

The Bee Line

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Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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The Oregonian/ROSS HAMILTON

Above: Honey bee pollinates apple blossoms near Dayton in Yamhill County. Right Alan Ehry, of Dundee, holds a frame of bees, brood, feed honey and fresh nectar.

Bee loss problem for farms

□ Parasites are cutting the number of hives that can be rented for pollination

By JIM KADERA

of The Oregonian staff

Maintaining a steady supply of migrant workers has concerned Northwest fruit and vegetable farmers for years.

Now another kind of migrant worker is in short supply — worker bees. Honey bees are rented from their keepers to pollinate everything from cherries and blueberries to clover and alfalfa.

But parasite mites have killed many bees in recent years and the gradual spread of aggressive Africanized bees from Latin America threatens even greater harm later in this decade, an Oregon State University researcher believes.

Domestic honey bees are important to farmers and consumers because there aren't nearly enough wild bees to do the job. OSU estimated that \$330 million worth of Oregon crops required or benefited

from honey bee pollination in 1991. The pollination value is placed at almost \$10 billion nationally.

"Right now we're in chaos," said George Hansen of Colton, past president of Oregon Beekeepers Association. Many of Oregon's 1,700 registered keepers have lost so many bees to mites they are desperate, Hansen said. Anxious to keep remaining bees working as much as possible, keepers are reluctant to raise rental fees to meet pace with high costs of fighting mite infestations.

Hansen, who has 1,500 colonies, spent \$2 per colony on mite control materials last year. But the problem has worsened and he expects to spend \$8-\$10 per colony this

year, or close to \$15,000.

Hansen and others were paid \$30 per colony in late winter for pollination services in California's vast almond groves, but they earn less closer to home. Rental rates average \$18-\$20 per colony in the Willamette Valley and \$22-\$25 in the Hood River Valley, he said.

"In the short term, I'm not optimistic. It will be hard to stay in business and there will be a big fallout of beekeepers," Hansen continued. "In the long term, I'm optimistic. There is a need for bees. When the real costs are known and we can get real

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Bees: Hybrid migration also poses threat to hives

■Continued from Page 1

value, there will be a niche for bees."

Rentals represent 65 percent of Hansen's gross income, with only 35 percent from sale of honey, wax or minor services. Keepers can sell honey for 50 cents a pound, but imports keep them from boosting prices.

Marge Ehry of Dundee, current beekeeper association president, and her husband, Alan, have watched their bee family dwindle from mite attack and other problems.

"We had 2,500 colonies in the 1970s and we have less than 500 now. The last 3-4 years have been hard on us," she said. "A keeper needs at least 600 to 1,000 colonies to make a living."

So far, there is no serious shortage of honey bees. Oregon farmers this spring are renting about 90,000 colonies, or more than 2 billion bees.

Unusually warm days in March speeded up blooming, prompting calls for an extra 10,000 colonies to be trucked in from California and

Washington.

Michael Burgett, an OSU professor of apiculture, is one of the experts trying to give keepers answers to their bee problems. Burgett began finding killer mites in late 1985.

By 1988-90, keepers were losing about 20 percent of their bees each winter. "In the next year or so, a lot more colonies will die but we can't estimate how many," he said.

A fumigant and a miticide are available to keep two different forms of mites from living in bee breathing tubes or externally in young bee broods. But keepers cannot tell if broods are infected with the external mite until it is too late, Burgett observed.

Losses to mites have not reduced Oregon farm earnings yet, he said, "but an influx of Africanized bees could. We don't know how they will do in Oregon. We hope to get the answers before they arrive."

Burgett has traveled to Central American to study the Africanized bee. A hybrid of European and African bees released in Brazil in the

1950s, the Africanized bee is more short-tempered and attacks in greater numbers when provoked.

Africanized bees are entrenched in the southern tip of Texas. Researchers there have predicted the mild winter will lead to early swarming and increased numbers of the so-called killer bees in southern Texas this year.

Some experts have said the dangerous bees won't prosper in Oregon and other states with colder climates. But Burgett isn't betting on that.

He expects the Africanized bees that move into the Southwest then Northern California to mate with European bees and be hybridized further. Those with genes closer to European bees will be able to live year round in Oregon, Burgett believes.

No one knows how aggressive those hybrids will be, but Burgett is worried about excessive swarming. "If I take 100 colonies from Corvallis to a cherry orchard near The Dalles and the farmer is stung, he won't like that," Burgett said.



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OSBA HAPPENINGS

JULY 18	SUMMER PICNIC/BEE DAY, hosted by Tillamook Beekeepers, a fun filled day for the family!!
AUG. 10-14	WESTERN APICULTURE SOCIETY OSU, full program in the May Bee Line
NOV. 13-14	JOINT OREGON/WASHINGTON CONV the GREENWOOD INN, Beaverton 1-800-289-1300

THE FOLLOWING LETTER WAS SENT TO 30 BEEKEEPERS INVOLVED WITH CRIMSON CLOVER POLLINATION. SOME BEEKEEPERS CONTACTED CHARGE AND WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM OTHERS WHO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE.

FROM: Marjorie Ehry

TO: Oregon Beekeepers

In the past several months beekeepers, both large and small have called concerning "charging" for crimson clover pollination. There is a consensus that a fee should be charged the amount varies between \$5 and \$10 per colony. However, the age old problem looms, "if I charge someone will come in for nothing. This is an old problem and there will always be those who cut prices or offer "free bees".

I am not going to tell you what you should charge for any crop but I have listed a few questions you might consider the next time you pay for a tank of gas, tires, bee supplies, medication, queens, sugar or feed of any kind, as you see this list could go on forever so think about your pocket book while you read these questions;

1. In the past 5 years have you needed to feed your bees while in crimson clover?
2. In the past 5 years have you extracted a consistent surplus of crimson clover honey? (not crimson/vetch)
3. Does your crimson clover surplus pay the expenses incurred, each year?
4. Does your grower expect a certain number of colonies per acre, in the crimson...free?
5. Does your grower expect those colonies moved in and out on his schedule...free?
6. Does your grower have the colonies placed where they will also fly to his other crops which benefit from bee pollination, at no fee?

LAST BUT NOT LEAST:

7. Have your growers made "money" from the use of your bees? If so, why are you giving away your services? ...in some circles they call this...PROSTITUTION!!

I sense that crimson clover pollination has come of age and beekeepers should not view it as a "free bee" any longer. Thanks!

Marjorie

President's commentary —



ARE YOU LISTENING;

Again this spring, many beekeepers are concerned about the bottom line. Beekeeping has undergone dramatic changes and with the arrival of the varroa mite to Oregon the challenge of survival is even greater.

In April of 89, the BEE LINE carried a well written editorial entitled "Beekeeping Costs Increase". The article pointed that pollination fees had changed little in the past five years. However, the cost of staying in business had risen significantly. In May of 1991, Dr. Burgett, spoke to OSBA, during the Spring Meeting, in Tillamook, where he chastised the beekeepers for allowing **red clover** pollination fees to drop. He also criticized them for giving their bees to producers of **CRIMSON CLOVER**. "You can't grow clover without pollination from bees". **ARE YOU LISTENING??** "It's wrong to give your valuable services away to someone who is in a position to pay. They need you worse than you their honey". Burgett said. **ARE YOU STILL LISTENING??**

Also, in 1991, Dr. Burgett and B.A. (Birtie) Stringer, were published in GLEANINGS IN BEE CULTURE. The title of this article was "COMMERCIAL POLLINATION IN OREGON-1991". **DID YOU READ THIS??** Pollination was covered in great detail and fact, complete with easy to understand, charts including crop acreages, values of commodity, average pollination fees and the 1990 pollination survey-summary sheet. **ALL VERY TIMELY INFORMATION** for you to have.

Now, I have been asked to include this information in the BEE LINE, again. And I was prepared to do so but **OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY** has already done the work and we must make use of this valuable resource.

IF I MAY TAKE A STEP BACK INTO THE PAST...there was a time when "we beekeepers" had numbers and facts but there was no way to get our message to the public, with a degree of **credibility**. So, OSBA worked long and hard to see that money was appropriated and a position developed at OSU, for someone to get our story told and make a difference for "BEE KEEPING IN OREGON"...**WE NOW HAVE A VOICE...BUT THE BEEKEEPER IS THE ONE WHO MUST LISTEN!!**

Let me ask, do you believe in the **HONEY BEE AND IT'S VALUE? DO YOU HAVE PRIDE IN THIS WAY OF LIFE??** If so, you must realize that when we put bees in free we are not safeguarding the location from some sneaky, greedy cut throat, we are in fact telling the grower that **BEEKEEPING IS 2ND RATE!** Do we see our services as being of no value or maybe we are impressed with ourselves and our over inflated egois telling us we can work for nothing and as long as we buddy up to this guy he might even call us by first name...while he tells his friends how **HIGH the beekeeper JUMPS WHEN HE WIGGLES HIS FINGER!!**

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Oregon/Washington
State Convention on
November 13-14**

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for
Northwestern Oregon
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JANUARY and FEBRUARY:

- Disturb the bees as little as possible.
- Don't break their cluster.
- Lift the hives to find any light ones.
- Give these emergency feed of sugar candy or dry sugar.
- Watch the flight intensity on warm days to spot weak colonies.
- Reduce weak colonies to one story.
- Store brood comb in cool dry place.
- Protect bees and comb against mice.
- Prepare equipment for the coming season.
- Pay your dues to the bee association.
- Buy your new colonies or order package bees.
- Order queens for April 1st delivery.

MARCH:

- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs. (3 full frames of honey).
- Feed light colonies sugar syrup (1:1) or diluted honey (2:1).
- Feed pollen substitute if colony has no access to pollen.
- Dust all colonies 3 times in ten day intervals with a 3/4 oz. portion of terramycin in powdered sugar, concentration TM-3.
- Unite queenless colonies to those needing bees.
- Rob combs of honey from colonies with excessive stores and give them empty comb next to broodnest to expand eggs laying.
- Clean the bottom boards.
- Look for colonies with nosema.
- Fumigate the comb from nosema infested colonies with 80% acetic acid.
- Check your stored comb for possible wax moth infestation.

APRIL:

- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs.
 - Feed as in march.
 - Get ready to install package bees that you might have ordered.
 - Requeen any failing queens with the queens you ordered in February.
Or...use these queens to make two-queen colonies out of your stronger colonies, to be split later for increase or for requeening.
Or... exchange the position of overly strong colonies with weaker ones, to give weaker more field bees and stronger less tendency to swarm.
 - Reverse the hive bodies on two story colonies inwhich the queen
-

- is only laying in the upper story.
- Give the single story colonies getting full of bees a second story.
 - Apple blossom time... put a queen excluder on the colonies with bees and brood in both stores and add a full depth super of drawn comb for possible honey flow. Don't give foundation at this time.
 - Keep on the lookout for American or European foulbrood and nosema.
 - Remove poor comb and replace with good comb.
 - Transfer bees from poor hives into new or reconditioned ones.
 - Check your stored combs for possible wax moth infestation.
 - Send your bee registration to the state Dept. of Agriculture.
 - Set up some decoy hives to catch stray swarms.


MAY:

- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs.
 - Give hives a 3/4 inch depth entrance for better ventilation.
 - Examine colonies every 10 days. Set off the supers; tilt up the second story and look for queen cells along the bottom of the brood comb.
 - If you find only eggs or larvae in the queen cells and the hive is crowded with bees, remove all cells----top and bottom. Put the hive body containing mostly worker eggs or larvae on the bottom board, and the other containing mostly sealed brood on top. Next put on the queen excluder and add supers to provide 10 to 15 empty full depth combs, or their equivalent, in the supers. Place the empty comb directly over the excluder.
 - If you find sealed or ripe queen cells, or possibly hatched ones, divide the colony. Set the top body, usually with most of queen cells, onto a bottom board and cover with a lid. Put this hive on a separate stand. Remove all queen cells from the lower body; put on the excluder and add supers to provide 10 to 15 empty full depth combs, or their equivalent, above the excluder. Several hours later, look for the queen in the divide. If you find a virgin queen let her remain, but if you find the old queen pick her up and let her run into the entrance of the colony on the old stand. Let the cells hatch in the divide.
 - If you find no attempt to rear queens, and the hive is full of bees, examine the supers and add more to provide 10 to 15 empty full depthcombs, or their equivalent, above the excluder.
 - If the bees seem reluctant to work in the supers thru the excluder, reverse the two hive bodies. This causes them to rearrange their stores and they will move some thru the excluder. Some colonies need training to go thru the excluder.
 - Make queen mating nucs from combs with ripe cells from the colonies you feel should be propagated.
 - Give supers with foundation, but only to those colonies that are working in the supers. Place directly over the excluder.
 - Keep on the lookout for American foulbrood.
 - Check your stored comb for possible wax moth infestation.
 - Remove and extract the supers containing well ripened honey.
-



Grandma said that we must pass
 Our blessings all around
 And share them with all other folks
 Wherever they are found.
 So if among your recipes
 A favorite one you find
 Send it in, we'll pass it on
 Like back in Grandma's time!

Cook's Corner



Attending lots of potluck picnics these days? Elsie Simila, 6848 Hazel Green Salem, has the answer for a tasty dish. It's made with honey, naturally:

FOUR BEAN SALAD

One can each - red kidney beans, green (whole or French cut) beans, wax beans, garbazo beans. Drain each can.

*1 large white, sweet onion, thinly sliced
 3/4 cup honey
 3/4 cup apple cider vinegar
 (To mix easier, heat until lukewarm)*

Add 1/2 cup safflower oil (or other good salad oil), 1/2 teaspoon pepper, 1/2 teaspoon celery seed to the honey-vinegar mixture. Then pour all over drained beans and onion slices. Best if refrigerated at least three hours before using, but will keep a long time if you can leave them alone! I save the bean juices and use in soups or gravies within a few days.

-Elsie Simila

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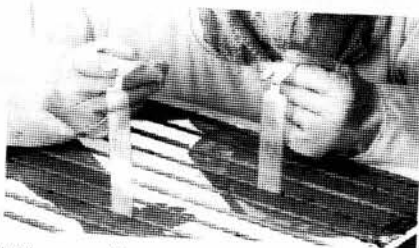
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Local Group Meetings

COOS

Beekeepers gather at the Coquille annex, next to the Extension Service Office, at 7:30 pm on the third Friday of each month except Dec.

KLAMATH

Meeting places and dates vary. Call either of the officers for particulars.

LANE

Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Public Employees Credit Union Bldg, 1155 Chambers St, Eugene.

PORTLAND

Meets in the Oregon City branch of Far West Federal Bank on McLoughlin Blvd, 7:30 pm, the fourth Monday of each month.

SOUTHERN OREGON

Meetings are the first Monday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Ag Extension Auditorium on Maple Park Dr. Medford.

TILLAMOOK

Meets the third Tues. of each month at 7:30 pm at the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, 4909 Third St.

TUALATIN

Meetings are the first Wednesday of each month during the school year at Rock Creek Campus of Portland Com. College, at 7:30 pm in Bldg. #3.

WILLAMETTE

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Membership and Publications

Membership in the Oregon State Beekeepers Association is open to anyone who has an interest in bees and beekeeping. You do not need to own bees or reside in Oregon to join.

OSBA Membership: \$15 per person. Includes 10 issues of the BEE LINE and a vote in all OSBA elections. If you belong to a local group, which one? _____
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