Take Cover!

The ice storm of February 24th 2007 was a not so subtle reminder that spring isn’t here yet. When it comes to an Iowa winter, bees and beekeepers alike can find this time of year taxing.
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

Dates to BEE Remembered:

June 24th-28th, 2007 International Pollination Symposium, ISU/Ames

August 9-19th, 2007 Iowa State Fair, Des Moines

November 16th & 17th, 2007 IHPA Annual Meeting, Marshall-town, IA

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.

Queens for sale, $13.00 Available around April 9. Queens are pick up at my home. If you wish to have them shipped there will be a shipping fee. 4 and 5 frame Nuc for sale around May 1, new 2007 Queens, price will be around $75.00 and $85.00

Pat Ennis
1040 Union Ave.
Goodell Iowa, 50439
flat_lander@lycos.com

FOR SALE: Single story colonies with four frames of bees and a 2007 queen—bottom bd and lid included. Each box will have 4 or 5 frames with foundation. Available in early May. Contact Curtis Barnhardt at 319-480-4209 or 800-728-9979

FOR SALE: Package bees may still be available in March. Contact Phil Ebert at 641-527-2639 or e-mail ehoney37@netins.net

FOR SALE: Two tier single wall stainless steel tank setup with 18" stand. Removable top tank is 24x24x8; bottom tank is 23x36x23 (about 60 gallons) Both tanks have lids. Needs bigger outlets before it could be used for honey. Would make a nice set up. $110 as is. I would consider modifying it to your specs for a fee. Contact Phil Ebert 641-527-2639 or e-mail ehoney37@netins.net

FOR SALE: Clean 4 Gallon Paragon buckets with handles and lids. Originally held corn syrup. 1-10, $1.50 each; 11-49, $1.25 each; 50+, $1 each.

Contact Phil Ebert at 641-527-2639 or e-mail ehoney37@netins.net

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Contact Phil Ebert at 641-527-2639 or e-mail ehoney37@netins.net

Any beekeeper who wishes to be listed needs to confirm they are a member of IHPA.

Apiary Registration 2007
Maury Wills, IDALS
It is time to register your apiary sites for 2007. You may again register on-line using your pin number and password from last year. Before registering you must contact the office via email (maury.wills@idals.state.ia.us) or by phone (515-281-5783) to let us know how many apiary sites you will have in which counties. If you don’t remember your pin number and password please contact us. If you do not have a computer or are having difficulty registering on-line you may register by calling the office. If you register in this manner you must have the following apiary information available when you call:

1. Township Name
2. Landowner Name
3. Township Number
4. Range
5. Section
6. Quarter Section
7. Number of colonies at each site

For more information, contact the office at (515) 281-5783 or visit our website at http://www.idals.state.ia.us
Greetings from the President of the IHPA

Dear Honey Producers,

Winter is hanging on. While I write this, it is very cold, extremely windy and the snow is blowing creating blizzard conditions. When you read this, I certainly hope the weather has changed. The ground hog is predicting an early spring. I am ready.

Honey bees and the plight of beekeeping has been in the news quite often recently. Mike and I were driving home on Sunday evening, Feb. 11th when The Apprentice featured honey bees and Sue Bee Honey. The drive from Denver was uneventful. The International Mead Festival was great as usual. Dr. Marion Ellis was one of the speakers. Mike and I attended his session and were pleasantly surprised when he mentioned that during his presentation we might recognize some of the items. He had featured a display of our beeswax items. No matter how many seminars that we attend, we always learn something new. It was a great weekend, wonderful tasting meads and nice company.

The Des Moines Register also featured an article on honey bees and the mystery ailment ravaging the nation’s bees. The article appeared in the Monday, February 12th edition. It outlines the plight of beekeepers that face the “colony collapse disorder”. Originally the mysterious ailment was coined as “fall dwindle disease.” Pollination is in jeopardy. The National Honey Board is spending money on research for CCD as it is being called now. The CCD group and Bee Alert Technology are asking beekeepers’ assistance in reporting instances of honey bee Colony Collapse Disorder and narrowing down management practices and environmental factors that might be common to these losses. Beekeepers can assist with this effort by participating in the National Bee Loss Survey as www.beesurvey.com. Please report any losses you have to this survey site. We need all the help that we can get on this one.

The national TV news and Iowa TV news stations have reported on the Colony Collapse Disorder and the devastation that is happening to the honey bee colonies and to beekeeping. I caught several reports saying that pollination might suffer because of the loss of honey bees. We have been saying this for years, but if it gets us some publicity, I’m all for it. It causes people to think and ask questions. I spoke to the Waukee Garden Club last week and was asked lots of questions about the situation.

I spoke to the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers at their convention in Marshalltown the end of January. Some of you might get a call for some pollination work this spring. The growers were interested in information about how honey bees work and about their job in pollination. It was a good meeting. Margaret Hala manned a booth for the IHPA there also.

I received a phone call from Dick Blake. Dick lives by Shenandoah in southwest Iowa. He attended the American Honey Producers Convention and was concerned about the Colony Collapse Disorder. He was going out to one of his yards to check his hives the morning he called and if he didn’t call me back, the hives were ok. I haven’t heard back, so that must mean that at least that yard was surviving. Let’s hope the rest of us will fare so well.

Our membership has been requested to make sure that we send in the Ag census questionnaire for honey bees and beekeeping in Iowa. The request is made from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). We all need to send these figures in so that we get an accurate counting and can use the figures to get funding for the Apiary Department within IDALS (Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship). They are asking for our support and for me to stress the importance of this survey. Between January 30th and March 31st the NASS, Iowa Field Office will contact farmers throughout the state by mail or phone to complete the survey. Producers will be asked to provide data on their farm operating costs, capital improvements, assets, and debts for agricultural production, as well as farm-related income, government payments, off-farm income and operator, and household characteristics. This information is used not just by the USDA and Congress, but also by producer groups, Iowa State University, agribusinesses, and others who make the decisions that shape the future of Iowa’s agriculture. That’s why participation in ARMS(Agricultural Resource Management Survey) is so important. Producer participation in ARMS ensures that decisions affecting farmers, their families, their businesses and their communities are based on the facts, straight from the source. ARMS is USDA’s primary source of information on the production practices, resource use, and economic well-being of America’s farm households. ARMS gives U.S. farmers the opportunity to set the record straight about the issues that affect them- and to ensure that policies and programs are based on accurate, real-world data that comes straight from the producers themselves. Please complete the survey.

Remember to register your hives. Maury Wills from IDALS is submitting an article [Page 2, Apiary Registration 2007] concerning the particulars for this year’s registration. If you don’t register your hives, there is no recourse for you if you get damage from pesticide spraying.

Think spring. Spring into action as soon as the weather permits. Be ready to work your hives. Make plans to feed bees, install packages or split hives. Good luck on the over-wintering of your colonies.

Sincerely,

Donna Brahms, IHPA President
A Word From The Iowa Honey Queen

Hello Beekeepers!

Brrr. . . It's been cold. I think we have been getting pay back for all of the nice weather that we had earlier in the season, hopefully winter is almost over. It's time to start doing an inventory check, and thinking about the upcoming season. It seems that time passes by so quickly.

With the promotion opportunities I have had so far, I have really been able to talk to people about the beekeeping industry. Several people ask "What in the world got you interested in beekeeping?" I explain to them that my dad has been a beekeeper my entire life and therefore I have been interested and have learned about beekeeping throughout my life. I expressed to them that over the years, bees really began to fascinate me, and I wanted to get more involved by becoming a honey queen. It seems that once they start asking questions they can’t stop. I have realized that the word "honeybee," and "beekeeping" is a foreign language to some people. It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to teach people of all different ages some amazing facts about honeybees.

It is so important to get the future generation interested in beekeeping. I think that it is wonderful that the Iowa Honey Producers have been able to give the younger generation the opportunity to get involved by offering the youth scholarship program, thanks to Teresa for getting the program started.

I am looking forward for warm weather, and future promotions. Please "BEE" thinking of a promotion that you may want me to help you with.

Sincerely,
Chelsa Bronnenberg
2007 Iowa Honey Queen

Beekeeping Education Classes

By the time this goes to press, all of our classes will be underway except for the one in Spencer. That will be a weekend course and is scheduled for March 23rd and 24th. Jim Strahan and Pat Ennis will be running that class. We didn’t get enough enrollments to hold the class at DMACC in Ankeny. This may be the result of limited signup time. The window available for holding the course was narrow. We had to schedule it to start a week after the catalog came out. That didn’t give prospective students much time. We’ll try for a different window next year and see what happens.

I didn’t think I was going to get enough for my Marshalltown class but several people signed up the day before class was scheduled to start. We wound up with seven people. Margaret Hala is helping me teach that class. Ron Wehr had five signed up for the class in Washington the last time I talked to him. Pat Randol has a nice group signed up for Winterset. Pat Ennis has a class underway at NIACC. He told me how many he had but I seem to have forgotten.

All of the mentoring students have been hooked up with a class. That got to be a bit of a panic at the end. Overall class enrollment is down a little from last year but we have a number of prospective beekeepers out there. Let’s do what we can to help keep them interested.

Submitted by Phil Ebert

Hive Sentry

Most of you are aware that Jerry Bromenshank [www.beealert.info] has developed a sensing system that can alert beekeepers when their hives start to move when they aren’t supposed to. He has now expanded the system beyond theft protection. The system now allows monitoring of hive temperatures both in the beeyard and during transport on trucks. The satellite has the capability to simultaneously monitor four external devices. Jerry is currently developing a pallet weighing system so you can tell whether colonies are gaining or losing weight. This can allow you to make several judgments as to whether on not you need to visit that yard. He can develop other sensor systems according to beekeeper needs.

The other thing being developed is an electronic hive scanner. Jerry has found that different races of bees have a distinct sound signature, i.e., a different buzz. The sound signature changes when the bees have foulbrood, are crashing from mites, are queenless, etc. In the future, it may be possible to walk through yards and monitor them without opening a lid.

Submitted by Phil Ebert
Midwest Beekeeping Symposium ~ June 9, 2007
SAVE THE DATE

The Illinois State Beekeepers Association is proud to announce its upcoming Beekeeping Symposium. This full day meeting will feature:

- Keynote Presentations
- General Sessions
- Breakout Sessions
- A "Beginner's Track" of Sessions
- Beekeeping Supply Vendors
- A Provided Lunch

Please save the date and look for further details to be releases in early 2007. Please also refer to the Illinois State Beekeepers Association website for the latest information www.isba.us

The Symposium will be located at the McHenry County College (MCC) Conference Center, in Crystal Lake, IL. For a campus map and driving directions, you may visit here: www.mchenry.edu/Maps

The 2007 Midwest Beekeeping Symposium is sponsored by:

- Illinois State Beekeepers Association
- Stateline Beekeepers Association
- Lake County Beekeepers Association
- Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association
- Cook-DuPage Beekeepers Association
- McHenry County College

Questions can be directed to ISBA President, Ken Haller via e-mail at: vikinghoneyfarm@comcast.net

Siouxland Flower, Lawn and Garden Show

The Siouxland Flower, Lawn and Garden Show will be held on Friday, March 23 and Saturday, March 24, 2007, at the Bluffs Area Family Center in Sergeant Bluff, Iowa. Educational sessions, how-to demonstrations, and exhibits are all part of this new, one-of-a-kind event in northwest Iowa.

Exhibits will include tried-and-proven as well as new and innovative products and services that make flower, lawn, and garden care easier and more enjoyable. Exhibitors are also permitted to sell or take orders for horticultural products and services during the show. Booth spaces are very affordable. A few spaces are still available but they are going fast.

“The planning committee is really excited about the quality of the exhibits and topics,” said Sherry McGill, Woodbury County Extension Education Director. “One of our featured speakers, garden writer Jan Riggenbach, will present Confessions of a Compulsive Planter.” Other well-known speakers include Jamie Beyer, Dawn Chapman, Dr. Eldon Everhart, Kelly Feehan, Harlan Hamernik, Dr. Cindy Hanes, Jane and Jack Hogue, John Kluver, Kelly Norris, Don Poggensee, Jan Riggenbach, Dr. Steven Rodie, James Romer, Gary Whittenbaugh, Megan Will, and Kathleen Ziemer. Multiple presentations will be running concurrently on both days.

Numerous topics will be covered in presentations, hand-outs, how-to demonstrations, workshops, and by vendors and Master Gardeners. Some of the topics include native perennials, herbs, perennials for shade, house plants, ornamental grasses, shrubs, iris, coneflowers, dahlias, conifers, conifer companions, groundcovers, aggressive plants, rain gardens, water gardening, butterfly gardening, gardening with children wildlife, photography, lawn care, conserving water, landscape problem-solving, basic landscape design, sustainable landscape design, home greenhouses, and edible landscapes.

Demonstrations will include topics related to container gardening, vegetable gardening, transplanting, and ponds. This “family-friendly” event will also include workshops and activities for children.

Admission is only $4. Food and refreshments are available during the show. Parking is free.

The planning committee for this event includes representatives from Iowa State University Extension, University of Nebraska Extension, horticulture businesses, and Master Gardeners.

For more information on attending, volunteering, being a commercial vendor, or displaying as a nonprofit organization, please contact Woodbury County Extension at 712-276-2157 or visit www.extension.iastate.edu/woodbury
2007 Beginning Beekeeping Workshops

Everything You Need to Know to Get Started in Apiculture

2007 Beginning Beekeeping Workshops

Beginning Beekeeping Workshops have been scheduled for 2007 at the following sites:

Feb. 3 – Scottsbluff 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Feb. 17 – ARDC near Mead 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
April 7 – ARDC near Mead 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Registration fee for the Scottsbluff and Mead workshops is $20 per person or $20 per family plus $8 for each family member accompanying the registered participant. Registration includes refreshments, lunch, and a workbook for new beekeepers. Preregistration is required for both workshops. The April Workshop is a hands-on session for participants in both the Scottsbluff and Ithaca workshops. Registration is not required for the April session. The April session will be a day to meet other beekeepers and share a potluck meal. Those attending will experience opening and examining honey bee colonies with guidance from members of the Nebraska Beekeepers Association. If you have questions about the workshops or need further information, contact:

Marion Ellis at (402) 472-8696 or MELLIS3@unl.edu.

Send Scottsbluff Registrations to:
Pat Martin
Panhandle Research and Extension Center
512 E. 35th Street
Scottsbluff, NE 69361
Email: pmartin2@unl.edu
Phone: (308) 632-1230
Make check payable to: University of Nebraska

Send Ithaca Registrations to:
Keith Glewen, Extension Educator
1071 County Road G
Room B, UNL Extension
Agricultural Research & Development Center
Ithaca, NE 68033-2234
Email: Kglewen1@unl.edu
Phone: (402) 624-8030
Make check payable to: University of Nebraska

Master Beekeeping Program

The University of Nebraska offers a Master Beekeeping Program that provides advanced beekeeping training for experienced beekeepers. Participants attend a 3-day workshop in June at the Agricultural Research and Development Center where they receive detailed instruction in the biology and management of honey bees. Training includes both classroom and hands-on sessions. Beekeepers should have at least one year of experience managing honey bees before registering for this workshop. Due to the program leader being on sabbatical leave in 2007, the next workshop will be offered in June of 2008. Registration for the workshop is $100 and includes five meals, refreshments, a cap, and a workbook.

Send Master Beekeeping Program Inquiries to:
Dr. Marion Ellis
Department of Entomology
202 Plant Industry Bldg.
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0816
Email: MELLIS3@unl.edu
Phone: (402) 472-8696
Make check payable to: University of Nebraska

Location of Meeting Sites

Scottsbluff Classroom Workshop
Panhandle Research and Extension Center
4502 I Street
Scottsbluff, NE 69361

ARDC near Mead Classroom Workshop
Agricultural Research and Development Center
Headquarters Building
University of Nebraska
Ithaca, Nebraska 68033-2234

ARDC near Mead Hands-On Workshop
Agricultural Research and Development Center
Apiculture Laboratory
University of Nebraska
Mead, Nebraska 68033-2234

Directions to the University of Nebraska Panhandle Research and Extension Center
4502 I Street
Scottsbluff, NE 69361
308-632-1230
http://www.panhandle.unl.edu

Directions to ARDC Christenson Research and Education Building
http://ardc.unl.edu/direct.htm
FROM OMAHA: Take Dodge Street west on Hwy. 275, turn south on Hwy. 275 until it winds into Hwy. 92. Travel west on Hwy. 92 to Mead. (Taking L Street out of Omaha is also Hwy. 92) A green Univ. of Nebraska Agricultural R & D Center sign is located just east of the main turn into Mead. Turn south (left) onto Road 10 and travel 6 miles to the stop sign. You will approach a stop sign and a directory sign. Turn west (right) on Hwy. 66 (formerly Hwy. 63) and travel ¾ mile to the August N. Christenson Research and Education Building. The building is located on the south side of Hwy. 66 between County Roads 10 and 11. Please park in the west parking lot. Time considerations: approximately 40 minutes from west Omaha.

FROM LINCOLN: Take Hwy. 77 north out of Lincoln towards Wahoo. Just north of the unincorporated community of Swedeburg (and 4 miles south of Wahoo), you will approach a green Univ. of Nebraska Agricultural R
THE BEEYARD REPORT

It’s February 13th. It’s below zero. A nasty wind is blowing. I don’t even want to know what the wind chill is. Snow is everywhere. I don’t think this bodes well for the bees. Cold weather doesn’t kill healthy bees. It will kill bees that have been under stress. A lot of mine were under stress in the fall and early winter. This gives me a lot of anxiety about high winter losses. I looked in my yard notes from last spring. We were looking at the bees on Feb 2 last year. I had a pretty good idea where I was at by the end of February. That won’t be happening this year.

It’s hard to plan when you don’t know what is going to happen. We have ordered fewer queens this year since I think death loss is going to be high. We have also set aside packages for us. I do this every year but we haven’t had to use any since the spring of 2000. We have set aside more than normal this year. If the bees somehow come through, we’ll sell off some of the packages.

There are some horror stories coming out of California and the Southeast. One of them was that Dave Hackenberg had lost 9000 colonies of bees. I didn’t give much credence to that one. I knew he didn’t have that many. It turned out to be 1900 which is about 2/3 of his operation. Occurrences like this have been documented in 22 states. They are calling it CCD--Colony Collapse Disorder. Nobody really knows what is happening. Whole yards collapse. I feel like Varroa is at the root of this but that’s just my opinion.

I saw a story on Nightline about the disappearing orange groves in Florida. The acreage in orange groves has declined 30% during the last 10 years. Most of this ground is being developed. In some cases it is selling as high as $15,000/acre. Orange trees are also being attacked by some exotic pests. It reminded me of the honeybee problems. The population of Florida is going to continue to explode. We can’t put off development but I wonder how we maintain balance. We are going to see a lot of acres come out of CRP in our area as the demand for corn acres increase. If all of the ethanol plants on the books come to completion, I don’t think there is enough corn to go around. It was pointed out to me that someone like Cargill will probably come in at that point and buy up the failing plants for 30 cents on the dollar.

Most of my excess honey is sold but I am holding back more than normal in case my bee losses are catastrophic. We have to be able to take care of our stores. There is still work to do but this time of year I get to quit when I feel like it. We still have some equipment left to repair and booking package bees seems to take up quite a bit of time. One winter project has been remodeling the kitchen. I had thought about it for years but never got around to it. I decided I needed help if it was ever going to happen. I have a neighbor who is good carpenter. He put the cabinets in. The big corner cabinet wouldn’t fit through the back door. We had to take out the kitchen window to get it inside. We were going to replace the window anyway but hadn’t planned to do it on a day when the temperature was zero.

Let’s hope for a positive end to winter and THINK SPRING!!!!!

Submitted by Phil Ebert
Featured Beekeeper of the Month

This month our featured beekeeper is Dean L. Wooten. He and his wife Edyth live in Muscatine, Iowa and operate Wooten Apiaries. Dean became interested in beekeeping because his grandfather had crippling arthritis for 30 years and depended on a wheelchair. Dean heard about bee strings helping arthritis and took a beekeeping class at Muscatine Community College. Then he bought the teacher’s business. Now he has 11 colonies and had an excellent 100-pound crop to some not so good this year. He sells honey to the roadside markets from the fields he has his bee colonies on. The bees are around watermelon, cantaloupe, vegetables, strawberries, and fruit orchards. He likes the extra income since social security doesn’t cover all living expenses.

Dean is expanding his numbers by 14 this year for another vegetable grower. He helps the Iowa Honey Producers at the State Fair.

Dean says he has learned to be a beekeeper and not an exterminator. It seems he received a call from a party who thought they had honeybees in their attic. Dean knew better, but got his ladder out, put on his suit, took a large knife and went up for a look. He cut a hornet nest down and sprayed it with 2 cans of spray. He told the homeowner he would be back in the evening when the rest of the hornets would be back. After prayer meeting Dean went back, suited up and went into the attic. His helmet kind of blocked his vision and Dean slipped and went through the ceiling catching himself on the joists with his arms. The homeowner heard the noise and tried to help Dean, whose arms finally gave out. Dean landed on a glass top patio table. Luckily the table wasn’t that far from Dean’s feet and did not break. He was in a little pain, which a trip to the emergency room solved. Lesson learned.

Besides beekeeping, Dean has another interesting project to keep him busy. He is a tour guide at the Pine Creek Grist Mill at Wildcat Den State Park near Muscatine. He told me the history of the mill. Benjamin Nye first built a sawmill in the spring of 1834. In 1837 Nye built a second mill, a gristmill, to grind grain into flour. In 1848 Nye built his third mill which is the one Dean is involved with. The mill has survived the flood of 1883 and after many years of wear and tear has been restored by the Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill. It is open to the public. If you are in the area, stop out. Maybe you’ll get lucky enough to have a personal tour by Dean.

Thanks for your story.

Submitted by Ron Wehr

Mystery Illness Wipes Out Bee Colonies
Honey Production, Crop Pollination May Be Affected

By GENARO C. ARMAS, AP

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (Feb. 11) - A mysterious illness is killing tens of thousands of honeybee colonies across the country, threatening honey production, the livelihood of beekeepers and possibly crops that need bees for pollination.

Reports of unusual colony deaths have come from at least 22 states. Some affected commercial beekeepers - who often keep thousands of colonies - have reported losing more than 50 percent of their bees. A colony can have roughly 20,000 bees in the winter, and up to 60,000 in the summer.

"We have seen a lot of things happen in 40 years, but this is the epitome of it all," Dave Hackenberg, of Lewisburg-based Hackenberg Apiaries, said by phone from Fort Meade, Fla., where he was working with his bees.

The country's bee population had already been shocked in recent years by a tiny, parasitic bug called the varroa mite, which has destroyed more than half of some beekeepers' hives and devastated most wild honeybee populations.

Along with being producers of honey, commercial bee colonies are important to agriculture as pollinators, along with some birds, bats and other insects. A recent report by the National Research Council noted that in order to bear fruit, three-quarters of all flowering plants - in-
cluding most food crops and some that provide fiber, drugs and fuel - rely on pollinators for fertilization.

Hackenberg, 58, was first to report Colony Collapse Disorder to bee researchers at Penn State University. He notified them in November when he was down to about 1,000 colonies - after having started the fall with 2,900.

"We are going to take bees we got and make more bees ... but it's costly," he said. "We are talking about major bucks. You can only take so many blows so many times."

One beekeeper who traveled with two truckloads of bees to California to help pollinate almond trees found nearly all of his bees dead upon arrival, said Dennis vanEnglesdorp, acting state apiarist for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

"I would characterize it as serious," said Daniel Weaver, president of the American Beekeeping Federation. "Whether it threatens the apiculture industry in the United States or not, that's up in the air."

Scientists at Penn State, the University of Montana and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are among the quickly growing group of researchers and industry officials trying to solve the mystery.

Among the clues being assembled by researchers:

Although the bodies of dead bees often are littered around a hive, sometimes carried out of the hive by worker bees, no bee remains are typically found around colonies struck by the mystery ailment. Scientists assume these bees have flown away from the hive before dying.

From the outside, a stricken colony may appear normal, with bees leaving and entering. But when beekeepers look inside the hive box, they find few mature bees taking care of the younger, developing bees.

Normally, a weakened bee colony would be immediately overrun by bees from other colonies or by pests going after the hive's honey. That's not the case with the stricken colonies, which might not be touched for at least two weeks, said Diana Cox-Foster, a Penn State entomology professor investigating the problem.

"That is a real abnormality," Hackenberg said.

Cox-Foster said an analysis of dissected bees turned up an alarmingly high number of foreign fungi, bacteria and other organisms and weakened immune systems.

Researchers are also looking into the effect pesticides might be having on bees.

In the meantime, beekeepers are wondering if bee deaths over the last couple of years that had been blamed on mites or poor management might actually have resulted from the mystery ailment.

"Now people think that they may have had this three or four years," vanEnglesdorp said.

NHB Funds Research for “Colony Collapse Disorder”

Firestone, Colo.- The National Honey Board (NHB) recently approved an emergency request for $13,000 to support research into significant bee losses sustained in recent months to undetermined cause(s), a phenomena termed “Colony Collapse Disorder.” The research group requesting the funds will use it as seed money to begin the research, and is seeking additional funding from other sources.

In late 2006, beekeepers throughout the United States began reporting large losses in honey bee colonies. Although bee experts have identified several possible culprits, a prevailing theory has yet to emerge.

The research group, the Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) work group, is composed of university faculty researchers, state regulatory officials, cooperative extension educators and industry representatives.

The CCD group and Bee Alert Technology are asking beekeepers’ assistance in reporting instances of honey bee Colony Collapse Disorder and narrowing down management practices and environmental factors that might be common to these losses. Beekeepers can assist with this effort by participating in the National Bee Loss Survey at www.beesurvey.com.

NHB conducts research, advertising and promotion programs to help maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets for honey. These programs are funded by an assessment of one cent per pound on domestic and imported honey.
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