

THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 29, Number 3

April 2004

BEEKEEPING RESTRICTIONS IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY CREATES A REAL BUZZ AND POSSIBLE BLEAK FUTURE FOR POLLINATORS IN REGION

Recent news reports have described the problems experienced by California's almond growers regarding a shortage of beehives available for pollination services. Many beekeepers from Oregon and other states across the country have been making the trek to the almond orchards with their truckloads of bees. Yet, even with bees being brought in from out of state, there have not been nearly enough bees available for the exponentially-expanding almond orchards in Oakland and around the Central Valley.

One of the problems contributing to California's shortage of in-state bees available for pollination services is a Calaveras County ordinance.

As more people move to rural areas and then complain about the presence of honeybees, the beekeepers are being pushed from the places they need to cultivate their inventory.

On February 12, 2004, *The Union Democrat* newspaper published an article written by Scott Pesnecker about the problem. In the story, Oakdale beekeeper Joel Whitlock—a local beekeeper—stated that Calaveras County codes do not protect beekeepers. A single complaint, he said, is enough to get a beekeeper booted from his property.

The county ordinance, Whitlock explained, is “too vague and ambiguous. It says if a person can't get along with their normal activities, then the bees have to go.”

The county's bee rule—called the apiary ordinance—says hives can only be on property if they don't cause a “nuisance” to neighboring residents. Hives must be far enough from buildings so that people occupying those

buildings aren't prevented from “pursuing their normal activities.” No specific distances are listed. The ordinance also says hives must be far enough away from roads so they don't create a nuisance.

Calaveras County Agricultural Commissioner Jearl Howard said the ordinance was vaguely worded on purpose when written in 1984, because it's hard to predict where bees will look for food and water.

“Trying to predict everything they can do (in a document) is very difficult,” Howard said.

Three beekeepers subsequently addressed county supervisors about their concerns. Supervisors agreed to hold a study session this month (March) to review the bee ordinance.

Howard reportedly said that his office has received complaints about five of the county's 20-25 bee sites. At least three of those sites are being shut down, Whitlock said.

This report will undoubtedly provide food for thought for Oregon's beekeepers as well as those in adjacent states who provide out-of-area pollination services.

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Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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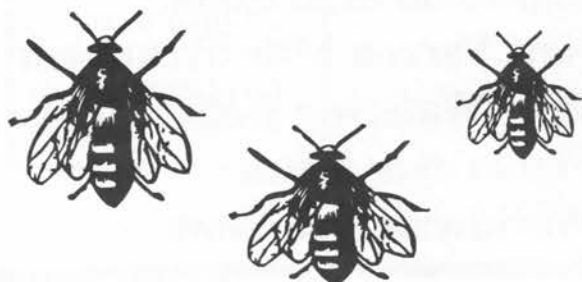
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BEEKEEPING IN PAKISTAN A PROSPEROUS INDUSTRY

Islamabad, Pakistan: Jan. 29 (PNS) – Pakistan is exporting honey to the Gulf countries and other states after attaining self-sufficiency in production of honeybees.

Beekeeping has become a profession of income generating and existence of 240,000 colonies of honeybees in all the four provinces and Azad Kashmir is proving its advancement and success.

The profession can easily be adopted as an income-generating activity, especially by women as it does not require big investments or infrastructure.

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President's Message

by Kenny Williams

As I write this message on a sunny March day of 65 degrees and the bees are actively pollinating almonds in California, it does indeed feel as though spring has sprung. With regard to a honeybee entomologist's position at OSU, 2004 is a year to build alliances at the university as they prepare a budget to present to the next legislative session in 2005. Several OSBA members have approached grower groups to ask for letters of support for such a position to be sent to Oregon State. Budget constraints in the state are as tight as ever, yet we must continue to make our voice heard, with the help of those who directly benefit from a healthy Oregon bee industry.

The next OSBA Executive Board meeting will be in May at Salem, and will cover such ongoing business as the Honeybee Workshops, State Fair, Api-Life VAR registration, the 2004 Fall Conference and more. This would be a good year for members to become more involved. There's a lot to do, and, as a group, we can make things happen. I urge each of you to choose an issue or a task, ranging from achieving funding at OSU to helping with your local bee club's picnic. Contact an officer and go for it!

AIR MOVEMENT A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN PLANTING ORCHARDS (and it's important for the bees, too)

Air movement within an orchard can significantly affect commercial fruit production. An excess or lack of air movement can result in physical or physiological damage to sensitive plant parts and reduce yield and quality.

Wind is the most common source of excess air movement in an orchard.

Studies show that high winds can break limbs, disperse straw and snow cover used for winter protection and disrupt field equipment.

(cont.)

Winds can also cause physical damage to plants and fruit. Also, prolonged exposure to prevailing winds increases the chance of dessication, as high winds accelerate water movement through crop plants, resulting in an increase in water use.

High winds can prevent or reduce insects' pollinating activity during the growing season. For example, When average wind speeds exceed 16 kmh (10 mph) or gust above 24 kmh (just under 15 mph), honeybee flight is reduced.

Plantings should be oriented to compensate for prevailing winds, and adequate shelterbelts should be in place, to reduce the impact of excess air movement.

Damage can be prevented by slowing down air movement. The general rule of thumb is one metre (approx. 40 inches) of height (protection) will provide 10 m of sheltered area.

Lack of air movement is as undesirable too much movement. No air movement can increase relative humidity, frost risk and the prevalence of disease and insect pests.

When fields and orchards are oriented to allow some air drainage within the planting, then that cold air does not settle at night and damage emerging flowers and sensitive plant parts.

Fields should follow the contour of the land. Orchardists who plant on a slope of three to five percent will create a sufficient amount of air drainage and reduce the risk of frost injury.

Shelterbelts should not completely restrict airflow because this can result in a buildup of humidity that can accelerate disease and insect development. Leaving some gaps in the shelterbelt will reduce wind problems while still allowing some air flow and ventilation. As well, inadequately pruned plantings can result in increased disease levels because humidity and temperature can build up within the microclimatic zone of the tree canopy if there isn't sufficient air movement.

Summation of wisdom, then, says that proper ventilation and air movement should always be a consideration when establishing a new planting, for success with the crop as well as with the pollinating honeybees.

This information was extrapolated from a news release generated by [Alberta Agriculture](#).

CREATING A GOOD WATER SOURCE FOR HONEYBEES

by Terrie Powers,
Clatsop County Regional Association

This past summer, because of the heat and dry weather, our bees made nuisances of themselves by taking over the birdbaths and several fountains we have in our yard. They especially seemed to like a particular fountain where the water runs down the sides of a square column in a zig-zag pattern. These sides accumulate algae growth and the bees were drawn to it like bees to honey, so to speak.

I recently found an old out-of-print book that I have been searching for called *The Beekeeper's Garden* and it had a suggested solution that we're going to try next year. I thought I would share it since it seemed like a great fix and addition to the bee yard. This might be all "old hat" for the experienced beekeepers in our group but newbees like us might be interested.

"Honey bees require a lot of water throughout the year, except when a nectar flow is in progress, when they have a surplus which has to be evaporated off. They need the water to add to the stored honey so that they can eat it and, in very hot weather, to cool the brood in the hive. They prefer to take the water from places where it is in small quantity and can warm up, and seem to prefer dirty water to clean." (Our fountain is perfect as are the birdbaths!)

"Probably the best (source) is a drum of water with a tap or a small hole, which can dribble onto a sloping board with a herring-bone arrangement of slats to guide the water." (EXACTLY like the popular fountain!) "Bees can be enticed to use it by filling the drum with a very weak sugar solution, but once they have found it plain water is sufficient. If you can encourage moss to grow on the board the system will be more efficient in holding the water." A trick I learned from bonsai to grow moss is to mix some moss with water and a little buttermilk and pour this on the surface that you want the moss to grow on. Works great.

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WARMING WEATHER MAY TRIGGER SURGE IN BEE NUMBERS

Wire Services, Associated Press, March 10, 2004
Mesa, AZ (AP) – Experts are warning of a potentially threatening explosion of aggressive bees, wasps and hornets this year.

Recent rains followed by warming weather are spurring a rapid blooming of flowers and other plants, providing a plentiful source to trigger explosive growth of hives.

Africanized bee hive that normally would peak at about 20,000 bees may grow to more than twice that number this spring, said David Langston, entomologist for the University of Arizona Maricopa Agricultural Center and former head of the Arizona Africanized Honey Bee Education Program.

But the chances of an attack are typically low unless you get so close to a hive and you're perceived as a threat by the bees, Langston said.

If the bees are away from the hive, even when feeding in large swarms, they pose little threat unless harassed, according to Langston.

(Recently) a 34-year old man fell to his death on Camelback Mountain in Phoenix as swarming insects attacked him.

###

A NEW TOOL IN MITE FIGHT

Frankfort, Ky, March 5, 2004

Kentucky beekeepers have a new weapon in their fight against a small but powerful enemy devastating their hives.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has approved the use of the pesticide Api Life VAR in Kentucky for control of varroa mites. The mites have caused havoc in domestic beehive populations and virtually wiped out wild honeybees.

"Honeybees have become an increasingly important part of Kentucky's agriculture since the rise of horticulture in the state," said Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer. "Our state apiarist, Phil Craft, has been working with beekeepers statewide, helping them to combat the varroa mite. This approval by EPA gives us another tool to preserve beekeeping in the Commonwealth."

"The value of beekeeping for crop pollination and honey production is tremendous here," Craft said. "These mites were first discovered in the U.S. in 1987 and in Kentucky in 1991, and our beekeepers have suffered significant economic and bee colony losses due to these pests."

Craft worked on the request to EPA for use of Api Life VAR in conjunction with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Division of Environmental Services.

The resistance varroa mites have shown to other chemicals used for their control has continued to make them the chief problem for beekeepers, Craft said. In October 1999, the EPA approved the CheckMite+ strip, which contains the active ingredient coumaphos, for

use in Kentucky against the mite. While Checkmite+ is still very effective, he said, varroa resistance to it has been reported in the eastern United States.

"We hope that EPA's approve of Api Life VAR will help to reduce the spread of varroa resistance to CheckMite+ and also to the pesticide Apistan through a rotation of different control agents," Craft said.

Application of Api Life VAR is more complicated than either Apistan or CheckMite+, and beekeepers must follow label instructions carefully for its use to be effective.

For more information, contact Craft by phone at (503) 573-0282 or by e-mail at phil.craft@kyagr.com.

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WEED CURSE BECOMES SALVATION

One of southeastern Australia's worst weeds has proved to be a boon to Victorian beekeepers recovering from the drought.

Apiarists in the north east of the state say the spread of Paterson's Curse, or Salvation Jane as it's also known, has helped rebuild bee colonies.

While most farmers have spent considerable time controlling the weed, Elwyn Papworth from the Victorian Apiarists Association says for beekeepers it's been a salvation.

"What weeds are to farmers, a nuisance; to the beekeeping industry the weeds are very valuable, because they are a variety of pollen for the bees themselves to enable the colony of bees to expand, and the queen to lay out more eggs and that gives a greater amount of bees in the hive for honey potential during the season."

—ABC National Rural News

SPRING

A FIGHT ABOUT MITES

Dissension among South Island (New Zealand) beekeepers on a proposal to deal with the varroa mite has sparked a board of inquiry.

Concern is growing, since the mite can be spread by beekeepers moving bees, hives and equipment around the country.

Varroa is widely present in the upper North Island, and found in pockets further south, although no cases have been found in the South Island.

Biosecurity Minister Jim Sutton says beekeepers cannot reach agreement on the contents of the Varroa National Pest Management Strategy, which is designed to keep varroa out of the South Island for as long as possible.

He says some are opposed on technical grounds, while others consider it an essential means of keeping the South Island free of the pest.

A board of inquiry which will allow all interested parties to put their views to an independent body is likely to be appointed by the end of April.

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SMELLS TRIGGER MEMORY FOR HUNGRY BEES

Lucy Andrew
ABC Science Online

Smells remind bees of where they once had a great meal, according to Australian research.

Dr. Judith Reinhard and team at the Australian National University in Canberra found that when honey bees were reminded of a smell, they could find their way back to the food using visual clues to guide them.

The results appear in a January issue of the journal *Nature*.

According to Reinhard, this was the first time researchers had used honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) in the field use smell to recall visual memories.

"It's just like what happens with humans and smell," said Reinhard. "When they smell freshly baked cake, they can immediately remember what the cake looks like, tastes like, even though they don't see the cake."

(cont. next column)

The study had two phases. In the first phase, the researchers placed feeders in particular locations 50 meters from the bee hives. The feeders contained sugar water scented with lemon, rose or almond. The honey bees learned which scent was where.

In the second phase, the researchers exposed the bees in the hive to a scent of lemon, rose or almond, and watched how they behaved. The researchers then placed empty feeders with no scent in the original positions.

More than 80% of bees flew to where they remembered the scent was. Most bees also circled and landed on the empty feeder, which Reinhard said indicated they were convinced food must be there.

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AMERICAN BEEKEEPING FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Foundation for the Preservation of Honey Bees, Inc. is a charitable research and education foundation sponsored by the American Beekeeping Federation, Inc. The ABF recently gave the Foundation a grant of \$50,000 from funds the ABF received from the estate of Glenn and Gertrude Overturf. The Foundation Trustees have chosen to use a portion of the grant to offer five \$2,000 scholarships to graduate students in apiculture with the stipulation that a portion of the funds be used to attend the 2005 American Beekeeping Federation meeting in Reno, Nevada, to present their research. The Board of Trustees hopes that the scholarships will encourage young apicultural scientists and looks forward to their contributions to the 2005 ABF meeting.

Applications for the scholarships will be accepted until June 1, 2004. Applicants should submit a cover letter from their advisor, a curriculum vitae and a research summary (not to exceed 3 pages) to the Board for consideration. The research summary can cover research completed within the past 12 months or proposed research that will be completed prior to the American Beekeeping Federation meeting. Recipients will be selected in June of 2004.

Send scholarship applications to:
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202 Plant Industries Building
Lincoln, NE 68583-0816
Phone: 402-472-8696
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HIVE CHEMICAL TREATMENT CONTROVERSY

LE FIGARO, 26.02.04

GAUCHO IS NOT A KILLER, ACCORDING TO A STUDY NEVER MADE PUBLIC

Yves Miserey

The affair surrounding Gaucho and Régent TS, the two insecticides accused by beekeepers for several years of killing bees, is certainly a very complicated one. Le Figaro obtained knowledge yesterday of an Afssa (French food safety agency) study which demonstrates that imidacloprid, the active ingredient of Gaucho, is not poisonous to bees, contrary to repeated claims by beekeepers. It so happens that this study, carried out in 2000 according to the strictest protocol permitted in apidology (the study of bees), has never been made public.

The conclusions of the team led by Jean-Paul Faucon are clear. "Repeated exposure of the colonies being studied to syrup supplemented with imidacloprid at concentrations comparable to those found in nectar in the open field provoked neither immediate nor deferred mortality (in particular hibernant), while deaths such as these are being reported by numerous beekeepers who attribute them to the use of this seed dressing product".

Experts based at Sophia Antipolis are suddenly finding themselves reduced to wondering whether the deaths observed by beekeepers could be due to other phenomena: debilitation of colonies "through the accumulated effect of several poisonings or by the simultaneous presence of one or several other products (which remain to be identified) or pathogens which may be acting in synergy", an "absence of sources of rich and varied food" or "the use of bee breeds which have not yet built up resistance to imidacloprid".

This study has come out of nowhere at the wrong time for the ministry of Agriculture. On Monday, Hervé Gaymard banned the use of fipronil (active ingredient of Régent TS produced by BASF) and also decided to initiate a contrary procedure aiming at a possible decision to ban Gaucho. This decision cannot fail to surprise now that we see that a study supplying a clear answer regarding Gaucho already exists and has been gathering dust in a cupboard.

Everybody is discontent at this present time. Beekeepers are asking that the ban on fipronil come into effect from this spring and they are calling for ban of Gaucho on corn crops (it was banned provisionally on sunflower in 1999 and 2001). Yesterday the Confédération paysanne (rural confederation) and Unaf (national French beekeepers' union) of Haute-Garonne lodged a complaint aimed at banning immediately the use of insecticides based on fipronil. Bayer and BASF are for their part adamant that their products are not at the origin of bee debilitation phenomena. BASF yesterday pronounced the suspension in France of fipronil-based insecticides as "incomprehensible" and proposed in Paris a far-reaching study into the mortality of "honey flies", as these small insects, whose biology is far from being understood perfectly, were once known.

BEEKEEPERS LAUNCH CLASS ACTION SUIT (RE: IMIDACLOPRID)

Thirteen beekeepers in the USA have launched a class action lawsuit against Bayer Crop Science, claiming losses of bee colonies from the use of the chemical imidacloprid.

Beekeepers involved in the suit feel that they have good evidence to prove their case. It is not yet known if, or when, the case will go to court.

As a consequence Bayer Crop Science has postponed a scientific information meeting that was to be held in Virginia on March 10. BCS's legal department has strongly advised them against such an open forum meeting that might include individuals who may be involved as plaintiffs or plaintiff's experts in future legal proceedings. The meeting has been postponed indefinitely until the litigation is concluded.

—Heather Clay, for the Canadian Honey Council News

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