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# THE BEE LINE



*The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association*

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Volume 23, Number 4

May, 1998

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## OSBA FIELD DAY '98 Foothills Honey, Colton, OR



**THANK YOU, GEORGE AND SUSAN HANSEN!**



**Oregon State Beekeepers Association**

*The Bee Line* is the official publication of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association and is published ten times a year. Subscriptions are included with OSBA membership.

To join the OSBA, complete the membership application in this issue and send with payment to: Phyllis Shoemake, 1874 Winchester NW, Salem, OR 97304

Editorial Offices: Send news, announcements, letters, comments and advertising to:

Diane Varner, Editor  
PO Box 123 Yamhill, OR 97148-0123  
503-662-4559

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OSBA members	\$ 2.00
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**President's Notes**

by Torey Johnson

I was driving out to George Hansen's place a few weeks ago to help promote honey and beekeeping to a group of about twenty food group professionals the Honey Board had lined up. I was pulling the Ruhl Bee Supply Extracting Trailer out to show (it says Mobile Honey Extracting on its side). When I pulled up to a stop light a man on a motorcycle pulled up along side me. He started waving at me to get my attention, and when I looked at him he gave me a thumb's up sign.

George and I took the food group people through some hives of bees on a beautiful spring day. Their initial fear turned to delight and amazement as the bees were perfect. We may have made a few new beekeepers and helped sell a few pounds of American honey.

Beekeeping is a main link in the chain of life and we should realize that we can take advantage of this to help us with some of the major problems facing this industry. People do know what's happening to bees and beekeeping. The public respects the efforts of people helping keep the bees alive. Most seem to say, "Hey, you're helping the system. That's cool." They also ask, "What's being done and are you going to make it?" My answer is simple: "We have to, for everyone's sake, and we will." I know too many people who work so hard in this industry, and I know we will come out on top.

There are things happening in research and we will do our best to report whatever we can to you. In the meantime, continue to medicate, and do whatever you can to sample your hives and check your own mite load. We're looking for feedback from as many of you as possible.

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## OSBA Field Day Notes

by Ray Varner

The Field Day held at George and Susan Hansen's place in Colton was a big success. Nearly 200 people attended and dozens of new members signed up. Even the weather cooperated.

Participants were formed into six different groups and each group was assigned a session. At the end of each session the groups rotated, so by the end of the day everyone had attended all the sessions. The instructors did a terrific job. Bill Ruhl gave demonstrations on splitting hives, while George Hansen talked about hive management. Dr. Mike Burgett talked about diseases and medication, and specific schedules for applications of Fumidil B, Apistan and Terramycin. Dr. Lynn Royce spoke about tracheal and Varroa mites, and demonstrated hive sampling protocol. A handout on testing procedures, along with addresses, costs, etc., was supplied to everyone interested. Torey Johnson showed how to find and mark queens, and gave a hands-on lab on smoker use. Bill Krueger demonstrated the use of queen excluders.

Ruhl Bee Supply donated a hive of bees for a raffle, along with some t-shirts, and sixty-eight folks took a chance. The hive was won by Kirk DeFord.

The Portland Beekeepers hosted a Plant Sale, and had an impressive selection of bee plants. Ajuga, Globe Thistle, Wallflower, Larkspur, Valerian, Rose of Sharon and Pink Pussywillow were just some of the plants available at bargain prices. It appeared that most plants sold by the end of the event. The Portland group also supplied cold pop, bagels and other snacks.

From comments heard among the groups during the event, and while people were having lunch, it appeared that most felt the event was very helpful and worthwhile. Thanks again to George and Susan for opening their operation to OSBA and helping this annual event take place.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

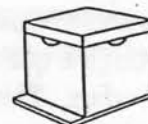
May 15 Deadline for *The Bee Line* articles



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## Northwest Beekeeping

**May** - Crops in bloom producing nectar and/or pollen: Maple, clover, fruit trees, meadowfoam.

- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs. or three full frames of honey. Continue feeding as in April if foundation is being drawn or colonies are small.
- Supply water.
- Examine colonies every ten days. Lift 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 and 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. Add supers to provide 10-18 empty full-depth combs, or their equivalent. **IF you find** sealed or ripe queen cells, or possibly hatched ones, divide the colony. **NOTE:** queen mating is always dependent on decent mating weather and the supply of drones this time of year. **IF you find** eggs and no attempt to rear queens, and the hive is full of bees, examine the supers and add more to provide 10 to 18 empty combs or their equivalent.
- If the bees seem reluctant to work in the supers through a queen excluder, reverse the two hive bodies. This causes them to rearrange their stores and they will have to move through the excluder. Some colonies need training to go through the excluder.
- Continue to be on the lookout for American and European Foulbrood.
- Remove and extract the supers containing well ripened honey.

*Thank you to Portland Beekeeper Association members Stephanie Barnes, David Gage, Rosemary Marshall, Ernie McCormack and Bill Ruhl, for Almanac review and suggestions, 1996.*

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## 1997 Pacific Northwest Honey Bee Pollination Survey

by Dr. Michael Burgett

For the twelfth year the Honey Bee Laboratory at Oregon State University has reviewed the pollination economics of commercial beekeeping in the Pacific Northwest (PNW). This is the fifth year for which combined data are given for the states of Washington and Oregon. With each year's information, the strength and importance of our region's beekeeping is highlighted. All participants in a regional agricultural industry need to understand the vital role played by beekeeping in agricultural production. This is especially true today with the increased costs and problems caused by the presence of honey bee mite parasites and the slowly increasing geographical expansion of our honey bee's tropical "cousin", the Africanized honey bee, now recorded in several counties in Southern California, as well as Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

The use of managed honey bee colonies for commercial crop pollination remains the most important function of our regional beekeeping industry. An enhanced knowledge of pollination economics is critical to every beekeeper that enters into the world of commercial crop pollination. It is also important for those growers who rent colonies to understand current economic conditions of the beekeeping industry.

This year's survey provides data that continue to show a number of trends, one of which is the dependence of PNW commercial beekeepers on the income generated from colony rentals. For 1997 the average commercial beekeeper received nearly 65% of his or her annual operating gross from pollination rental. This is down from the record high figure of 72% reported in 1995. This reduction is, at least in part, the result of the historically high prices beekeepers received for honey in 1996 and to a lesser degree for 1997. I am aware of no region in the U.S. or the world for that matter, where honey bee pollination rental is of such importance to the economic survival of a regional beekeeping community. Even in California, the state with the

largest and most varied beekeeping industry in the U.S., pollination rental income is just slightly over 50% of operational revenues.

For the past five years the average size of an individual commercial operation has been increasing. This trend continues. In 1996 the average commercial operation reported 1,350 colonies compared to 1,348 for 1995. For 1997 the average commercial operation reported 1,504 hives, which is an 11% increase from 1996.

As in past years, the 1997 survey was sent to all Washington and Oregon beekeepers that registered more than 25 colonies with their respective state agriculture departments. A total of 27 commercial beekeepers returned completed surveys. These individual beekeepers collectively owned 40,605 colonies. A total of 120,546 colony rentals were reported for all respondents, which produced \$3,743,779 in rental income.

For 1997 the average pollination rental fee, computed from commercial beekeeper rentals on all crops reported, was \$31.05. This is a 1.5% decrease from the average pollination fee charged in 1996 (\$31.55) (see Table 1). Commercial beekeepers were responsible for 97% of all reported pollination rentals and a corresponding 97% of all pollination income. This is very similar to past years and shows how dominant commercial beekeepers are in the arena of large-scale agricultural pollination.

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
16.15	17.50	16.05	18.40	19.45	19.25	22.50
1994	1995	1996	1997			
28.10	29.60	31.55	31.05			

**Table 1. Average Pollination Fees 1987-1997**

The amount of income generated from pollination rental is dramatically increasing. This is easily inferred from the parallel increases in the average rental income generated on a per-colony basis (see Table 2). During the past five years the average rental fee has increased from \$22.50 (cont. on page 6)

(cont. from page 5)  
 (1993) to \$31.05) (1997). Over the same period the average annual revenue from pollination rental increased by a factor of 2.25 (from \$61,627 in 1993 to \$138,669 in 1997). As economically wonderful as this appears, it needs to be remembered that colony maintenance costs and especially colony replacement costs are on a steep increase. Commercial pollinators require high colony numbers to survive, and replacement costs for the dramatic increase in colony losses, due in part to mite parasitism, is a heavy fiscal burden for all beekeepers. It needs also to be pointed out that honey bee colony rental has for many decades been an underpaid service. It is really only within the past five years that rental fees have begun to more accurately reflect the enormous value-added service of managed pollination.

colony rental. In terms of acreage, apples are the largest crop grown in the region and this is reflected by the large number of reported rentals (26% of all reported rentals and 23% of reported rental income). The combination of almonds and tree fruit accounted for 73% of all rentals and 76% of pollination income for PNW beekeepers in 1997.

Year	Avg. # Colonies	Average Rental Fee	Average annual Rental income/colony
1992	765	\$ 19.25	\$ 49.70
1993	990	\$ 22.50	\$ 62.25
1994	1,225	\$ 28.10	\$ 78.70
1995	1,348	\$ 29.60	\$ 78.15
1996	1,350	\$ 31.55	\$ 97.50
1997	1,504	\$ 31.05	\$ 92.20

**Table 2.** Average colony numbers, average rental fee per hive, and average annual rental income per hive for a commercial beekeeping operation in the Pacific Northwest, 1992-1997

For the PNW, tree fruits are the dominant crops for pollination income (see Table 3). In 1997 the combination of pears, sweet cherries and apples accounted for 40% of all reported rentals and 37% of all reported pollination income. Paradoxically, the most important pollination crop for PNW beekeepers is grown in California, i.e. almonds. This single crop was responsible for 33% of all rentals and 39% of all rental income in this year's survey. More than 95% of all commercial colonies in Oregon and Washington are taken to California for almond pollination.

For crops pollinated in the PNW, cranberries provided the highest average fee at \$36.50 per

Crop	# rentals	Avg. fee	Income
Pears	9,726	\$29.70	\$288,722
Cherries	7,648	29.75	227,376
Apples	30,814	28.50	877,532
Berries(1)	4,802	20.40	98,060
Blueberries	1,937	25.30	49,052
Cranberries	1,232	36.50	44,960
Vegetable seed	5,284	33.55	177,215
Clover seed(2)	4,728	17.85	84,414
Crimson clov. seed	1,033	3.00	3,120
Vetch seed	452	8.65	3,900
Radish seed	677	31.35	21,220
Sq. & pump. seed	1,708	30.60	52,224
Watermelon	939	34.90	32,756
Meadowfoam sd.	8,697	34.75	302,195
Misc.(3)	237	22.40	5,304
Almonds	40,197	36.50	1,466,025
SUM	120,546		\$3,743,779

- Average pollination fee \$31.06  
 (1) Includes blackberries, raspberries, marionberries, and loganberries;  
 (2) Includes red & white clover as grown for seed;  
 (3) Includes arrow-leaf clover seed, bird's foot trefoil seed, turnip seed, kiwi and holly

**Table 3.** 1997 Average Commercial Pollination Fees

The crops with the lowest pollination fees are the legumes crimson clover (\$3 per colony) and hairy vetch (\$8.65 per colony), both of which are grown as seed crops and are also traditional honey producers, hence historically low fees. The situation is somewhat similar for our berry crops, which as late spring to early summer bloomers are copious nectar producers, often result in honey crops as well as pollination fees, which are reduced due to an expected honey crop.

The average PNW commercial honey bee colony was rented 2.97 times in 1997 and this includes California almonds. With the average rental fee of \$31.05, this results in an average per colony pollination income of \$92.20, which is down somewhat from the previous year.

(cont. on page 7)

(cont. from page 6)

The combined colony numbers from those commercial beekeepers who responded to the survey (40,605 hives) represent approximately one-third of the commercial hives in Oregon and Washington. Therefore, if we multiply the pollination income (\$3,743,779) by a factor of 3, we have a ball park estimate of the pollination income generated by commercial beekeeping in the PNW, i.e. slightly more than \$11,231,000. This is less than 1.5% of the estimated farm-gate value of PNW crops that require or benefit from managed pollination. Pollination income in the PNW far exceeds the value of honey and wax sales for our regional beekeeping industry. Pollination rental income is frequently two and a half times greater than honey and wax sales in any given year, a situation that is largely ignored by federal and state agricultural economists, who continue to rely almost solely on honey and wax sales as the yardstick for beekeeping economic activity.

It needs to be remembered that much of the data presented here represent the pollination rental situation of the "average" commercial beekeeper. For individual beekeepers the data are most useful as benchmarks against which they should compare their particular operations.

During the past decade many thousands of colonies of honey bees have been lost due to the presence of parasitic mites. The losses have been most severe from the wild honey bee population and from which the hobbyist ranks. Commercial beekeepers, while experiencing heavy colony mortalities, have, by and large, responded by increasing their colony numbers. An economic situation has been created whereby every living colony of honey bees now possesses a greater potential economic value. Commercial beekeepers have taken advantage of this opportunity.

I wish to thank all those beekeepers in Oregon and Washington who took the time to participate in the survey, which has now, over the past twelve years, generated the most accurate assessment of commercial pollination known in the United States.

### SUMMARY INFORMATION - 1997

A total of 27 commercial beekeepers returned survey forms:

The average per colony pollination rental fee (for all beekeepers, for all crops including California almonds) was:

**\$31.05**

The average commercial colony was placed in 2.97 pollination sets in 1997, with an average rental fee of **\$31.05**, for an average per hive rental income of **\$92.21**.

The average commercial bee operation maintained **1,504** colonies and grossed **\$148,683** in pollination rental income for 1997.

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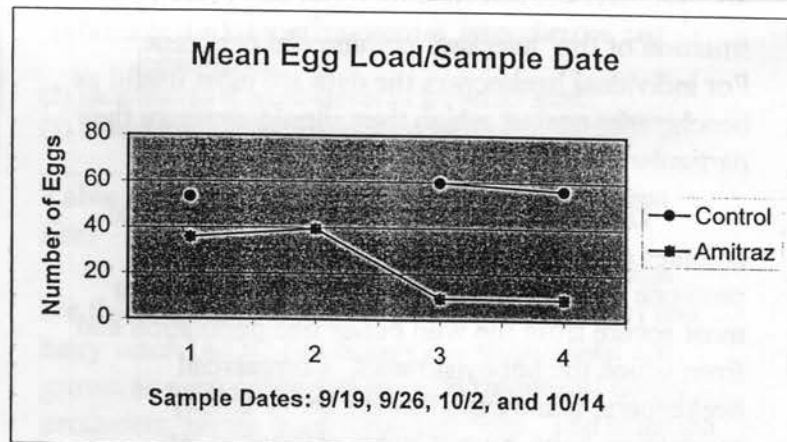
# Tracheal Mites

by Dr. Lynn Royce

Tracheal mites are still a problem in the Pacific Northwest. Control measures that seem to work well in other parts of the U.S. do not always work well here. Our cooler, wetter climate seems to be good for tracheal mites and their populations often build up to stressful or lethal levels even when we apply the suggested control programs. It is, therefore, important to keep track of colonies and give them all the support available. That is: use medications for other diseases and parasites, make sure the colonies are well fed and be sure they have a healthy laying queen (see the October, 1990 *Bee Line* article reprinted in the March, 1998 *Bee Line* by Geoge Hansen and myself). Checking once in awhile for mite loads is a good idea just to monitor how well you are doing.

Control by grease may seem a bit like black magic, but there is a scientific basis behind it. The life cycle of the tracheal mite requires at least 21 days from egg to new adult. Thus, a newly mated female mite must find her way into the trachea of a young worker bee if she is to have time for her offspring to mature before the worker bee dies. Average life span of a worker bee during spring, summer and fall is four weeks. We have some evidence that migrating tracheal mites can recognize young bees by the lipids (fats and oils) on the bee's skin. Therefore, by putting a foreign grease in the colony that workers get on themselves we can confuse the mites, causing them to make mistakes in their host choice. This method requires the continual presence of some oil or grease in the colony. Grease patties made up of sugar and vegetable oil work well: generic recipe is one part grease to two parts sugar by volume. One translation of this recipe is: 1 c. Crisco to 2 c. powdered sugar or enough sugar to get the bees to interact with the patty but not so much that they take it away too quickly. Continual presence is the main point here, because if the confusion factor is removed the mite populations will rebound quickly. In favor of this technique is the fact that the mite will not develop resistance.

If you have read the articles in the American Bee Journal by Dr. Bill Wilson and others, you realize that tracheal mites are problematic in other areas of the world where *Apis mellifera* is kept. Research is ongoing for ways to control the tracheal mite. Formulations in plastic strips like Amitraz work well for *Varroa* but do not work well for tracheal mites. Techniques that use volitalization of chemicals or sometimes burning have a better efficacy. A lot of interest currently lies in plant compounds, and oils from some of our native plants like cedar and juniper. For the study on delivery systems we are using Amitraz, a compound known to be effective against tracheal mites when burned. Results are still preliminary, but we know we can use the program reported by Bill Wilson (ABJ 1993.123(12):871). See figure below. We are comparing results of burning juniper leaf oil with treatments using Amitraz. These results so far do not show juniper leaf oil to be a promising control agent but it may work well as a bee repellent. We also have plans to begin work on juniper heartwood oil and to look at when to apply tracheal mite treatments.



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# Bee Musings

by Diane Varner

Wasn't the Annual Field Day great? Many thanks to George and Susan Hansen for opening their operation for this event. Nearly 200 people attended, and 35 new members signed up. Wow!

Not only were the six instructors terrific at demonstrating their assigned lessons, they were obviously passionate about bees and why they keep them. Anyone not already a beekeeper would want to be by the end of those sessions! I also came home with forty plants from the Plant Sale. They were all good bee plants and wonderful bargains. My husband said it was a good thing we brought the truck!

John Schmitz from the Capital Press was at Bee Day and will be writing an article about beekeeping soon. A segment on beekeeping was featured on *Rebecca's Garden* Sunday morning on Channel 2 (Martha Stewart did a segment last year). I have noticed several articles in magazines lately about honeybees and their importance. I don't know if this is a renewed increase in interest or if I am just noticing it now that I keep bees, but it is good to keep the public aware of the importance of honeybees to everyone, and the difficulties beekeepers face with mites and disease control.

As I attend meetings and classes and events (like the Field Day), I am impressed with the rich resources in terms on talent, experience and knowledge among OSBA members. Beekeepers at every level of experience and commitment should know they never have to face unfamiliar or difficult situations alone. Check page 10 for a local contact person at any time. Beekeepers love to mentor!

This month I plan to visit the Southern Oregon Beekeepers in Central Point. We used to make frequent trips to Ashland when our daughter was at SOS. It's beautiful there and I am looking forward to visiting with the local beekeepers.

Last month at the Tualatin meeting I tasted some wonderful cookies that Jerry Schwanke's wife baked. Shirley was kind enough to send me the recipe and I'm sharing it with you.. I'm serving

these at my annual Mother-Daughter Tea in May. I hope you try them!


## Chewy Nut Cookies

- 2 c. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 c. butter or margarine
- 1 c. honey
- 1/2 c. dairy sour cream
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 c. uncooked quick-cooking oats (can substitute old-fashioned oats)
- 1 c. coarsely chopped walnuts
- 2 c. seedless raisins

Mix flour with salt, baking powder and baking soda. In large mixing bowl, cream butter; continue creaming while adding honey in a fine stream. Stir in sour cream and vanilla. Blend in flour mixture and oats. Stir in walnuts and raisins. Chill the dough for thirty minutes (can be chilled overnight).

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Drop dough by spoonful onto greased cookie sheet. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until lightly browned. Let stand a minute, then remove to racks to cool. Makes about 3 1/2 dozen cookies.

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**REGIONAL BRANCH ASSOCIATIONS****Coos County**

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**Tillamook County**

Meets 7 pm first Thursday  
Fish & Wildlife Bldg.  
4909 Third Street, Tillamook  
President: Bob Allen 541-322-3819  
VP: Doug Taylor 541-842-4245  
Sec./Treas.: Wayne Aubel

**Tualatin Valley**

Meets 7:30 pm fourth Friday  
OSU Extension Office, 18640 SW  
Walker Rd., Beaverton  
Pres.: Sean Killean 503-646-1275  
V P: Roy McMillan 503-628-0277  
Sec.: Jerry Schwanke 503-357-9284  
Treas.: Dan Hiscoe 503-662-4502

**Willamette Valley**

Meets 7:30 pm fourth Monday  
Rm. 112, Building 50  
Chemeketa Community College,  
Salem  
Pres: Doug Davis 503-390-9559  
VP: Richard Farrier 541-327-2673  
Sec.: Ron Bennett 503-838-2328  
Treas: Fritz Skirvin 503-581-9372

### Classified Ads

Classified advertising rates per issue: 30 words, per issue: OSBA members, \$2.00, non-members \$3.00. Copy and payment must be received by editor no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication.

**FOR SALE: FOUNDATION.** Make honeycomb candles. 8"x16 3/4" medium brood, \$100 per 25 lb. case; 4"x16 3/4" medium brood, \$125 per 30 lb. case. Colored 100% beeswax sheets \$.80 each. Christine Erwin, 541-942-7061, Cottage Grove.

**WANTED:** 20 or 30 boxes of deep drawn comb. Call 503-662-4502.

**FOR SALE:** Several hundred used bottom boards, \$.50 each. Pallets to fit bottom boards, \$2 each. 1979 Dodge 1 ton flatbed with 360 engine, best offer. Bobcat forklift with trailer, best offer. Charlie Mock, 503-824-3456.

**FOR SALE:** 14 A. bee boom. Excellent for 1 ton truck with 12 foot bed. \$800 firm; 55 gallon honey drums, excellent condition \$7 each. Contact Ben Lochmann, Atwater, CA (209) 358-4268.

**FOR SALE:** Dadant 20 frame radial extractor #M00400. Four years old, excellent condition. \$775 includes stand. Doug Mason, Medford (541) 776-9116. Could deliver to Willamette Valley or Portland in May.

**NOTE: CLASSIFIED ADS  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12.**

### 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 is \$15 per person and includes a vote in OSBA elections, discounts on other bee related publications, ten issues of *The Bee Line*, and more. Foreign membership is \$23.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Local Group \_\_\_\_\_

Start your savings now! Get a discount on the following subscriptions through the OSBA:

<i>American Bee Journal</i>	_____ 1 yr. \$13.88	_____ 2 yrs. \$26.25	_____ 3 yrs. \$37.46
<i>Gleanings in Bee Culture</i>	_____ 1 yr. \$12.75	_____ 2 yrs. \$24.75	
<i>The Speedy Bee</i>	_____ 1 yr. \$13.25	_____ 2 yrs. \$25.25	

Make checks payable to OSBA and send this form with payment to:

Phyllis Shoemake  
1874 Winchester NW  
Salem, OR 97304

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**FOR SALE:** Steel 55-gallon open head drums, \$6.00 each. Free catalog, includes beekeeping equipment, candle and soap making supplies. Contact Glorybee, 1-800-GLORYBE (456-7923) or in Eugene, 689-0913.

**FOR SALE:** 55 gallon honey drums \$6-\$10 based on grade and condition. Call Bee's Knees Honey (503) 225-0755 or (503) 640-5757.

**FOR SALE:** Wax melter, coffin style with radiant heat and water jacket. Kenny Williams in Blodgett at (541) 456-2631.

**WANTED:** Northwest produced honey in 55 gallon drums. Also looking for vetch, snowberry and fireweed honey. Call Bee's Knees Honey at (503) 225-0755 or (503) 640-5757.

**WANTED:** Forklift with four wheel drive. Please call Kenny Williams in Blodgett (541) 456-2631.

**NOTE: CLASSIFIED ADS  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 11.**

## THE BEE LINE

Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers  
Association  
Diane Varner, Editor  
P.O Box 123  
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