Greetings from the President of the IHPA

Dear Honey Producers;

April showers bring May Flowers. We really could use more moisture. Our area has missed almost all of the snow or rain this winter. We have only missed one day of school because of bad weather and it was just because ice was predicted, but it didn’t materialize. I have had to fill the water for our bees a couple of times this winter.

Thanks for completing the survey of Iowa honey and beekeepers. The statistics are available now at: http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/zhibb/hony0206.pdf

As long as we are talking about statistics, it would be of great help if you contacted your US Senators and Representatives about the Agriculture budget. Of course, it is proposed to be cut and that will leave a lot less money available for the honey bee research labs. Please let them know that the money is needed to keep the mite research going to help keep our colonies healthy. If we have healthy colonies of honey bees, more pollination is completed, we have more of a crop and supplies are maintained. The key talking points are that *Honey Bee Colonies Are Dying; *U.S. Agricultural Crops Are Threatened; and *More Honey Bee Research Is Urgently Needed. If you need information, please contact me or check on the American Beekeeping Federation website: www.ABFnet.org

Chuck Eckermann from the Pesticide Bureau has informed me that the chemicals needing a Section 18 have been approved for use in Iowa and should be available for your use. If you encounter any difficulty getting them, let me know. Remember to follow the labeled instructions carefully and use the precautions suggested. This is for your safety and the health of your honey bees.

Some new programs for the IHPA are in the works and will be presented at the Iowa State FFA Convention in April. We are sponsoring a Youth Mentoring Program and are working on information for FFA groups to sell Iowa honey with the annual fruit sales for a money making project for both the local Iowa honey producers located near FFA groups and the FFA groups themselves. We are excited about both programs.

The Field Day is all planned and looks like it will be a great learning day and also some fun. Plan to attend.

Remember to register your apiaries so that when spraying occurs in your area, you will be notified. The new procedure is outlined in another article in this issue. I have entered the site and put in our information. It is not hard to do. Read the article and if you have questions, contact Becky Ohrtman at IDALS.

If you have a promotion planned and would like to have the Iowa Honey Queen help you, contact Liz at jimsj@netins.net or phone her at (319) 279-3892.

April reminds us of warmer weather to come, but also can be a nasty month with ice or snow. This just lets us know that we are not in control of the weather. We can only hope for good package or queen installation weather.

Sincerely,
Donna Brahms, IHPA President

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
**A Year With Honeybees**

This video has proven to be popular available on either VHS tape or DVD. It follows beekeeper Dick Blake through an entire production season. It starts with spring feeding and ends with the barrels of honey being loaded on the truck.

There is good information here for beekeepers of every level. Available from the Iowa Honey Producers for $20. That includes shipping within Iowa. It may be slightly higher elsewhere. Make checks payable to the Iowa Honey Producers and send to one of the addresses below.

The Buzz

Margaret Hala
c/o Phil Ebert
14808 102nd Ave. E.
Marshalltown, IA 50158

**Dates to BEE Remembered:**

**April 22 2006 1:00PM**

Beekeeping Class
1 hr classroom, remaining time in the field
Purpose: To learn about & practice early spring management techniques

Items covered:
1. Characteristics of different Races of Bees
2. Mite detection and Control
3. Purpose and use of the smokers
4. Locating the Queen and evaluation of the Brood
5. Bee Diseases & detection and prevention

Fee: Member- $7 this session
Non Member -$14 this session

Indian Creek Nature Center
6665 Otis Road SE
Cedar Rapids, IA
319-362-0664

**April 29, 2006**

North Iowa Bee Club field day, April 29 from 1pm to 4pm. We will be working with the bees (weather permitting) to help new beekeepers learn to find the queen, workers, drones, pollen and any thing we can think of that will help them. Bring bee suit and any protective cloths you want, not responsible for stings.

**May 18 2006 6:30 -8:30 PM**

Iowa State Fair Entry Class
Iowa State Fair Aug 10- 20 2006

Want to boast you have Blue Ribbon Honey? Come and learn how to enter your honey and bee products into the Iowa State Fair. Whether you’re a hobbyist or a commercial beekeeper, if you have not participated in the State Fair or haven’t won at the fair, this class is for you. Learn how to enter your honey and bees wax in the Iowa State fair, how to prepare an award winning exhibit and get the details on carpooling entries from Cedar Rapids area to and from the Fair in Des Moines.

The place to be is the Honey House at the Indian Creek Nature Center, Cedar Rapids Iowa, May 18 from 6:30 pm till 8:30. This learning experience is free to anyone interested.

Indian Creek Nature Center
6665 Otis Road SE
Cedar Rapids IA, 52403
319-362-0664

**July 23-28, 2006**

The 9th International Pollination Symposium. Scheman Building, Iowa State University.
www.ucr.iastate.edu/mnet/plantbee/home.html

**Aug. 10-20, 2006**

Iowa State Fair

To add an important date to the list, contact the Buzz by email at thebuzz@abuzzaboutbees.com
Or by mail at the address listed on the front cover.

**For Sale:** I have a Dadant Fill Master for Sale in good working condition. Portable Table Top Unit- Self Priming-All electric (120 Volt) Pack from any bulk contained-Easy to adjust Fill Quanity. Stainless Steel Type 304, 20

Ann Garber
PO Box 36
Allerton, Iowa 50008
agarber@grm.net

**Indian Creek Nature Center**

6665 Otis Road SE
Cedar Rapids, IA
319-362-0664

**FOR SALE**

Single story colonies of bees with bottom and top.

Available around May 1st.

Contact

Curtis Barnhardt
in Monticello.

800-728-9979
or
319-4765-3941
Featured Beekeeper of the Month

This month our featured beekeeper is Gale Urquhart. He and his wife Connie live in Des Moines, Iowa. His business name is tentatively Spring Creek Honey.

Gale writes to explain his beekeeping business and says, “I started beekeeping because I had a nervous breakdown and while in therapy it was recommended that I take up a hobby. My wife and I went to the State Fair and visited the IHPA booth and I became so interested in the insect that I took a beginning beekeeping class given by Phil Meyer. This has proved to be a wonderful hobby for me, as there is something that needs to be done in spring, summer, fall and winter. It keeps me busy all the time. Maybe that is because I’m not the best beekeeper in town, never the less it has not seemed to stress me or add to the stress level. I sure don’t kneed another one of those breakdown things!”

Gale says he started with one hive in 2004, over wintered it and expanded to 9 hives in 2005. The bees produced about 50 gallons of honey to share with friends and family and some to market. He only produces liquid honey.

Even though he has already lost one hive Gale says his biggest satisfaction in beekeeping is that it takes his mind off the daily stress of work. The bees amaze him, the fact that they recover after he robs their honey. I think he has experienced their retaliation on parts of his body not covered.

If all goes well Gale plans to expand to 50 hives. He belongs to the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association and is vice president. Membership is about 65. They meet every quarter with Pat Randol as President. The club has question and answer periods to help members learn the art. Gale says, “I’m also a member of the IHPA and at the moment I’m on the committee trying to increase the membership through beginning beekeeping classes at DMACC, this has not become a reality yet but my hopes are high. I’m also working on a new membership list, so if you have not sent me your membership, please do. egchkeeye@ail.com”.

Asked the question what beekeeping experiences have you had that would interest others and Gale says, “I’m sure my experiences in beekeeping would not be of much interest to most members. My experiences are so mindless.”

Advice: “Wear protective gear or you will get stung and that does hurt and if you’re like me you swell up real bad. Keep your dog out of your bee yard! He will just stir up the bees and then when you try to beat the bees away from the dog, the dog things you are beating the tar out of him and it takes you forever to get his trust back. Make sure you keep enough room to maneuver around and between your hives with ease. Don’t have hives around your honey extraction house or area, they will find you. Do know what a mite looks like and check your hives. Treat if needed. The biggest experience I’d like to share is if you’re going to start from scratch as a beekeeper, you must be patient and let the bees draw comb. Don’t expect anything until that happens and some bees are better at it than others. Become a member of a local club and the Iowa Honey Producers and listen and listen and listen and learn and listen and learn. Become involved within your limits and have fun.

Thanks for your story Gale. You’re learning fast.

Submitted by Ron Wehr

Video Sales

The video “A Year with Honeybees” is doing well. We have sold about 100 of them. Lee Heine has taken 50. That gave sales quite a boost. Draper’s took 15. The rest have gone one at a time. We have approached Mid Con, Dadants and Mann Lake as possible distributors. I also placed ads in newsletters in Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas. Several copies have been donated to schools. It works great if you have to put on a program somewhere. I usually show some equipment and tell about our operation. Then I show the video and take questions. It’s easy to fill a 60 to 90 minute slot.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Education Update

The beekeeping education classes will finish up in mid March. We had 66 total students in five classes. I think this has been a successful venture. Thanks to all the instructors who donated their time. Ron Wehr, Vern Ramsey, Pat Randal, Gale Urquhart, John Johnson, Margaret Hala, Pat and Peggy Ennis and Phil Ebert.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Magazine Coupons

Both bee magazines are available to IHP members at a reduced rate. To qualify for the discount, you need to get a coupon from Gordon Powell. He can e-mail it to you or send a copy in the mail. You can contact Gordon at iabceekpr@earthlink.com or at 4012 54th St, Des Moines, Ia 50310

Annual Meeting Date

Speakers have been lined up for the fall annual meeting. Dates for this years meeting will be Nov 17& 18. Jamie Ellis of the University of Georgia and Zachary Huang of Michigan State University will be the headliners. The business meeting will be Saturday morning. Workshops will be in the afternoon.
Beeyard Registration

I found out today (March 20) that Becky Ohrtman will be leaving IDALS, effective March 23. Becky has been our point of contact on apiary matters for the past year. She is pretty frustrated with the lack of support she received from IDALS. Things just aren’t happening over there. Becky’s main project lately has been getting a website set up for apiary registration. It’s a good idea but so far it doesn’t work if you want to register multiple yards in the same county. I spent an hour and a half on the phone with Becky. She found she could do it from her administration page but that is the only place. You and I can’t do it at this point. She wants to get it fixed before she leaves but the guy heading up the website is on vacation this week. It doesn’t sound good does it. When you do attempt to register your yards, be aware that you need the range and township numbers in addition to the township name and section number. The whole point of this is that the spray applicators will be able to use GPS to pin point your yards in the event they are able to get registered. If you are going to use this site you have to contact IDALS for a Pin number and user ID. For the time being, Maury Wills will be our point of contact at IDALS.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

The Buzz

From the Iowa Honey Queen

As the spring season comes to an end, the queen bee has only just begun her busy year. Like her, I have only just started promoting beekeeping across Iowa.

On March 4, I attended a class in Mason City designed for beginning beekeepers. Here, many vital beekeeping topics were covered including: lifecycles, equipment, and disease. For part of the class, I was asked to talk about the experiences I have had as a beekeeper. Though slightly intimidated, still being a beginner myself, I felt honored to be able to share with others what I had learned through my first few years. I told them of the memorable experiences I had dealing with things that worked for me and the ideas I will never try again! I gave them a run through of a basic year and things that should be done and expected. I even asked fun and interesting trivia questions to whom the winners received prizes, thanks to Pat and Peggy Ennis.

By the time the class ended, I felt that the attendants had a clearer understanding. Programs like that are so beneficial and help bring new people into beekeeping. After talking with them after the class, I not only went away with some new ideas for the upcoming season, but also new friends. I wish you all luck in your upcoming year and I am sure I will see you in the future. As beekeepers, we are in this together and we all need a helping hand every once in awhile.

I also was a “celebrity” cook at the annual 4- H Omelet Breakfast held in Waverly. I had so much fun talking with people throughout the community while cooking them a tasty omelet. (Not to brag, but I did make excellent omelets once I got the “flip” of things.) Most of my customers did not know that there was such a thing as a Honey Queen; they seemed very intrigued at that fact. Once they started asking questions, they couldn’t stop. After cooking almost fifty omelets in heels, answering many questions, and being told that I was as sweet as honey, my morning came to an end.

My adventures are only just beginning and I can’t wait to see what is in store. Until then, best of luck with all of your future plans.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Macken
2006 Iowa Queen

I can be contacted at home by: 319 – 279 – 3892 or by email at jemsj@netins.net.

Greetings from the American Honey Princess

Greetings Iowa Beekeepers!

I am excited to write to you this month about some of the great things going on within the IHPA. We are in the process of starting a program called the IHPA Youth Partnership Program. This is going to allow 4 youth age 12-17 from non-beekeeping families to get started keeping bees. They will be given all of the equipment needed to start, as well as mentorship from an IHPA member for a year. I would encourage each of you to think about becoming a mentor for this program. When you think back to when you got your first hive, was there somebody there who helped you along the way? Consider being that for a young person. We are also working on a program to match up honey producers with local FFA Chapters that want to market local honey through their fruit sales. We will be contacting FFA Chapters across the state soon to determine those groups that might be interested, so if you think this is something you might like to take advantage of look for more information in The BUZZ.

I just want to let everyone know that I feel honored to be part of this group. The IHPA is a strong advocate for this industry, and the work that is done helps everyone who keeps bees. The Honey Queen Program is a strong example of one way the IHPA serves its members through promotion. I encourage you to take advantage of this service by inviting either Liz or myself to your events. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to become a member of the IHPA. By becoming a member you let the world know that you support the beekeeping industry, but you also allow the IHPA to serve you better. I wish you all a wonderful spring, and as always, if you need to contact me for anything I can be reached at teresajurchen@iastate.edu or 712-779-0321.

Best wishes,
Teresa Jurchen
2006 American Honey Princess
**IHPA Partnership Program**

Do you know a young person interested in keeping bees? Encourage them to apply to be an IHPA Partnership Program Scholar! Youth aged 12-17 from non-beekeeping families are encouraged to apply. Four scholars will be selected at the Annual Meeting, and they will receive all the equipment and training needed to get started.

The strength of this program will be the wonderful IHPA members who will be the mentors to these devoted youth. We need you! If you would be willing to introduce one Iowa youth to the wonderful industry that we all love, please contact Teresa Jurchen at teresajurchen@hotmail.com or 712-779-0321. You can also look for more information at www.abuzzaboutbees.com

Submitted by Teresa Jurchen

**FFA Convention**

The Iowa Honey Producers will have a booth at the state FFA convention in Ames on April 10-11th. This event is held at the Scheman Center and will be attended by over 4,000 students and their advisors. There are over 220 FFA chapters in Iowa. This is a great opportunity to get our youth mentoring project off the ground. We also hope to connect local beekeepers with local FFA chapters to sell honey in conjunction with fruit sales. Vern Ramsey has made contact with several chapters in his area and the response has been very positive. Beekeepers and beekeeping need to be visible to the public. This will provide an opportunity for us to show ourselves. Teresa Jurchen will be in charge of the project. She will be surveying advisors who are interested in incorporating honey sales into their fundraisers. If you are interested in selling honey through the FFA, you need to contact Teresa at teresajurchen@hotmail.com. If there is more than one provider in a given area, all names of the interested parties will be furnished to the FFA chapter. It will be up to individual beekeepers to make the sale. If you are interested in this, you need to remember that the FFA expects to make 40% on the products they sell.

Candidates for the youth mentoring project will be solicited at the convention. Selections will be made in the fall. At this point we only have funding for four students. Candidates need to be between the ages of 12 to 17. They will be provided with bees, equipment, training and a mentor. If they successfully complete the one year program, they will assure ownership of the bees and equipment. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, you need to contact Teresa.

We will have more detailed information in an upcoming issues of “The Buzz”

Submitted by Phil Ebert

**CIBA Officer Elections**

We had our regular third Saturday of the third month meeting and held our annually election of officers and directors

Results:

OFFICERS

President - Arvin Foell
Vice President – Ellie Johnson
Sec/Treasurer – Margaret Hala

DIRECTORS:

Bill Van Rockel
John Humke
Phil Ebert

Submitted by Arvin Foell

**Southeast Iowa Beekeepers**

The Southeast Iowa Beekeepers met at 6:00 p.m. at the Sirloin Stockade for their winter meeting. There were 34 members and guests present. The meeting was called to order by vice president Ray Tull. Minutes were read and the treasurer report given. Vern Ramsey explained a project to get more young beekeepers started. It involves kids in the FFA program. The club voted to provide gloves and veils to help 3 kids get set up in beekeeping.

We also are donating boxes of bees, smokers, and hive tools. This equipment is issued with the understanding if you don’t continue beekeeping it will be returned for use by another person. It was also discussed asking the FFA groups if they would be interested in selling honey as a fundraiser.

Ron Wehr took orders for corn syrup. All officers were reelected. Bernie Andrews, our evening speaker donated his fee to the veil and gloves fund. He also spoke to us about mites and showed us a tape of his honey house.

Eight door prizes were handed out. Dues were collected. Our next meeting will be sometime in April when we get package bees to install in hives.

Submitted by Ron Wehr

**Master Beekeeping Scholarship**

We have had one application for the Master Beekeeper scholarship, so far. Applications are due by May 1st. Take advantage of this opportunity and apply today. Include your name, address, phone number and/or e-mail along with a one or two paragraph bio about yourself. The Master Beekeeping Workshop is June 22-24th.

Send to:

Phil Ebert
c/o The Buzz
14808 S. 102nd Ave. E.
Lynnville, IA 50153
SUMMER FIELD DAY
JULY 8TH
IOWA 4-H CENTER
1991 Peach Avenue
Madrid, Iowa 50156
(515) 795-3338
www.extension.iastate.edu/4hcenter

Morning Schedule:
8:30 Registration
9:00 Welcome, Announcements, Introduction
9:15 Varroa Mite, what to do…………...............David Vander Dussen
10:30 BREAK
10:45 IOWA BEE INSPECTIONS…………………………..Boyd Palmer
11:00 Mite-Away II tm…………………………..David Vander Dussen
12:00 LUNCH BBQ CHICKEN OR A BBQ PIG
1:15 BREAK OUT IN FOUR GROUPS:
   ONE…………………………..David Vander Dussen
   TWO…………………………..William Eickholt
   THREE…………………………..Boyd Palmer
   FOUR…………………………..Pat Ennis

Each group will open up two hives, on one we will do either a powdered sugar or ether roll and the other will have a stick board to do a mite count.

3:15 QUESTIONS

HAVE A SAFE TRIP HOME, AND HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE FAIR.

We will be trying to get someone to come in and make homemade ice cream or malts. We hope all will bring a dish to pas and spend time with friends.

Summer Field Day
Plans for the summer field day have been finalized. It will be held at the 4-H Center in Madrid. The main speaker will be David VanderDussen from Nod Apiary Products in Ontario. They are the manufacturers of MiteAway II formic acid pads. These are pads that are preloaded with acid. I heard David speak at the AHPA meeting in Houston. He has a lot of good information about Varroa mites. He has a product to promote but a lot of his information about mites is applicable to any type of treatment. It’s all about being about to estimate population growth. The morning program will be devoted to Varroa mites and how to work with MiteAway II. After lunch, hives will be opened and demos given on how to take ether rolls and sugar rolls.

Lunch will be either BBQ chicken or BBQ pork. The main course and drink will be provided by the association. We hope everyone will bring a dish to share for pot luck. We have to charge a registration fee for this event to help defray the expenses of the speaker. We have to provide his transportation and other travel expenses. The association is paying for lunch. Registrations for the field day need to be sent to Pat Ennis at the address below. Fees will be $10 for members and $15 for non members. Non members will be able to receive the Buzz for the remainder of the year.

Pat Ennis
1040 Union Ave.
Goodell, IA 50439
(641) 444-4767
Flat_Lander@lycos.com

Submitted by Phil Ebert

IHPA Board Meeting of March 11th, 2006
The IHPA board of directors met March 11 in Des Moines. The new directory of beekeepers is finished. We are looking for a printer. We are getting a price from Principle. The Farm Bureau is another option. They have
offered to help us with printing projects.

It was decided to offer the video "A Year with Honeybees" to schools and youth organizations for educational purposes at fee of $5 to pay for postage and handling. Margaret Hala is going to assist Phil Ebert with video sales. She will keep a stock of videos and mail them from her home. Inspection was also discussed. The state had intended to only inspect beekeepers with more than 50 colonies. It turns out that there are some legal problems with this. Inspection has to be available to all. The latest thing is that they are only going to inspect hives that are registered. This may be a bit of a moot point. The registration site doesn’t work and there aren’t enough inspectors to cover the state. Last year, there were only 130 beekeepers that registered their bees. This is a bad deal because the state looks at numbers. If people don’t utilize a system, they think it isn’t needed. It’s a bit of a Catch 22. The system doesn’t work but we need more people in it.

We don’t know what is happening to the money appropriated for apiary. Some money has gone for the registration website. We don’t know if the rest of the money is still there. We are supposed to get an accounting of how this money is spent. So far, it’s not happening. We keep asking but that’s as far as it gets.

There was a lot of discussion about the youth mentoring program and how to coordinate honey sales with the FFA. It was decided to evaluate this after the convention when we have a better idea of what the response is. Teresa presented the application process for the youth mentoring program and explained the survey sheets she was going to hand out to measure interest in honey sales among the FFA chapters. She also had the budget of the program worked out.

We finished up in about 3½ hours

Consider an IHPA Membership

This is mainly directed to people who read “The Buzz” on the internet. It’s true you can read it for free with no obligation to join the organization. We post it so beekeepers can have access to information. With no apiary department in Iowa, there are limited opportunities to get information out. Our current membership is hovering around 200. When we go to the state or some other agency to get help on a project, that is not a very impressive number. If you don’t already belong to the IHPA, we would like for you to consider membership. We are not going to make any money from your dues. Half of that will go in postage to mail you “The Buzz”. The other half won’t begin to cover the production cost. There is strength in numbers. We definitely need to build our numbers to have any influence. We are working to increase the advantages to being a member.

So You Want to be a Bee Inspector

Is there anybody out there who would like to be an inspector? We currently have two inspectors—Bill Eichold in the northwest and Boyd Palmer in the northeast. They can’t cover the entire state. We need more inspectors to make travel efficient.

The state has money for bee inspection. The problem is we don’t know what is happening to it. Some of the money has gone to establish the yard registration website. The IHPA is supposed to get an accounting of how the rest this money is being spent. So far, this has not happened. To get adequate inspection, I think we are going to have to provide the state with a list of names of potential inspectors and then pressure them to hire someone. Inspectors are part time employees who can work 780 hours per year. The pay is close to $15/hr. Mileage is paid by the counties. It helps if you have a fuel efficient vehicle.

If you are interested but don’t feel confident about disease detection, I would say you should submit your name anyway. Contact one of the board members. If we had several names to submit at the same time. I would feel more confident about getting some results.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Honey Prices

As I was walking to the mailbox today (March 8), I was thinking about the low bulk price for honey. When I looked at the post, there was a letter from the AHPA saying the Argentine crop came in 30% below average. Much of this crop had already been sold on forward contracts at low prices. Current pricing for Argentine honey 34mm and lighter at the dock in New York (as of this writing) is 83 cents.

The EU has banned food imports from Brazil. This has forced European buyers into Argentina trying to buy honey. This has driven up the price. Some Argentine exporters are not taking orders at any price. If the bonding loophole should happen to get closed, honey prices could really take off. Here are some Brazilian prices in metric tons by the container load (approx 20,000#): Orange Honey $2130, Eucalyptus Honey $1760, Wild Flower-La $1700 Wild Flower-white-$1820. All prices are FOB at the port of Santos, Brazil as of March 6th.

The legislation to close the bonding loophole is still being held up in committee. Bill Thomas, who is the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, is responsible for this. He is from Bakersfield, Ca, which is almond growing country. One would think he would be concerned about beekeepers being able to stay in business but that doesn’t seem to be the case. Richard Adee reports in the spring addition of the honey Producers magazine that four Chinese companies have applied for new shipper status and are now booking massive quantities of honey at very low prices for April and May delivery.

Submitted by Phil Ebert
THE BEEYARD REPORT

We have seen all of our yards. There are three lame ones where we will have a 50% loss but the others are quite good. We are 7% dead with another 10% rated weak. The weak ones have less than four frames of bees. The others were rated 45% excellent and 38% good. It can still go south but things are starting to look more in my favor.

The syrup in my tank is looking a little grainy. It will clean up when the sun starts to shine on the tank. Because it is grainy, I haven’t put out any feeder buckets. Syrup is no good if it crystallizes in the buckets. We haven’t had to feed very many colonies. The ones we have fed have gotten division board feeders so the syrup is inside where the heat is. We have found that bees will take feed in the spring when the outside temp is in the thirties if the syrup is in a division board feeder. These big colonies where the cluster is next to the feeder.

The little colony with Tim Laughlin’s queen is still alive. That’s as of March 15. There are three good frames of bees and they emptied their feeder. They are very active so I think they are healthy.

We have been building pallets. I started out using ¾ “ floors. Then I talked to Curt Bronnenberg. He told me most of the ones he had seen had 1/2” floors. After that, I started to think about the weight. If I ever want to put these on a semi, I am going to have a lot of extra weight if I use 3/4” plywood. The next batch is going to have 1/2” floors. I had planned to use 3/8” openings but then I thought about all the entrance blocks I had for 3/4” openings. There are about 500 of them. I decided to go with 3/4” so I could use my old blocks.

There is now room to walk around in my warehouse but I’m still sitting on 80 barrels of honey that remain from our crop of 138 barrels. We’ll bottle about 30 barrels of what is left. I have commitments for ten barrels of bulk honey. That leaves me with about 40 barrels that I need to find a home for. I let a few barrels go for 80 cents but everything else has brought 95 cents or better.

Time flies. Package bees will be here in two weeks. The target date for the first load is April 3rd. That will probably turn into a crazy week. I have to haul 200 packages into Illinois. Alex will have to handle distribution at home. The first lot of queens is slated to be here April 12th. We’ll start pulling brood as soon as they arrive. We’ll go through all the yards and pull the good ones. We’ll go back two weeks later and pull the rest of them. If there are any colonies that aren’t big enough, we will kill the queens and use the bees to make splits. We will try to graft our first lot of queens at the end of April. That will put mating time at mid May. There will be a good drone population by then. I think we will have enough brood to start our mating nucs with a frame of brood. We like to get the cells in with a good frame of bees. It gives the queen a opportunity to lay quite a few eggs right out of the gate. It gives us an opportunity to evaluate the queen better and the mating yard also becomes a brood factory. We can continue to build nucs through the summer if we choose. Let’s hope for a good year.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Bee Nuisance Calls

Have you ever wondered how to handle those calls you get about nuisance bees? The first step is to try to establish if it is really honeybees. Sometimes, this isn’t easy. If it stings, people tend to think it has to be a bee. Most of my bee calls in the fall turn out to be yellow jackets. Yellow jackets have distinct yellow lines on their heads and bodies. I describe them as threadlike lines. Foundations of houses seem to be one of their favorite places. Ask if there is a paper like nest. A big nest may be hornets. A small paper nest is paper wasps. By small, I mean something less than the size of a fist. No one has ever complained to me about mud daubers. Their nests are about the size of paper wasps but they look like a ball of mud. I always tell people that wasps are beneficial since they eat two or three times their body weight in insects every day. Sometimes they want to kill them anyway. The farm coops in our area sell a dairy aerosol spray. I think it works better than most of the other sprays. It sells for about $10 for a very large can. I always recommend it to people who want a do-it-your-self job. I got a couple of calls last fall from people who said bees were harassing them in their raspberry patches. Both of these were close to my yards, so I went to look. The problem proved to be yellow jackets and bumblebees. The bumblebees were very small. They appeared to be about 1/3 the size of a normal bumblebee. The berries must have been excreting some juice because they were covered with insects. It was also very dry at the time. There may have been limited foraging opportunities. Other than offering reassurance that my bees were not at fault, there was nothing I could do here. I did pick the raspberries for one of the ladies involved.

The other thing to determine is whether you can get paid for offering a service. If I get a swarm call that is close to one of my yards, I go get it.
with no questions asked. I like to main- 
tain a good public image. If it’s not 

close, I try to determine how big the 

swarm is—basketball size, softball 

size, etc. Then I have to know if it is 

somewhere I can catch it. The top of a 

40” tree is not a good place. I don’t 

like to work off ladders. If it’s a big 

early season swarm that I may get 

some good out of, I may pick it up for 

free. However, I emphasize that if the 

bees are gone when I get there, I need 

to get $20 for the trip. After we get 

into June, I need to get $20 plus the 

bees. I may adjust the fee if more dis- 

tance is involved. Sometimes you will 

not be able to determine if it really is a 

swarm. If it’s hot, the bees may cluster 

outside the dwelling cavity. This may 

look like a swarm to someone not fa-

miliar with bees. I try to be up front 

about the fact that, sometimes, I won’t 

be able to do anything.

Then we have the calls about bees in 

dwellings or old buildings. I usually 

don’t mess with these. They take too 

much time. If it sounds like something 

I might consider, the minimum is 

$100. I also point out that I am not re-

sponsible for putting anything back 

together. A lot of these calls are from 

people that want to preserve the bees. 

The problem is that they think the bees 

should be worth something to me. 

Usually, the only thing they represent 

is a lot of work to remove them. If you 
can gain access to the cavity, the slic-
est way to remove them is with a bee 

vacuum. After the bees are cleaned up, 

it is easy to cut out the combs.

Calls about stinging incidents are the 

hardest for me. People focus on the 

pain. They have no idea what stung 

them or where it came from. Try to 

determine what they were doing when 

they got stung. Sometimes it offers a 

clue.

There is an established procedure for 

dealing with accidents dealing with 

honeybees that are being transported. 

We’ll cover that next month.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Make Your Own Bee Vac
Leon Rowell of Montezuma, Iowa is a 

pretty handy fellow. One of the many 

things he has built is a Bee Vac. Here 

is how it all came about.

The next day I made the trip to my 

friends house to see what the situation 

was and he wasn’t lying. He definitely 

had a garage full of bees. The only 

problem was that most of them were 

lying on top of his cars and on the 

floor dead. He had covered the hole on 

the outside of the building with a piece 

of metal and they had chewed through 

the sheetrock on the inside but couldn’t 

get out of the garage. I put my gear on 

and removed the piece of sheetrock 

where the hole they had made was. 

Unfortunately there were only about 

200-300 bees left in the hive area and 

no sign of a queen. I decided to go 

ahead and try the Bee Vac anyway so I 

proceeded to vacuum the bees from the 

comb. The vacuum worked very well 

and all of the bees were sucked into 

the inner box and with no casualties to the 

bees.

A friend of mine called one day and 

said that his garage was full of Honey 

Bees and wondered if I knew how to 

get rid of them. I told him that I 

thought I could remove them for him 

and that I would be up in a couple of 

days.

I gathered the parts & pieces together 

and started assembling the Bee Vac. I 

used an old suitcase that my Mother in 

law had for the outer case instead of 

building one out of wood. And I had a 

vacuum motor from a shop vac that the 
canister had rusted out on. I used the 
hose from a larger shop vac that I had 
thinking it would be easier on the bees 
as they pass through it.

The bottom of the inner box slides 

away making it easy to deposit the 

newly acquired bees into a hive body.

I then removed the natural comb from 

the hive (there was no brood or honey 
in the comb but I wanted to go through 

the entire procedure anyway) and 

wired it into the empty frames and put 

them into the super. When you get 

home all you need to do is to set your 
hive up with the frames of natural 
comb, set the box with the bees in it on 
top of the hive and gently slide the bot-

tom from the box. Theoretically the 

bees will migrate down into the hive. I 
can’t confirm this because of the con-

dition of this natural hive.

Leon obtained the plans for the Bee 

Vac from the internet at 


There are plans for several other pro-

jects too for anyone needing a project. 

Thanks Leon.
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