power house colonies and was much simpler than the 2 screeners the Minnesota people used. We made the 2 queen colonies until the tracheal mite came in and we haven’t done them since then.

For several years we got all of our queens from Louis Harbin at Theodore, Alabama. He produced excellent queens and we had an excellent working arrangement with him. During those years we used some packages and hauled packages for Louis, delivering to his customers in Iowa and Minnesota. That ended when he passed away. After that we started raising our own queens and made 3 way splits in August. We made 300 or 400 of these and wintered them in a refrigerated trailer converted for that purpose. We did that until about 1998 when the honey house burned down and the boys moved on to greener pastures.

When the SMR queens came out, I requeened everything with them. They are resistant to varroa but I think they are not as productive. I next used an SMR mated to a carniolan and the following years I used Minnesota Hygenic queens. All grafting of queens came from Glenn Apiaries in California. Requeening in August is work but it makes for good honey crops. Right now I am operating 160 colonies of bees. I still buy about 50 mated queens every spring to even up with and make nucs.

I did not requeen this summer because the mite treatment screws up the schedule. In August we pull off the honey crop down to the brood nest. We never extract honey from the brood nest. As we do this, we put on the mite treatment on every hive. The treatment is on the bees 3 or 4 weeks depending on what we use. This year we used Apiguard and MiteAway II. The Apiguard is thymol oil. MiteAway II is formic acid. Both occur naturally and don’t contaminate the hive or honey and don’t hurt the bees. When the mite treatment is over, we go back through them and check them for weight. If they are light we have to feed them so they will come through the winter in good shape. We feed them high fructose corn syrup. We also put insulated lids on the bees for winter.

I am a member of the Iowa Honey Producers Association and have been president, vice president and a board member. In 1980 I was named Iowa Beekeeper of the Year and in 2004 they gave me the Pioneer Award.

Ivan Rickers

Thanks Ivan!

Submitted by Ron Wehr
How can we as IHPA members be better beekeepers? This last summer at our summer field day, if you came you learned about the life cycle of the varroa mite, and how each mite can have ten or more brood cycles in its life with three to five mites per cycle. IPM is learning or knowing your ENEMY!

Integrated pest management (IPM) is a decision making process that makes use of the selection, integration and implementation of the best methods of pest control available. This means that one first seeks to use and encourage natural control mechanisms including predators, parasites, and diseases that might control the pest. It also includes controlling or taking advantage of the environment. When necessary {ONLY WHEN NECESSARY} one can also use a chemical but then the emphasis is on selecting the safest one available. IPM is a common sense approach to controlling pest, and in the case of US the BEEKEEPER it forces on to become familiar with the diseases, pest and predator of the honey bees so as to make the best long-range decisions.

Remember that varroa can live or coexist with honey bees at a low level so we don’t need to exterminate the mite, but rather just keep its level low. How can we do this? Screened bottom boards with a sticky board to help you find out how big of a mite problem you have. Drone brood trapping and freezing. Better queens or mite resistant queens. There are many things that one can do to slow down and even eliminate some mites in the process if we just stop and think about it. Use a powder sugar dusting! The most important thing is to stop and think what you’re doing and be prepared to take control.

Where did I find all this information? Stop and think? (1) ABC and XYZ of bee culture (2) The American Bee Journal Dec. 2006 page 1035-1041! Not really hard you just need to know where to look. If you don’t have a subscription to either The American Bee Journal or The Bee Culture magazine you should get one or the other, or try them both. By the book ABC and XYZ of bee culture.

In the evaluation form, from the annual meeting I got about ten things that people wish to know more about, and I will try to cover one or two each month. I hope this will help both me and the people who wanted to know. I’m also looking for help in deciding what to do for the summer field day, because I’m not sure what to do. Any useful help will be considered.

BEE HAPPY,
PAT ENNIS

Apitherapy News ...
Researchers Taste Success With Honey Cure

August 8, 2006
Jennifer Harper
The Washington Times

It could be sweet news, indeed. German medical researchers have announced that honey -- yes, the breakfast favorite -- is more effective in healing problem wounds, ulcers and skin conditions than standard antibiotics.

"In hospitals today we are faced with germs which are resistant to almost all the current antibiotics," said Dr. Arne Simon, an oncologist with the Children's Hospital at the University of Bonn. "As a result, the medical use of honey is becoming attractive again for the treatment of wounds."

Dr. Simon is the first to acknowledge that honey is a "millennia old" panacea for all sorts of ills, from baldness to intestinal distress. But the emergence of multi-drug resistant bacteria in the last decade has generated new interest in an old remedy.

With cooperation from specialists in a dozen German hospitals, Dr. Simon is planning a large-scale study on honey's curative effects. He has already charted the success of traditional honey poultices on troublesome surgical wounds and skin conditions.

"Even chronic wounds infected with multi-drug resistant bacteria often healed within a few weeks," Dr. Simon noted, adding that the honey method was particularly helpful for
young patients with weakened im-
mune systems -- deeming it "astonishing." Honey also made 
dressings easier to change and even 
reduced distressing smells associ-
ated with some skin conditions.

Ancient Egyptians, soldiers in the 
field and assorted healers who have 
relied on honey over time may not 
have understood the science behind 
it all. The bees -- who typically visit 
2 million flowers to produce a 
pound of honey -- may not know it 
either. It's the bees themselves who 
are the heroes, however. During the 
honey-making process, they add an 
enzyme called glucose-oxidase, ulti-
mately generating a mild form of 
hydrogen peroxide -- an antibacte-
rial agent.

In the last five years, researchers in 
Australia, New Zealand, Europe and 
the U.S. have found that honey is 
effective against about 60 strains of 
bacteria -- including staphylococcus 
and heliobacter pylori, which causes 
stomach ulcers. Honey is also 
thought to reduce inflammation and 
provide a source of cancer-fighting 
antioxidants.

None of this has escaped the com-
mercial sector. "Medicalgrade 
honey" is now a reality.

MediHoney -- sterile, prepackaged 
applications of honey -- is now 
manufactured by Australia's Capi-
lano Honey to treat stubborn surgi-
cal wounds, oral infections and skin 
conditions. New Zealand's Comvita 
anually sells $30 million worth of 
wound dressings that combine 
"medical-grade active manuka 
honey" -- made from a local plant -- 
and seaweed fibers.

British-based Medlock Medical and 
Advancis Medical also offer sterile 
honey dressings and creams, noting billion "wound care market."

Remember that "The Buzz" is offering $10 for one picture each month. 
I know some of you will have good photo opportunities during the 
summer months. Entertain your fellow beekeepers and make some 
money at the same time. This offer does not pertain to pictures printed 
with articles. Submit you photo via e-mail to the Buzz at thebuzz@abuzzaboutbees.com

Will Americans have access? Per-
haps. According to a recent report 
from CNN, MediHoney has applied 
for approval from the Food and 
Drug Administration and expects an 
answer late this year -- and a poten-
tial gateway into our annual $2.8
A hard-earned hornet’s nest

It was my first year keeping bees. I’d gotten a late start (a three-pound package in early June), managed to kill my queen (another story entirely) and had little hope of getting any honey for my efforts. Nevertheless, I was happy and proud to be a beekeeper. I'd only been stung a couple of times, and was feeling cocky.

So when a lady named Teresa approached me about getting rid of a hornet’s nest in her yard I quickly obliged. I’d never met Teresa, but she cleaned offices for my father-in-law and he’d told her I was a beekeeper. (Becoming a beekeeper is like buying a pickup truck – soon everyone wants you to help them move.) And besides, I’d always wanted one of those nests.

I made a quick visit to Teresa’s house to check it out, and went to a bee club meeting the following evening to ask for guidance. My primary concern was preservation of the nest. I received two recommendations:

Suit up well: Wear the full bee suit, plus jeans and a long-sleeved shirt underneath. Hornets have industrial-strength stingers, and they pack a wallop.

As for removing the nest, it’s pretty simple: Just go out at night, snip the branch on both sides, drop the whole nest into a plastic bag and tie it tight. After a night in the deep freeze, shake the dead critters out on the ground and the nest is yours.

I went by Teresa’s house on a Sunday evening. The nest was football-shaped but beach ball-sized. It hung in a bush along the driveway, about five feet off the ground and 15 feet from the house. It was pretty dark in that part of the yard, though there was a small light on the house by the side door.

I suited up as advised, grabbed my trash bag and pruning shears and approached the target. I shined a flashlight on the nest, and one of its denizens immediately crawled out to investigate. Well, they’re not sleeping, I thought.

I hated to arouse them further, but I was going to need light to see what I was doing. After a minute or two, I was able to prop the flashlight in the grass in such a way that it illuminated the nest. I picked up the shears and went to work.

My initial surveillance had not been thorough. I soon found that there were about a dozen branches routed through the nest. It took several minutes and quite a bit of jostling to snip them all, and by that time I was pretty well surrounded by curious hornets. I say curious because, amazingly enough, they did not seem aggressive. Not that the sight and sound of them wasn’t a little unnerving – I was used to the hum of honeybees, but this tone was of a deeper, more ominous nature.

I finally extricated the huge nest from the bush and, with some further effort, managed to stuff it, branch amputees and all, into the trash bag and seal it. I turned to head for the car and saw scores of disoriented hornets circling the light on the house. I wondered if there were any left in the nest.

At home, I dropped the nest into my basement chest freezer, and didn’t give it another thought until about 2:00 a.m. Tuesday. I was working the night shift at the time, and when I arrived home I pulled the bag out of the freezer and hauled it outside. After shaking a few dozen frozen hornets out onto the grass, I dropped my prize nest back into the bag, set it just inside the front door, and went to bed.

At about 9:00 a.m., I awoke to a shriek from my wife. Even in my groggy state, I immediately knew what it was about. At about 9:00 a.m., I awoke to a shriek from my wife. Even in my groggy state, I immediately knew what it was about. I also knew that it was not so much a cry for help as a cry of – well, let’s just say I was the one who was going to need help. My wife had not been thrilled about the whole bee thing to begin with, and the idea that I would bring stinging insects into the house (even if I had every reason to believe they were dead) -- well, that was just unacceptable.

After a brief, futile attempt to explain myself, I stalked and killed the revivified varmint, then hauled the nest back outside. Upon opening the bag, I was greeted by two more live hornets, who buzzed lazily away. I shook the nest for a few seconds and out fell a handful of dead ones, on
top of what looked like the majority of those I’d shaken out the previous night. I still wonder why some survived the zero-degree temps while the rest perished.

As for the original job, Teresa called a couple of days later to say that the hornets were busy building another nest in a neighboring bush. I went back that night, this time stopping off at the hardware store for some wasp spray. (The heck with the nest — I was getting tired of this.)

The new nest was already about the size of a football, but rounder. I didn’t mess around this time. No need to suit up — I just soaked it down with wasp killer, clipped the branches and stuffed it into a bag, this time for trash.

Teresa was very appreciative. She gave me a whole $5.00, which marked the beginning of a lucrative career in pest removal. Minus the cost of the wasp spray, and not counting gas, I cleared almost 75 cents. The trash bags I was able to reuse. And as for my time — well, I’ve learned in the 10 years since that I’m much better off not keeping track.

Study: All the World’s Honeybees Come From Africa

By Sara Goudarzi
Thursday, October 26, 2006
Fox News

You can be stung in Rome, Moscow or Phoenix. But the honeybee is originally from Africa, scientists reported Wednesday.

By looking at variations in genetic markers from 341 bees, researchers found that the common honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, originated in African and migrated to Europe at least twice.

“The migrations resulted in two European populations that are geographically close, but genetically quite different,” said lead study author Charles Whitfield of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “In fact, the two European populations are more related to honeybees in Africa than to each other."

The researchers used simple variations in the bee DNA, called single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), to figure out where the bees came from and what their relationships to one another were.

The researchers compared 1,136 markers, many more than had been available for previous studies. The vast number of markers allowed the scientists to decipher the bees’ genetic information more precisely than ever before.

In a third expansion in the Americas, the European honeybee, introduced around 1622, was replaced by the African killer bee in 1956, the researcher write in the Oct. 27 issue of the journal Science.

“By studying the variation in the honeybee genome, we can not only monitor the movement of these bees, we can also identify the genes that cause the variations — and that will allow us to better understand the differences,” Whitfield said.

North American Honeybees Declining

www.sciencenewsblog.com/environment/

The Environment News Service reports that a new study from the National Research Council has found that honeybees and other pollinators are declining in North America. The report sounds a specific warning for the honeybee, which are vital to U.S. agriculture, pollinating more than 90 commercially grown crops. It can take a massive amount of bees to ensure a crop is suitably pollinated.

For example, it takes about 1.4 million colonies of honeybees to pollinate 550,000 acres of almond trees in California.

U.S. honeybee populations have declined at least 30 percent since the 1980s, when a non-native parasitic mite was introduced.

The committee said that the full extent of the decline is unclear because of problems with the way the federal government collects statistics on the beekeeping industry.

Antibiotic-resistant pathogens and encroachment by Africanized honeybees also are hurting North American honeybee levels, the committee said, and there is clear evidence of a honeybee shortage. The populations of other pollinators like butterflies, bats and hummingbirds are also on the decline.

Posted on November 3, 2006
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American Beekeeping Federation website
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