
THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 30, Number 4

May 2005

LANE COUNTY'S BEE SCHOOL A BUZZING SUCCESS

Our colleagues from the Lane County Beekeepers Association (LCBA) reported that their 2005 Bee School was quite a production! There were 130 students in attendance, and the Grange Hall was filled to capacity.

Bee School is the LSBA's major outreach to the community, and also its most important fundraiser. LSBA extends a hearty thank-you to all the many members who helped with planning refreshments, presentations, and of course cleanup! And, welcome to all the new members that have joined the club!



Chuck Hunt presents



Largest crowd in LCBA Bee School History!



VP Morris Ostrofsky and GloryBee's Margaret Swall present a certificate for a 3 lb. package of bees to prizewinner Dick Boyce.

Your club's news and photos can be featured here, too. But first, you need to send it all to the Editor!

Regular or digitized photos, via e-mail or U.S. Mail--it all works for us. Send us your news today!

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Monthly Beekeeping Tips
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 - *Review of BEESIEGED Book by Bill Mares
-

Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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Full-page:	100.00

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Contact the Editor for any special requirements and mechanical information.

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President's Message

by Kenny Williams

During the business meeting of the OSBA membership at our 2004 Fall Conference at Newport, we were discussing ways that members could make donations to a Research Fund to be used only by an Oregon State University honeybee entomologist, should we succeed in restoring that position. We ran short of time to discuss this matter fully, but a motion was passed to dedicate the funds raised at our annual auction to this fund. Treasurer Phyllis Shoemake has accordingly set up a new, separate bank account for these funds. The auction lately has attracted some high-rollers, shall we say, who generously bid on donated items, and one by-product of this kind of bidding is that beekeepers with fewer hives often bow out of the bidding.

However, all beekeepers have a stake in honeybee research at OSU. Our discussion at the business meeting centered on additional ways for any and all members to donate. A motion was made to continue this dialog at another time, as rushing through it would not do the issue justice, and member interest seemed high.

At that time I offered that at the next OSBA Executive Board meeting, we would assemble a one-time committee consisting of Board Members plus interested individual members, to discuss the one issue of methods for members to donate. At our meeting last fall there were four ideas on the table:

- A Pledge by Mail, similar to public radio or television
- A donation of so much per hive, such as 15 cents or 25 cents
- A donation of product
- A donation according to range in size, such as Hobbyist, Sideliner, or Commercial Beekeeper

Certainly, there are other ideas not yet presented. We are eager to hear from interested members at this coming Board meeting, which is Saturday, May 21, 2005, at 1:30 PM at the Salem Public Library at 585 Liberty St. SE, just south of the downtown area. (See the OSBA website under "Events" for a map.)

We understand from people at the University that a donation from an affected industry, even though relatively small, is a signal to the University that we are in earnest about the position. We raised about \$5000 at last fall's auction. If we could generate at least an additional two or three thousand dollars by membership donations, we would like to be in a position to offer the University a dependable, annual research donation on the order of \$8000. This will be the goal of our discussion on May 21.

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NORTH CAROLINA HUSTLES TO REBUILD STATE'S BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

The state of North Carolina is struggling to boost its numbers of honeybees and beekeepers available to help with crop pollination.

David Tarpy, the state's cooperative extension apiculturist and assistant professor at North Carolina State University, voiced his opinion that if something isn't done about the problem now, the state may be heading towards an agricultural crisis.

In the late 1980's, North Carolina had some 180,000 managed bee colonies. Now there are about 100,000 such colonies and last year, the state's beekeepers had to turn down requests for some 10,000 new colonies.

Many farmers there are moving out of growing tobacco and into crops such as cucumbers and melons. Six years ago, farmers say, they could find plenty of bees to pollinate their crops, but these days, the shortage is pronounced.

Most of the dozen or so commercial beekeepers that the farmers rely on for pollination services are at least 60 years old. So, new, young blood is needed for this effort. North Carolina State University hopes that a cost-share program it has started will lure more people into beekeeping as a hobby, laying the groundwork for an eventual increase in commercial beekeeping. The school has provided 250 qualified applicants with two hives of Russian honey bees. Participants were expected to invest \$50 to \$150 for protective clothing, smokers, and other necessary items. The program will help put the newcomer in touch with nearby mentors. Prior to the deadline of February 11, the program had already received 600 applications, and by the final date, over 2700 individuals had applied to the program. Also, organizers of annual introductory classes in beekeeping are reporting that their enrollment has doubled or tripled since the N.C. State program was announced.



The one-year program is being funded with a \$164,000 grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation, which administers money received by North Carolina from its settlement with cigarette manufacturers. Golden LEAF did not feel that underwriting commercial operations fit its mission. Instead, the organization hopes to bring new people into the hobby and that they decided to master all aspects of bee cultivation, including breeding and production of honey, pollen and beeswax. And, it's possible that some hobbyists could decide to take the plunge and join the bee business full time.

Tarpy said he hopes that some of the 250 new beekeepers will take it seriously and expand to the point where they may start doing it commercially.

Incidentally, North Carolina has a Master Beekeeper Program. It is an educational and public service program which is sponsored by the N.C. State University Cooperative Extension Service, the N.C. State Beekeepers Association, and the N.C. Dept. of Agriculture. It is a multilevel program with over 3,500 individuals enrolled at some level of the program. For more information, visit www.ncbeekeepers.org/master.htm, or contact the North Carolina State Beekeepers Association.



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KASHMIR BEE VIRUS

Background

Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV) was diagnosed in the Fraser Valley in the spring of 2004, in a commercial operation whose honeybee colonies had declined and subsequently died. It has also been recently found in colonies that appear healthy.

The virus had previously been diagnosed in British Columbia in the early 1980s, in honeybee stock originally imported from Australia and New Zealand. At that time, well before the Varroa mite arrived, no symptoms had been observed and therefore, KBV was not a concern.

In the late 1980s, researchers in Europe and the US reported that KBV was a highly contagious and virulent pathogen in the presence of Varroa mites. Over the years, little information became available about KBV and its distribution and impact, since colony losses were mostly attributed to mite parasitism or other causes without proof. KBV and other viral honeybee agents may not have received much attention because disease symptoms were generally not as definitive as others, while laboratory analysis required expertise and resources.

The precise distribution of KBV in North America is not known. KBV was detected in 1995 in a small US survey of seven states. All states were positive: California, Florida, Maine, Minnesota, New York, Texas, and Washington. It has been suggested that the virus is endemically present throughout most of North America's honeybee population.

KBV Origin and Classification

The Kashmir Bee Virus is a natural disease of the eastern honeybee *Apis cerana*. After the introduction of the western honeybee *Apis mellifera* into the distribution range of *A. cerana* in southern Asia, the virus made a "species-jump" and began to parasitize its new host.

KBV of honeybees is a RNA-virus in the newly established family Dicistroviridae. RNA viruses (in comparison to DNA-viruses) are very small and associated with the mitochondria of host cells.

Disease Spread

KBV's virulence is made possible because of its association with the Varroa mite. Mites carry the viruses externally and internally. By piercing the honeybee's cuticle, they transfer viral particles into the host's tissue. The bee's pupal stage appears most susceptible to infection. In the confined space of the capped pupal cell, viruses are not only transferred from mite to bee, but also from mite to mite. After several mite generations in the honeybee colony, the majority of mites will be KBV carriers. As more bees become infected, the transfer of food, grooming and other physical contact between bees facilitates the further spread of the virus.

It is not known whether the honey bee tracheal mite (*Acarapis woodi*) and Nosema (*Nosema apis*) are viral vectors as well. Since these pathogens cause tissue damage in the tracheal tubes and epithelial cell wall of the midgut of adult bees respectively, they may play a role in the introduction of viral agents into the host's body cavity.

Expression of Virulence

At this time, the causes that trigger virulence are unclear. Throughout the 1980s, the presence of KBV in BC colonies was an academic curiosity, as the virus remained non-virulent or in a latent state. Even after the introduction of Varroa in British Columbia in 1990, there were no reports of viral infestations. In recent years, occasional incidents of colony losses that could

not be attributed to common honeybee diseases may have involved KBV.

Some studies have shown that high mite levels result in high virulence. This correlation can be readily accepted as large numbers of KBV-carrying mites contribute to the rapid spread of the virus throughout the bee population, while stress caused by mite parasitism increases the honeybee's susceptibility to viral infection. However, surveys carried out by MAFF indicate that KBV virulence also occurs when Varroa infestation levels are low or non-detectable.

Field Symptoms

There is no prescribed set of symptoms confirming KBV in the field. Definitive diagnosis is carried out in the laboratory through Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) analysis. However, beekeepers may observe various symptoms that may point to viral infection. These include:

- *Weakening of the colony without any apparent presence of brood diseases and mites.*
- *Increasing numbers of dead or dying bees on the inner cover, landing board or in front of the hive. Dying bees may be trembling and display uncoordinated movement.*
- *Affected bees are partly or completely hairless where the upper surface of the thorax is especially dark.*
- *Older adult bees have a greasy or oily appearance while recently emerged bees may appear opaque as if pigmentation of the tissue had not been completed prior to emergence.*

Remedial Action

There is no product available for KBV control. Most viral infections become evident when bees have been stressed due to other diseases, weather conditions or management practices. Some bee stocks have shown higher susceptibility to viral infection than others; this can be remedied by replacing the queen with a queen from another source.

To minimize the impact of KBV and other viral infections:

- *Reduce stress to bees by applying good management practices.*
- *Provide plenty of food stores, especially pollen.*
- *Keep mite levels low through frequent monitoring and applying mite control products when necessary.*
- *Apply hygienic management practices in the apiary.*

For more information, contact the Apiculture Office in Abbotsford, British Columbia, at 604-556-3152 / 604-556-3129 or visit MAFF's website at www.agf.gov.bc.ca/apiculture.

Apiculture Factsheet #230

PRESS RELEASE FROM BEE CULTURE MAGAZINE

BEES BESIEGED, by *Bill Mares*, explores the troubled world of honey bees, beekeeping, and beekeepers as no Bill book has done before. It sheds light on this tiny, but so very important aspect of American Agriculture. **BEES BESIEGED** looks at the problems of today, analyzes this esoteric industry and offers hope where, lately, hope has been in short supply.

--Kim Flottum Flottum, *Editor, Bee Culture magazine.*

One Beekeeper's Bittersweet Journey To Understanding - *Bees Besieged* by Bill Mares

Bill Mares is a hobby beekeeper living in Vermont. Several years ago he lost all of his bees...they died in the spring from a tiny, exotic, and poorly understood pest that is still not under control. Bill decided then to find out what he could about his bees, this deadly, destructive pest, his beekeeping hobby, but most of all the bigger industry he was a part of.

He began a journey that took him from his home in Vermont to California; from Florida to the Pacific Northwest; from the Midwest plains to the blueberry barrens of Maine. He talked to University scientists who studied bees and to those who studied their pests; he talked to commercial beekeepers that, like Gypsies, move their bees from one crop to another to make their living. And he talked to those who stay at home to make honey for a living. He talked to hobby and sideline beekeepers, honey packers and importers, to government regulators and scientists, and everyone and anyone he thought might help him understand what was happening to the whole world of honey bees and to his bees in particular. What he found was an agricultural legacy under siege, an ageless tradition disintegrating around him. And though he found little solace, he did find understanding, and perhaps some hope.

In his quest to understand why all of his bees died, Bill visited scores of people associated in one way or another with this small, quirky industry. And what he found was that to solve this Industry's woes, you must also understand the problems they have with pesticides; foreign honey and international trade; politics and personalities; zoning and government regulations; killer bees and killer bee diseases; cowboy beekeepers who defy the authorities; droughts, floods, frigid winters, blistering summer heat and Mother Nature in general; and mostly, you have to understand the fundamental economics of agriculture in the U.S.

They have all contributed to the growing threat. They are all part of the storm. This spring honey bees and that tiny, exotic pest made the news again, this time threatening the entire production of the most important pollinated crop and the most valuable food California grows and exports...Almonds.

During the spring of 2005 thousands of beekeepers lost their bees, threatening not only California's almonds, but fruit, vegetable, and nut crops all across the nation. This year Bill's losses were magnified a million times, and everywhere there was concern. But the answers Bill found shed light on these problems, and offer hope for a future for honey bees and beekeeping. Moreover, *Bees Besieged* tackles these obstacles, fleshes them out and renders them clear and understandable. But beekeeping is still in a dangerous, though more visible place, and vigilance is still needed. But because of Bill's journey, at the very least these problems are now not nearly as much of a threat.

"...a well written narrative that gives an accurate picture of what American Beekeeping is today."
Sue Hubbell, *Author, Beekeeper.*

"...torrentially informative, fun and fascinating."
Edward Hoagland, *Author, Environmentalist.*

Bees Besieged, by Bill Mares. Published by the A.I.Root Co.,
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Queens, Bees, Honey & Pollination

BEEKEEPING IN THE OLD DAYS, WAS DONE IN STRAW SKEP. YOU MIGHT FIND OTHER SAMPLES OF SKEP SOMEWHERE ELSE IN THIS NEWSLETTER!

NORTHWEST BEEKEEPING TIPS - MAY

By Harry Vanderpool, WVBA

- Don't let colony stores get below two or three full frames of honey. Depending on your location, elevation, and the weather, you can still have periods of dearth.
- Supply water in apiaries and out yards. Small wading pools for toddlers made out of hard plastic make a cheap water supply. Dump a bucket of water in and toss in some rocks or boards for the bees to land on.
- Inspect colonies at least every other week. Replace as many crummy frames as you can muster up replacements for. Toss them into the burn barrel and light a match before you change your mind. Don't be cheap!
- Keep an eye out for American Foulbrood. If you do not know what Foulbrood looks like, ask a senior beekeeper to accompany you in your next hive inspections. Your favorite bee supply establishment has a book available with excellent pictures for about five bucks. (Honey Bee Diseases & Pests, C.A.P.A.)
- Check the calendar and remove varroa mite strips in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Place honey supers on your hives only after spring medications have ended, varroa strips are out, and after the prescribed rest period if you used Coumaphos or Apilife-VAR. Read the label.
- Stay a step ahead of the swarming tendency with thoughtful timing of your annual requeening program and making your splits and nucs. Supering ahead for honey, and increasing ventilation through the hive, seems to help, also.
- Set out some extra hives with empty frames for swarm decoys. Do this in order to catch swarms from those other beekeepers who have swarms issue from time to time.
- This life is not a dress rehearsal, dear friends. Make this year a meaningful year to remember. This is the season to try all of those cool procedures that you have always wanted to attempt. Whether it's raising queens, starting a 2-queen colony, or whatever; roll up your sleeves and get started. Enjoy your life with the bees!
- Don't miss your regional beekeepers association meeting. You are truly missed when you do not attend.

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Continued on next page

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