



# The Buzz

*Newsletter of the Iowa Honey Producers Association*



February 2012



**Package Bee Ads Pg2**  
**Beekeepers abuzz over threats to hives Pg4**  
**Featured Beekeeper of the Month Pg8**



**March 11th**—IHPA Board Meeting, 2pm.  
**April 21st**—CIBA Annual Auction.  
**May 6th**—IHPA Board Meeting, 2pm.  
**June 23rd**—IHPA Field Day ( Board meeting to follow. )  
**August 9th-19th**—Iowa State Fair  
**September 9th**—IHPA Board Meeting, 2pm.  
**November 15th**—IHPA Board Meeting, 7pm.  
**November 16-17th**—IHPA Annual Meeting, Marshalltown, IA



**FOR SALE:** Package Bees for Sale  
 Spring Valley Honey Farms 2 pound or 3  
 pound Italian or Carniolan.

We will be shaking packages out of our  
 own hives with California Queens from  
 April 5<sup>th</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup> depending on  
 weather and Queen Availability.

Also we will bring in a load Mid April  
 from California. Prices are not set but ap-  
 proximately \$75.00 to \$80.00 No deposit  
 to book packages or on cages.

To book packages call  
 Home 515-465-5939  
 Curt 515-480-6075  
 Pat 515-293-2601

Beekeeping Supplies  
 Spring Valley Honey Farms will be keep-  
 ing a fairly complete line of Beekeeping  
 supplies from February through June. No  
 set business hours so call with your needs.  
 515-465-5939

**FOR SALE:** Package bees We will  
 have 2#, 3# and 4# pkgs with your  
 choice of Carniolan or Italian queens.  
 The 4# can come with either one or  
 two queens. Available in April. Check  
 our web site for dates and current pric-  
 ing. [www.eberthoney.com](http://www.eberthoney.com)

Call 641-527-2639 or e-mail  
[ehoney37@netins.net](mailto:ehoney37@netins.net)

**FOR SALE:** 2 or 3 pound packages of  
 Italian bees with queen. Picked up in  
 Cedar Rapids or Aurora, Iowa in mid-  
 April. Bees from Hill-Ward Apiary in  
 California.

All orders must be received by Febru-  
 ary 28. Contact Douglas Child 319-  
 634-3682. 2/12

**FOR SALE:** Small steam generator  
 without heating element. Also avail-  
 able--the inner tank for a 20 frame  
 Betterway Wax Melter.

Contact Ike Pfantz in Newton  
 641-792-6032

many seeds are now treated with pesti-  
 cides that remain in the soil While the  
 chemicals lose a portion of their po-  
 tency, a half life if you will, there is  
 enough to compound the effect on the  
 next year's plantings, and these chemi-  
 cals are building up in the soil and  
 plants to be lethal doses to all insects  
 and affecting more than insects. You  
 missed a very good talk, if you didn't  
 attend.

What he had to say was backed up by  
 an email I received today from Bee  
 Alert saying the same thing and stress-  
 ing new research be done on the use of  
 the new seed treatments and pesticides,  
 and condemning Bayer continued claim  
 that neonicitoids are safe and refusing  
 to look into more testing and research.

The next CIBA meeting will be March  
 17 at Bonanza Restaurant and Steak-  
 house on NE 14th St. in Des Moines.  
 Eat at 5:30, meet at 6:30 with election  
 of officers the topic of the evening.

Thanks,  
 Margaret Hala, Secretary  
 Central Iowa Beekeepers Association

### CIBA Auction

The CIBA auction will be April 21,  
 2012 at Curt Bronnenberg's honey  
 house right along Hwy 141, in Perry.  
 It will start at 10:00 and someone will  
 be at the sale location from 8:00 am  
 on to help unload and guide sellers to  
 their spots.

I believe we currently have at least 6  
 consigned sellers, and we need more,  
 so contact either Margaret Hala at  
[mhala@marshallnet.com](mailto:mhala@marshallnet.com) or Pat Ennis  
 at [flat\\_lander@lycos.com](mailto:flat_lander@lycos.com).

### CIBA Meeting

Gary Rueter from the Univ. of Minne-  
 sota was the featured speaker at the  
 CIBA meeting held yesterday, Jan. 14  
 at Bonanza Restauraunt and Steakhouse  
 in Des Moines. We had about 45 at-  
 tend. He spoke on the research being  
 done at the Univ. Bee Lab now, and of  
 high concern is the impact of neonicoti-  
 noids and the other new pesticides be-  
 ing used to chemically treat plants and  
 seeds. It seems all, or almost all, plants  
 are treated in the greenhouses to com-  
 bat pests, and these chemicals, espe-  
 cially if the seeds are treated, stay in  
 the soil over the winter. Likewise,

### 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](mailto:TheBuzz@ABuzzAboutBees.com) or by mail to The Buzz, c/o Phil Ebert, 14808 S. 102<sup>nd</sup> Ave. E., Lynnville, IA 50153. **The deadline for submissions is the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Melanie Bower, IHPA Treasurer, 207 S.E. Diehl, Des Moines, IA 50315, Phone: (515) 287-6542

## Greetings from the President

I have just returned from California where we worked and graded the colonies sent for Almond pollination. I was very confident in the bees I sent but was a bit disappointed in the results. It was actually only one of the four locations that were overly disappointing. In that location a little over 150 colonies out of about 800 were dead. Most were not completely dead but down to 2-3 frames of bees so we combined 2-3 colonies leaving 1 or 2 dead. We found that the bees from many of the colonies from one semi load had drifted to the NW and NE corner of the block where they were placed. After talking to my broker he said that load was unloaded in the morning and it got very warm that day so the bees apparently took flight but didn't get a chance to orientate themselves to the new location. In these circumstances the bees tend to migrate to stronger pallets and when it starts more and more bees migrate there and the problem compounds itself. Probably 15 to 20 hives in the corners were packed full wall to wall and even filling the two gallon feeders in some. We shook bees out of the stronger colonies into many weaker ones but many of those bees will simply return to the old hive in the first flight day. Out of the other 3 locations one had 7% loss, one had 9% loss and the best yard had only 6 dead colonies out of 664 colonies with 571 of those being rated at 8 frames of bees or better. Overall I am happy with the condition of the bees.

I hope your bees are doing well. We have seen some cooler weather but that was followed by warmer weather that should allow the bees to move and adjust the cluster to get closer to feed, I popped open my one Iowa colony on January 25 and it seemed the cluster had shrunk some and it is completely in the top box so I didn't disturb the cluster and only opened the colony between the 2 brood chambers for about 10 seconds. It has definitely lost some weight.

We will be having our first board meeting of 2012 on January 29<sup>th</sup> and I'll give you a summary of decisions and goals of the committees in the next newsletter.

I have received one handwritten letter and a few e-mails on the State Fair Sales Booth volunteer issue. No magic bullet yet, so we'll put our heads together to provide some incentive or encouragement to keep

the booth well staffed and think ahead better this year to be sure we have people to handle all of the bee presentations. It's never too early to start planning for the Fair. If there is a certain group of people or a person you enjoy spending time or working with contact them and make plans early to attend the fair and work a shift or two. It would be interesting to have the local Iowa Bee Clubs get together and try to take some shifts or full days.

Everyone should try to enter at least one category in the apiary class this year or better yet try to enter all 24 classes and go for the sweepstake award.

I received a couple of questions this month. I'll try to answer them and I'm guessing that knowing beekeepers, not everybody will agree with my answers so I'd guess that some answers may receive some rebuttal and we may have to debate them for a few months.

Questions: from Jed from Cresco, Iowa  
I am a first year beekeeper with three hives of Minnesota Hygienic bees. They are in four medium supers, wrapped in tar paper, upper and lower entrances and they have 80 to 100 pounds of honey for the winter. I live 15 miles from Minnesota yet the temperatures this winter have been in the 40s with sunshine for days on end. It is now early January and I am wondering what is happening inside my hives.  
Do the bees think that this is March?

Did the queen ever quit laying eggs or is she making lots of brood?

If she is making lots of brood now, are the bees eating the honey and pollen at a rapid rate?

If they are eating food at a rapid rate and we get a cool, wet spring, should I anticipate that the bees will run of food before nectar flow?

Answer:  
No the bees have somewhat of an internal clock and many of the cues that let them know it is March weren't the same in December. The Queen should have slowed her brood production with the changing season and first frost stopping pollen. Brood rearing may be a little more because of the warmer weather and the extra flight weather helps them with cleansing flights but uses up food stores and may wear out

some older bees. It is probably that the bees are consuming more honey because of extra flight and brood rearing but it is important to always watch the colonies for food reserves in early spring.

Question: from Jolene  
I am entering my third year of keeping bees and I am really enjoying it. But one thing I can't seem to wrap my head around: when and why to requeen.

One would assume that bees would take care of requeening themselves. They wouldn't have survived all these centuries without taking it upon themselves to requeen.

So, I am now entering my third year. Last year I harvested around 140 lbs of honey. The hives seem to be doing just fine. Lots of workers, lots of honey stores going into winter, and so on. Do I requeen since I have completed two years?

Answer:  
In nature honey bees are forced to requeen themselves but in managed colonies the beekeeper has the chance to requeen, theoretically, with a good noted queen with superior genetics. Unless your original queen was marked you do not know if the bees have already replaced the queen. A young vigorous queen is the best thing for honey and successful wintering but you also face the risk of failed introduction, the queen you receive could be inferior and sometimes even a good well mated introduced queen will soon be superseded. I don't personally requeen but I feel on a smaller scale than my operation I would, but suggest doing so by creating a split or nook from the colony then eliminating the old queen later after the nook has proven itself then uniting the two with the newspaper method.

Have Fun, Bee Productive,

Curt Bronnenberg



## **2012 IHPA Membership and The Buzz**



### **Iowa Honey Queen**

Hello Iowa Beekeepers!

Happy Valentine's Day! This January brought me to the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association Annual Meeting in Des Moines. My Mom and I enjoyed listening to guest speaker Professor Gary Reuter of the University of Minnesota talk about their current research. We were also able to take part in the CIBA meeting. We had a great time and it gave me the opportunity to make connections with beekeepers from across the state. A presentation for the local 4-H club kept me busy as well.

I am looking forward to making an appearance at Craig Greene's, of Wee Bee Apiary and Farm, bee classes next week in my home town of Chariton. I will also be attending my first Iowa Honey Producers Association Board meeting before the end of January. This February I am excited to be joining Pat and Peggy Ennis for their honeybee classes in Mason City at Northern Iowa Area Community College.

The winter has been absolutely "bee"-utiful, giving my family the opportunity to get out and check on the girls. It was warm enough to open up the hives and give them some sugar water. They seem to be wintering fine. After about three days of actual snow on the ground, clear, warm days have us continuing to be hopeful for a short, mild rest of winter!

Please do not hesitate to contact the Queen Chair, Connie Bronnberg to schedule me into one of your events. I would love to come and "bee" helpful in any way possible.

Enjoy the warm weather!

*Renae M. Beard*  
2012 Iowa Honey Queen

## **Beekeepers abuzz over threats to hives**

Jan. 21, 2012  
By Bill Hanna

For the first time since Thanksgiving, commercial beekeeper Clint Walker III is working with his colonies of honeybees scattered across Central Texas ranchland. By April 1, Walker hopes to triple the size of his hives that are currently pollinating yaupon holly trees several miles from the Brazos River. A few hundred yards from a herd of grazing cattle, Walker, who runs the honey business started by his father in 1938, is checking on the colonies' health and giving them nutrients to stimulate the queens to start laying eggs.

Unlike those of most U.S. commercial beekeepers, Walker's hives are staying home this winter. For the second straight year, he won't be shipping bees to California for February's annual pollination of the almond crop. "I've been chemical-free for nearly two years," Walker said. "We've stayed out of agricultural fields to cut out their exposure to chemicals, and my bees are finally starting to behave like bees again."

It's a result of his experiences with colony collapse disorder, a malady that has hit U.S. beekeepers hard in recent years and caused his hives to plummet from a peak of 2,500 in 2006 to fewer than 1,000 today.

While a variety of culprits have been identified as possible causes of colony collapse, including pesticides, varroa mites, viruses and a parasitic fly that turns them into so-called zombie bees, the search for a solution is crucial with bees pollinating about a third of the U.S. food supply.

Since Walker changed his business practices to focus solely on honey making, new research about the risks of pesticides continues to come forward.

This month, the Sierra Club called on

To be included in the 2012 IHPA Membership Directory, your 2012 dues must be paid by March 1, 2012. The membership list will be sent to the printers shortly after that date.

April 2012 will be the last issue of the Buzz that will be mailed to members who have not paid their 2012 dues. The expiration date is located above your name on the Buzz.

The first membership for 2012 is still \$10.00 and \$5.00 for each additional family member that would like a membership and is living at the same address.

Membership dues for 2013 will be \$20.00 for the first membership and \$5.00 for each additional family member that would like a membership and is living at the same address.

Please send your dues to: IHPA, Melanie Bower, 207 S.E. Diehl, Des Moines, Iowa 50315-5227.

Melanie Bower  
Treasurer

### **THE 2012 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF THE IHPA**

I think it would be nice to have a Beekeeping Question and Answer section in the Buzz, so if you would like to submit a Question please e-mail to cbronny823@aol.com and use the Subject line Buzz Question and Answer. It will help me with ideas for subjects to write about for my Presidents Column.

Thank You.  
Have Fun, Work Hard,  
and Bee Involved.

Curt Bronnberg

the EPA to ban clothianidin, a seed treatment for corn, after scientists at Purdue University found that it affected bee health. The research showed that clothianidin, a neonicotinoid pesticide, is present in areas where bees pollinate long after the seed has been planted. Neonicotinoids target the central nervous system of insects.

"Despite numerous attempts by the beekeeping industry and conservation organizations to persuade the EPA to ban clothianidin, the EPA has failed to protect the food supply for the American people," said Laurel Hopwood, chairwoman of the Sierra Club's Genetic Engineering Action Team.

#### Emerging research

While many headlines in recent years focused on chemicals that could kill bees, much of the new research is concentrating on lower levels of the pesticides that may be changing bees' behavior or weakening their immune system.

These sublethal effects may play a role in explaining why many beekeepers like Walker struggled to rebuild their hives years after they were hit by colony collapse.

Last week, a study published in the science journal *Naturwissenschaften*, documented the effects on bees given sublethal doses of the widely used pesticide imidacloprid. The study showed that the number of infections from a parasite, *Nosema*, increased significantly after exposure.

"Interactions between pesticides and pathogens could be a major contributor to increased mortality of honey bee colonies, including colony collapse disorder and other pollinator declines worldwide," wrote authors Jeffrey Pettis of the USDA-ARS Bee Research Lab; Dennis vanEngelsdorp and Galen Dively, both of the University of Maryland; and Josephine Johnson of the University of Maryland Baltimore.

At the North American Beekeeping

Conference this month in Las Vegas, Walker, whose term on the National Honeybee Advisory board ended in December, surveyed an audience of beekeepers to see whether they had seen their colonies being lethargic, not multiplying and not producing the normal amounts of honey. Almost all in the audience raised their hands.

"I call it colony malaise," Walker said. "It's a failure to thrive."

Those beekeeper accounts shouldn't be taken lightly, said James Frazier, an entomology professor at Penn State University who is also studying the sublethal effects of pesticides.

"These guys understand the impacts pesticides are having; they just don't understand how, and it's up to the research community to figure out those answers for them," Frazier said last week.

#### Multiple causes

Frazier cautions that it is a mistake to focus on a single cause for colony collapse or related problems. Instead, researchers should take a more nuanced approach, he said.

"I think in the end, there could be a number of scenarios from two, to a dozen or up to 20 that give similar impacts, the worst of which would be the collapsing colony," Frazier said.

There are an estimated 250,000 honeybee colonies in Texas, with each typically housing 40,000 to 60,000 bees. Nationally, beekeepers reported total losses from managed honeybee colonies of about 30 percent from all causes for the 2010-11 winter. Those totals were similar to losses from the previous four years. The latest annual survey conducted by the U.S. Agriculture Department and the Apiary Inspectors of America should come out this winter.

Finding answers is important because bees add an estimated \$15 billion in value each year to such staples as nuts, fruit and vegetables, many of which require bee pollination.

Marion Ellis, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of entomology, said more research is needed on sublethal doses as scientists work to give the EPA and other agencies new screening tools for pesticide use, including neonicotinoids and fungicides. "Our work with sublethal effects is in its infancy," Ellis said. "I have a lot of good questions and need a couple of good years of research. I certainly don't have all of the answers."

<http://www.star-telegram.com/2012/01/21/3677470/beekeepers-abuzz-over-threats.html>

## THE BEEYARD REPORT

I was contacted recently by Becka Kelley at Southern Illinois University. Her field of research is safety in agricultural products. She wants to continue the work on insecticides in pollen and beeswax. She seemed unaware of the work that had already been done but I was encouraged by her enthusiasm. The more people we have looking at this, the better off we are. I sent her some samples to test.

I attended the AHPA meeting in Phoenix. We are still trying to answer the same questions. Varroa control is at the top of the list. RNA is one of the things being looked at. When Varroa mites are immersed in dsRNA in a petrie dish, their genes are down regulated. Whether this fact will result in any kind of practical control is unknown. The Varroa genome map is nearly complete. It is hoped this will give some key on control.

For all of the complexities going on in bee hives, the things we do as beekeepers are simple--have good queens, help out with nutrition, provide adequate space and control mites. Controlling mites is not always simple but the concept is simple.

Every time I talk to David VanderDussen, he convinces me MAQS is a good thing. This goes against my experience. He did tell me that some commer-

cial operators were putting in one strip and then going back a week later to put in the second one. Of course, there is still the third trip to remove the pads after they become hard as a rock. I still have \$1400 worth of those things. I want to get my money out of them.

Marion Ellis says they are fine if the temperature doesn't get over seventy degrees. The recommendation is to use MAQS four to six weeks before the honey flow. In our area that could mean treating in mid April. That's when we are trying to split and build brood so treatment with MAQS is not real practical. Finding that 70 degree window in the fall is not easy. I think we will probably try to give one strip at a time and see what the result is.

Randy Oliver had a seminar on the Wednesday before the meeting started. Most of it was devoted to Nosema ceranae. The main point was that individual bees may have millions of spores but other bees may have very few. It is the level of infection in the whole colony that is important. We should be careful not to crush bees when putting in pollen patties, etc. When the bees clean up their crushed sisters, they clean up the nosema spores and the infection spreads. Randy also characterized almond pollination as a pathogen equalizer. Big holding yards and drifting bees spread pathogens. That's old news but I had never heard it expressed that way. Another thing Randy talked about was how quickly his bees shut down when the pollen cuts off for a few days. We don't see this in our hives. I'm thinking Randy's pollen sources must not be very good. We usually find lots of pollen in our hives and almost never give pollen supplement. Mann Lake had pollen patties on sale at the meeting so I bought six cases. With all the warm weather we have had. The bees will probably brood up early. This may result in depleted pollen stores. We will throw pollen patties on the big colonies in February if we can get into the yards.

Bob Danka has continued the work

with VSH bees that John Harbo started.

He is very up front with the fact that these bees are poor producers. He has tried to correct this by releasing a cross. It's called the Pol Line Hygenic Italian cross. Richard Adee, Ryan Lamb and Andy Card were cooperators on this project. Breeders are available from Glenn Apiaries.

Bob suggested starting 100 nucs with cells grafted from the breeder. Mark the queens that mate successfully. That will immediately cut your count down to 70 or 80 queens. At the end of the season, check for the original queens. Also check the Varroa load. The biggest colonies with the fewest mites are the breeders.

The EPA is looking at the effect of chemicals on pollinators. The chemical companies are looking at it also. Bayer was at the meeting. They have a bee guy on staff. They actually contacted me last summer about doing a survey on bee health. They sent me a lot of information.

Then I never heard from them again. I wondered if they got busy with something else or I if asked too many questions. Monsanto obviously has something in mind. We don't know what it is yet.

Jeff Pettis talked about a study they did with 250 colonies in commercial operations to see if moving affected bee mortality. The conclusion was that it didn't. The shocker was that 73% of the colonies died. Most of the mortality was due to queen failure. Nosema and other factors were minor.

Here are a few other items--none of which are new. Nutrition affects the division of labor. When there is a dearth there are more foragers. Genetic based nosema resistance is being looked at. A single gene imparts resistance to chalkbrood. If 20 female beetles lay fifty eggs/day for five days, you will wind up with 5000 beetles.

There are some mortality predictors--nosema over 1,000,000 spores, queen events, and idopathic brood disease aka "snot brood". The bottom line is that all of the stress factors interact. Many of them are out of our control. As I said in the beginning--keep it simple but make sure it gets done. A day late and a dollar short results in failure.

### Jerry Hayes

I was shocked recently to find out that Jerry Hayes is going to go to work for Monsanto. You may recall that I mentioned previously that Monsanto had purchased Remebee. Remebee produces a product that employs RNA as a virus inhibitor. Obviously, Monsanto is planning to do something that involves bees. I don't feel good about this.

### Lee Heine

When talking to the Wisconsin guys in Phoenix, I found out Lee Heine had some bad heart trouble in December that had required surgery. They said he was out of the hospital and doing well. Lee has been a big supporter of the Iowa Honey Producers. If you know Lee, or even if you don't, he would probably appreciate a card. He is a really good guy. I don't know his home address but the business is Box 331, Watertown WI 53094.

Submitted by Phil Ebert



### State Apiarist Andy Joseph

Hi all.

January 16<sup>th</sup> and I popped a few hives open today. I have a yard of 14 or so colonies which I've been using as an indicator as to how we're faring this winter. These bees have been bothered more than necessary, but it's been pretty interesting. This mild winter

has allowed a good bit more brood rearing than usual. I assume others have noticed this also. With all the busy-ness and flight activity, they have really been eating through stores which may or may not present a problem later on. Currently all hives are very much alive and active, which they should be, given ½ a chance in a season like this. Some are still good and heavy but others (the ones that just wouldn't slow down last fall) are becoming a little on the light side. I haven't yet seen any dysentery or other signs of winter stress and struggle. There's still plenty of winter weather left I'm sure, but so far it's been pretty great, right? Hope for an early spring to go with the fall-like winter we've had. We could use an "easy going" year for the bees around here. Will this extra early brood in our hives give Varroa a head start? We should really keep a close eye on their numbers come spring, and be ready to "take care" of them when / if necessary. It'll be interesting to see how the plants respond to these conditions also.

The beginner beekeeping schools have gotten off to good start. A couple new locations have been added this year. Attendance overall is way up. It was "up" last year too. It's great to see so many people taking a new interest in bees. Playing a small part in helping someone get started is exciting – my guess is that all the course instructors feel this way.

The Central IA Beekeepers group put on a great winter meeting this year. Thanks to Arvin for setting it all up! I found out about it not even a week before the event. Gary Reuter came in from MN to talk about all they're up to in the Marla Spivak lab. He gave a great presentation. They're working on all sorts of research: from Neonicotinoid field trials to getting a better understanding of the values of propolis (fascinating) to native pollinator surveys. ...So much important work being done for the benefit of beekeepers and bees.

Several have asked questions regarding

used bee equipment. Basically, any used equipment (especially containing comb and / or live bees) needs to be inspected by the IA Dept of Ag & Land Stewardship prior to changing hands. This is true whether for sale or just being given away. We're (Boyd Palmer and I) happy to inspect the equipment for signs of disease. My contact info is listed on the back of this Buzz and on the IHPA website. There is no charge for the inspection service. It's also worth noting that new beekeepers may want to be particularly wary of used bee equipment – starting out that first year with new clean equipment and package bees is something you only get once. There are enough things to think about and figure out the first few years without concern of inheriting someone else's disease / pest / parasite issues. It's not a steal of a deal if the bees start showing signs of foulbrood three months down the road. Everyone has their own level of comfort in regards to used equipment and frames of bees – I'd just like to throw out a voice of conservative caution.

I'm already looking toward springtime and making plans for my bees. I guess it's just that time of year already...

Thanks! Andy

## HIVES OR COLONIES?

By, Glen L. Stanley  
State Apiarist (emeritus)

Just two months now until, as of April 1st beekeepers will be examining the results of Winter. We will be hearing, vocally, or in written reports about "how many hives died, how many hives starved, how any hives needed fed and how many hives became queenless and as May and June arrive as to how many hives swarmed.

ACTUALLY THE HIVES DID NONE OF THE ABOVE. The hive is just a receptacle in which colonies of bees are kept for the convenience of man to manage. SO, some colonies may have died, some colonies may have starved,

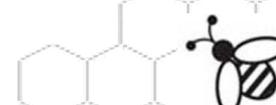
some colonies may need to be fed and some colonies may have become queenless. and without proper attention in May and June some colonies will swarm.

The hives of the removable frame design, in which all colonies are kept today, was designed by Dr. Lorenzo Langstroth in the year 1853. The hive has stayed virtually the same since that time except being tried in various sizes. Now most are eight or ten frame units, used Nation wide. It is still known as the Langstroth hive.

If colonies had an adequate supply of honey as of last October, then no need to bother them until time to make needed adjustments in April. It can then be determined if the queens are O K and there is a good pattern of brood. All things being normal the colony is off to a good start and further attention and favorable weather will determine the extent of a crop of honey. Some colonies may actually be short of Pollen. Some pollen can be supplied by obtaining some EXPELLOR PROCESSED Soy flower. It can be placed on the inner cover early or in a covered container near the hives. The bees really go for it. We used it as a stimulant as the bees often hesitate to dig out the stored pollen.

The last I obtained I found at an elevator in North Liberty, Iowa. The Kelley Co. used to sell it but that required a freight charge.

Actually some colonies, depending on location, will store an excessive amount of pollen and it will age and be of no value to the bees. Such combs will reduce the brood space and come Fall they will weigh heavily and colonies cannot survive on pollen alone. It is apparent that the entire State is a bit short on moisture, but with some early showers it may be an average year for honey production, Here's hoping.



## Featured Beekeeper of the Month

This month our featured beekeeper is Lance Evans. Don and Lisa are his parents, and they live in Solon, Iowa. Lance has a sister Erin and a black lab named Kate.

They enjoy vacationing together especially in Colorado. Lance is in the 10th grade in the Solon Schools where he enjoys wrestling, football, baseball, and shooting on the trap team. His hobbies are hunting, trapshooting, playing paint ball and helping on the farm. After graduation he is planning to attend college.

Lance found out about Iowa Honey Producer's mentor program while visiting the honey booth at the State Fair.

His mentor is Ron Puettman, also from Solon, Iowa. During his first year beekeeping, Lance says he had a lot of trouble with his queens. One queen died. Next, they were heading out to work the bees and saw a swarm, however they didn't know it was his bees at the time, and his third queen also died for whatever reason. Lance said he did learn how to identify swarm cells and take care of them.

He took his classes at Indian Creek Nature Center. This year he would like to add another hive to his apiary. Good luck with your bees this year Lance, and we all hope you have better luck with your queens.

Submitted by Ron Wehr



**Lance and a few remaining bees from a package bee installation.**

### SCREENED BOTTOM BOARDS:

I Haven't the slightest idea who created the screened bottoms as a tool for eliminating some of the mite population within colonies. It may have been an idea created in one of our USDA Labs.

After many observations and tests, the State Apiarist, Andy Joseph, and I have con-

cluded that the screened bottoms do little good, if any. What we do know is they make the expansion of colony growth more difficult for the bees.

From investigations I have made I observed the bees will not build and utilize combs all the way to the bottom of the frames of the lower brood chamber. By measure that is approximately ten percent of the brood area. It is impossible to know just how

much the constant cold air does but it is conceivable that it keeps more bees providing warmth throughout the hive SO we don't know how much effect that has on activities of the colony and would lessen the production of honey.

The use of standard bottom boards gives the beekeeper better control of the size entrance that is made available to the colony at any given time of the year. A small entrance is advisable until April 1st.

Glen L. Stanley

### Keeping bees healthy

Presented by Randy Oliver, Grass Valley CA, article by Ia Farber and Jim Bach

Randy Oliver's presentation focused on giving Hawaii's beekeepers hope that their future with bees will be promising in spite of the devastating losses many Hawaiian beekeepers are currently facing. Being hit with both the Varroa mite and the small hive beetle in recent years has led to massive colony losses on the Big Island of Hawaii. However Oliver expects that in 6-10 years beekeeping in Hawaii will stabilize as 'survivor' colonies adapt to the presence of Varroa and small hive beetle, and beekeepers learn new management methods. In the interim, he advises beekeepers to be diligent in monitoring and then treating to minimize the adverse problems these pests cause in bee hives.

#### General outlook:

Your bee management goal should be colony strength and bee morale. Colony strength should be the maximum colony size for your area, and bee morale is more subjective in the experience of the beekeeper. It is generally measured by quiet and cohesive colony behavior, with an attractive queen (12-15 workers in her retinue).

Selective breeding of survivor stocks should be a key component of rebuilding Hawaiian honey bee stocks. Queens must mate with 15 to 40 drones to maintain genetic diversity. Topographical elevation also affects colony behavior and success as do some nectar sources.

Four items affect colony health: a)chilling (not likely in Hawaii), b) nutrition (more opinion than measured), c) environmental toxins, and d) parasites - Small Hive Beetle (SHB), Honey Bee Tracheal Mites (HBTM)

and Varroa. Regular analysis and measurement of these items is necessary to be successful.

#### **Nutrition:**

Pollen reserves in the hive are critical - they need to be substantial and from diverse pollen sources. Bees require 2lbs. of pollen per 1lb. of bees per season or 1/2 gal syrup and 2lbs. of pollen fed per week to keep brood rearing at its peak.

#### **Small Hive Beetles:**

Oliver advises beekeepers to place their colonies in the open in sunny, dry areas as the SHB thrives in cooler, more humid areas. SHB will fly into colonies between 6:00 and 8:00 pm, especially into younger colonies, and at twilight. They also take advantage of the lower bee population after the bees swarm.

Keep hive populations as strong as possible. Manage hives so that all combs are protectively covered by bees. Use effective SHB traps until such time as honey bees adapt and begin to effectively co-exist with the SHB. Drone cell frames, oil reservoir traps and oil pans on a screened bottom board are somewhat effective.

Maintain hive cleanliness, and proper bee space (5/16"). Proper bee space prevents harbors for SHB to gather and multiply. Bees corral and then feed SHB in various places in the hive and we are starting to see bees beginning to drive SHB out of the hive as a defense mechanism.

Use 2 sided corrugated plastic material on the bottom board for SHB gathering, remove every few days and shake beetles into soapy water.

Long term, bees must develop a tolerance level for SHB and also smell behavior for identifying SHB. Studies are needed on bee & SHB interaction to evaluate new control strategies.

#### **Nosema ceranae:**

Be mindful of Nosema ceranae loads. Take spore samples from bees at the hive entrance. If bees are stressed or suffering from a mite-introduced virus, Nosema ceranae may be a concern to the beekeeper.

Use a 400x microscope and a hemocytometer for counting Nosema spores and sample

older forager bees at the hive entrance. Take a large sample for greater accuracy - few bees have high number of spores. Divide the number of spores by 5 to get an average count per bee.

Oliver questions the impact of NutriBee on Nosema without data and questions the severity of Nosema impact on bees since populations are variable over time.

#### **Varroa and viruses:**

Oliver explains that Varroa management is only one aspect of maintaining colony immunocompetence and resistance to viruses. Varroa pierce a bee's exoskeleton and inject a chemical to keep the wound open. This allows viruses and bacteria to enter and any latent virus will explode in numbers.

Monitor your Varroa level: 6 Varroa per 300 bees (1/2 cup) = a 2% infestation of bees at hive entrance; 12 Varroa is 5% infestation which is too high. If you see signs of defecation inside the hive, this indicates a high Varroa load.

Oliver advises beekeepers to use an alcohol wash instead of the less reliable sugar shaker test which requires far too many applications to be efficient.

To use the alcohol wash method - take bees from brood nest frames, shake into Rubbermaid tub and scoop out 1/2 cup of bees to wash, shake jar vigorously, shake Varroa through a screen and reuse alcohol.

If mite loads exceed 6 / 300 bees in an alcohol wash test, initiate treatment protocols. Rotate treatments to lessen the chances of mite resistance.

\* Thymol - Apigaurd - 50 gr. patties, use 25 gr. patty in the middle of brood nest.

\* Formic acid - Quick Strips: high colony response variability, use single strip in hot weather.

\* Oxalic acid: in sugar solution when little or no brood is present. Use acid resistant gloves.

\* HopGaurd: Use as one of 4 treatments with Thymol, Apigaurd & Formic acid.

Avoid persistent synthetic miticides such as Apistan and Checkmite.

Place one drone comb in each hive, remove after 4 weeks, uncap and remove pupae to check for mites.

Making splits and nucs can introduce a broodless period and break the mite and virus reproduction cycle. Shook swarms break the mite brood cycle very effectively. These will become your honey production colonies in the first or second year.

Randy Oliver posts all his articles on ScientificBeekeeping.com, where you can read about the above in far more detail.

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Deformed wing virus is one example of a sick bee that is easy to spot by the beekeeper. When deformed wing virus is present, white spots can be seen on the top cell wall. Look at crawling bees to see the impact of deformed wing virus.

Spring colony quality is the best way to determine "healthy bees." Breed from those with 1 Varroa per 300 bees as best colonies. (Healthy bees are those with the largest spring colony size, bees are quiet on the comb and fully cover the comb surface, elliptical colony cluster shape at 55 F., with queen retinues having 12 to 15 bees. JC Bach)

Oliver is of the opinion that Varroa doesn't kill bees, it's the viruses that kill bees because the virus targets the bee's immune system. He also feels that dry weather results in less Varroa, wet weather more Varroa. Screened bottom boards don't control Varroa. He tried for five years, and is now phasing out the boards.

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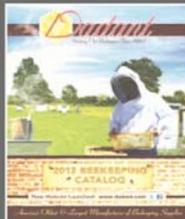
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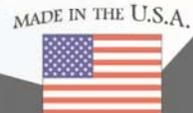
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# The Buzz Newsletter

Iowa Honey Producers Association  
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