
THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 24, Number 3

April 1999

Amitraz Delivery System

By Dr. Lynn Royce

The purpose of this study was to look at the possibility of using the smoker to deliver acaricides for treatment of tracheal mites in honey bee hives. Using the smoker as a delivery system has the drawback of exposure to the applicator, necessitating protective covering. The advantage is the ease of use and the fact that the acaricide as a smoke is expected to be effective against tracheal mites where impregnated plastic strips have been shown to be ineffective (Wilson and Collins, 1993).

To test the efficacy of Amitraz in burlap that is burned in a smoker while smoking honey bee colonies, five test groups were set up: a control: that was smoked with untreated burlap, a standard: where Amitraz was placed on filter paper that had been soaked in saltpeter and this was burned in the hive, treatment 1: with enough Amitraz on the burlap to treat 12 colonies and the colonies were treated once, treatment 2: had the same amount of Amitraz on the burlap but the colonies were treated once a week for three weeks, and treatment 3: where the burlap was heavily soaked in Amitraz and colonies in this group were only treated once.

Pretreatment samples were taken before the first treatment and post treatment samples one week after the last treatment. Thirty bees were dissected from each sample and all mite stages present were counted. It is difficult to differentiate dead female mites from live females and sometimes males; therefore we used the egg counts to determine treatment efficacy.

The results are summarized in Figure 1 and show that the standard was different from the control. In spite of the rainy weather that makes lighting and burning of the filter paper in the standard difficult, mite eggs are consistently fewer in the standard than in the control. Thus Amitraz is effective in the Pacific Northwest when used as directed by Wilson and Collins. This method of controlling tracheal mites is labor intensive, but works and is safer to use than Amitraz burned in a smoker. The two treatments with measured amounts of Amitraz on burlap burned in the smoker did not show significant difference in pretreatment egg counts and post treatment egg counts. This may have been because the smoke did not deliver the necessary amount and thus was not effective. The best of the two trials using measured amounts of Amitraz on burlap burned in the smoker was the one where treatment continued for three weeks, but the reduction in the number of eggs produced by mites was not enough to consider this as a useful control method. When burlap was soaked with Amitraz and used in the smoker to smoke infested colonies the reduction in mite egg production was very similar to the standard. But this treatment does not allow us to control the dose being applied and could lead to

(cont. on page 3)

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Star Thistle Ban Proposal
 - *ARS Research Funding Cut-What You Can Do
 - *Portland Non-Profit Seeks Donations
 - *Germany-Thailand Beekeeper Presentation Info
-
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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

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Business Ads, per issue:

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Copy, art and payment must be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Contact the editor for any special requirements and mechanical information.

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President's Notes

by Torey Johnson

March was a busy month for me. I spent a lot of time in the bee yard checking and medicating (between rain and hail storms). The bee schools were well attended and the shop is busy gearing up for the season. Pollination calls are coming in.

On a personal note, on Saturday, March 27th Holly and I welcomed a baby girl into the family. Weighing in at 7 lbs., 10 oz., Regan Nicole joins big brothers Ryan and Hunter.

Hope to see you at the Field Day later this month. Maybe I'll have baby pictures to share!



Spring Poetry

Barbara Drake is a published writer of poetry, creative essays and fiction. She lives with her husband on a small farm in the foothills of the Oregon Coast range. Having raised eight children they now raise wine grapes and Romney sheep and enjoy their grandchildren. For several years they kept a few hives of honey bees.

Bees in Wet Weather

The beehives look weathered and wet.
I hope the bees are okay. It's not
that much longer till something blooms,
pussywillows, maybe, in February.
Worried about them, all these storms lately,
I go out to the hives, lean down
and put my ear against the wood.
I smell the wax and the honey.
I hear them.
Like a song a child makes to itself
Humming on a comb.

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(cont. from page 1)

toxicity to the bees or resistance development on the part of the mites. This is also most likely to be dangerous to the applicator.

To summarize, Amitraz in smoke does kill tracheal mites. Amitraz delivered via the smoker is easy to use but has the difficulty of being difficult to deliver a measured amount of active material.

Wilson, WT and AM Collins, 1993. Formic acid and Amitraz for spring and fall treatment of *Acarapis woodii*; **American Bee Journal** 123:871

Changes in tracheal mite egg numbers in response to smoke containing Amitraz

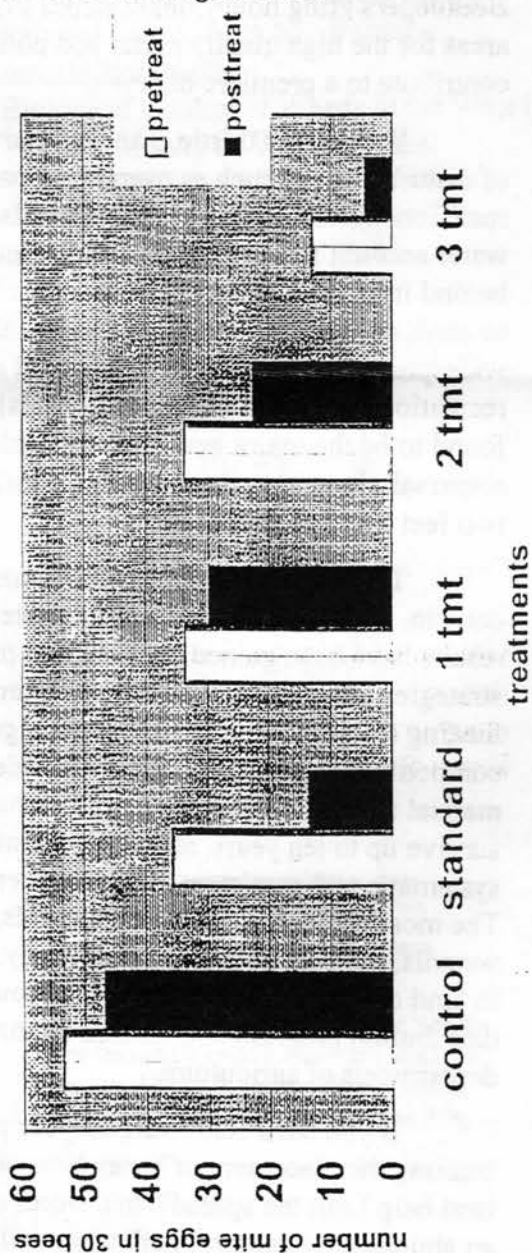


Figure 1

Northwest Beekeeping

April: Fruit tree bloom is ranging behind about two weeks due to cold weather.

- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs. (3 full frames on honey).
- Remove entrance reducers.
- In colonies selected for honey: discontinue Terramycin in pollen supplements, don't give supplemental feedings and start moving sealed frames of honey to top supers.
- Keep on the lookout for American or European Foulbrood and nosema. Get brood supers ready to install package bees that you might have ordered. Reserve boxes/frames for catching swarms.
- Give single story colonies that are getting full of bees a second box. Give two story colonies a third brood box.
- Examine frames often for queen supercedure and swarming tendency.
- Continue to equalize brood and stores between the colonies.
- Remove poor comb and replace with good comb. Transfer bees from poor hives into new or reconditioned ones.
- Reverse the hive bodies on two story colonies in which the queen is only laying in the upper story.
- Requeen any failing queens with the queens you ordered in February.
- Exchange the position of overly strong colonies with weaker ones, to give weaker ones more field bees and discourage stronger colonies from swarming.
- Clean existing bottom boards.
- 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. Check one week later; see if bees are above the excluder and if not, take it off to put on later.
- Attend beekeeping meetings in your area, to learn, have fun and share.

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

Beekeepers Banned from Star Thistle?

By Dr. Lynn Royce and BA Stringer

Yellow star thistle is a source of premium honey in several western states, but is rapidly becoming one of California's worst noxious weeds. Some beekeepers are concerned that landowners may ban honey bee colonies from star thistle areas because the honey bee pollination is viewed as a contributing factor to the weed's spread.

Could banning bee colony placement on or near star thistle infested properties help to contain the dispersal of the plant? Honey bees, in gathering nectar and pollen from star thistle, will certainly pollinate the flowers, but the insects have no role in physical distribution of the seeds. Honey bees are a crucial link in the agricultural production chain. Without them, we would get limited production of crops from alternate pollinators, but yields would be severely reduced. Through direct pollination of fruit, vegetable seeds, forage seed, and flower seed, honey bees affect most of our agriculture, all the way through the meat and dairy production. Part of honey bee management is ensuring healthy, honey-laden colonies for overwintering in order to provide early pollination of spring crops, such as almonds, and star thistle is often a vital part of this annual cycle. Far more effective than disallowing bees, there are several controls for star thistle which do not adversely affect bees and their keepers.

What is this plant and where did it come from? Yellow star thistle has the botanical name of *Centaurea solstitialis*, and is closely related to knapweeds and thistles. It is native to Southern Eurasia and the Mediterranean basin, where it is not a problem because it has many natural enemies which attack the plants. Since its introduction to this country by ranchers who imported contaminated grain and alfalfa seed in the mid-1800's, it has become well established in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California. Recent estimates from the California Department of Food and Agriculture indicate that about 20 million acres, or 22% of the state, are covered with the weed.

Yellow star thistle is an winter annual or occasionally a biennial which sends down a long (6-8') tap root and grows up to six feet tall. A rosette of

lobed leaves in fall increases in size until summer, when tall branched stems grow and produce flowers. The stems and leaves are covered with fine white hairs that give the plant a grey-green appearance, while the flower head bracts bear long sharp spines, giving the plant its name. Dense stands of star thistle can produce enormous numbers of seeds annually, and a very high proportion of the seeds germinate.

Until the stems are produced, the plant can be used as forage for cattle, sheep and goats, but it is toxic to horses. Once established, star thistle quickly becomes dominant in an area, displacing native plants as well as coexisting native animals such as deer, quail, rabbits, skunks and raccoons. Beekeepers bring honey bee colonies to star thistle areas for the high quality nectar and pollen which contribute to a premiere honey.

Yellow star thistle is an aggressive colonizer of disturbed areas such as overgrazed pastures or by road construction zones. While animals, wind and water account for some dispersal, the main force behind its spread is man. Use of contaminated hay or seed, especially in uninfested areas, along with the widespread transport of seeds in gravel or soil, and recreational land use (ATVs and 4WDs) have been found to be the major contributors to this weed's dispersal. In nature, the seeds rarely fall more than two feet from the parent plant.

There are control methods to manage, contain, eradicate star thistle from a site, and best results have been gained by using two or more strategies together. Controls include mowing, insect feeding (biological control), livestock grazing, plant competition, prescribed burns, herbicides and manual removal. As seeds buried in the soil can survive up to ten years, attention to control must be systematic and persistent over a number of years. The most promising biological controls, the hairy weevils, the bud weevil and the gall fly, are available to land owners and land managers through a distribution program coordinated by the county departments of agriculture.

If you have star thistle on your property, will banning the placement of honey bees on or near your land help limit the spread? In a word, no. There is an abundance of natural pollinators utilizing star
(cont. on page 5)

(cont. from page 4)

thistle whether or not honey bees are present. People not bees are responsible for its spread. Use of cultural control methods and some other insect helpers will be far more beneficial without harming your relationship with your beekeepers.

For recommendations for site-specific management, and more background on yellow star thistle, check these publications:

1. Yellow Star Thistle Biology and Control, University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication 21541 (1996) available from University of California Communication Services-Publication Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 6701 San Pablo Ave. 2nd Floor, Oakland, California 94608-1239. Cost is \$5. E-mail anrpubs@ucdavis.edu.
2. Biological Control of Weeds in the West (1996), Western Society of Weed Science.



Fig. 218 *Centaurea solstitialis*; a, upper branches; b, lower leaf; c, fruit.

From Roseburg south and in eastern Oregon

An introduced weed from Europe which has become a locally important source of nectar. Honey is yellow with excellent flavor. Nectar sugar concentration 37%.

Bee Musings

By Diane Varner

Bits and pieces again this month. I didn't get to follow through last month on the story about watercolors made with honey. Between final exams and the flu bug I had to draw the line somewhere. It will be forthcoming.

The National Honey Board listed two web sites that might be of interest to those wanting honey market information:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/htp/sugar/1998/98-11/honev.htm> is the address of the Foreign Agricultural Service, and the National Agricultural Statistic Service data can be located at <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/zho-bb/honey>. Horticulture magazine listed a website that might be of interest: www.bee-commerce.com.

Ag-Fest is set for April 17-18 at the Fairgrounds in Salem. The Willamette Valley Beekeepers will have a beekeeping booth with observation hives and the bee cage. Volunteers are always needed and welcome! Contact Richard Farrier at 541-327-2673.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr. 24 Deadline for *The Bee Line*

Mar. 29-June 4 Backyard Beekeeping, Lane Community College, Eugene. Call Chuck Hunt at 541-607-0106

April 17-18 AgFest, Salem

April 24 OSBA Field Day

Sept. 12-18 Apimondia, Vancouver BC

For further information visit web site:

<http://www.apimondia99.ca>

Clinton Budget Drops New ARS Research Funding; Beekeepers Urged to Contact Congress

Reprinted with permission from ABF newsletter dated Jan/Feb 1999

The new funds Congress approved for bee research last year have been dropped from the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2000, which begins Oct. 1, 1999. In the FY1999 appropriations bill, Congress added \$500,000 for the Weslaco Bee Lab and \$300,000 for the Baton Rouge Bee Lab in addition to the funding requested by the Clinton Administration.

Reportedly, the Administration left out of the budget all such funds, which Congress had added to its FY1999 requests. Traditionally, once Congress adds such funds, the Administration retains the funding in the following year's budget. However, last year the Administration also failed to continue the funds which Congress had added. That omission included \$500,000 for Weslaco, which Congress restored. The added funds for Weslaco were earmarked for research on Africanized bees and parasitic mites; the Baton Rouge funds were earmarked for genetic research on varroa.

"The ABF is working with the Agricultural Appropriations subcommittees to ensure that the funds are restored," said ABF Vice President Clint Walker III, the chairman of the ABF Legislative Committee. "We are also asking for a general increase in funding for the entire ARS bee research program." Mr. Walker added: "We need every beekeeper to contact his Congressman and Senators and ask them to work to have the funds restored. The more contacts are made, the more likely we will be able to be successful."

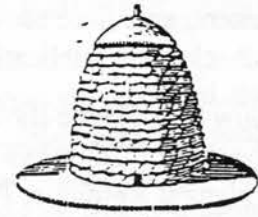
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To reach any Congressman:

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Directions: From Oregon City, take Hwy. 213 through Mulino to Union Mills Road. Turn left and continue 8 miles to Oswalt Road., turn right on Oswalt and go ¼ mile. Follow the Bee Day Signs.

Portland Area Non-Profit Seeks Equipment Donations

Brian Lacey, director of Growing Gardens, a Portland area non-profit vegetable garden concern, recognizes the importance of honey bees in their efforts to produce fresh produce. In an effort both to increase their yields and educate an urban population about honey bees, Mr. Lacey has asked for full or partial donations of any new or used beekeeping equipment. Donations are tax deductible.

The beekeeping effort is starting from scratch so any equipment from supers, hive tools, veils, smokers, bee suits on up to extractors would be welcome. The mailing address for Growing Gardens is 2003 NE 42nd Avenue #3, Portland, OR 97213. Mr. Lacey can be reached at 503-284-8420.

National Animal Interest Alliance Newsletter Information

Patti Webb from the National Animal Interest Alliance recently contacted the OSBA President with the following letter:

"As a beekeeper, you provide valuable products and services most people take for granted. The NAIA appreciates the contributions your business makes to our food supply and as a healthy sweetener. The importance of bees to the food chain is not always understood and mistakenly criticized by some groups of people that make decisions based on emotions, rather than fact or knowledge of the subject.

Ingrid Newkirk of PETA has stated in a public forum, "I would not even eat honey, because a bee had to die making it." This attitude reflects little understanding of the natural, beneficial contribution bees make to our lives. Some of these groups are also trying to stop the use of all pesticides, not accepting the fact that some of them can be helpful if used wisely. The welfare and health of bees can cause a direct effect on the price of produce in our markets, so it's a subject that should concern us all, especially vegetarians.

NAIA publishes a bi-monthly newsletter that may be helpful to you and your clients as a broad-

based resource on a wide range of topics. It would be a positive forum for articles on bees and other insect populations that benefit from human intervention and care. Our members come from a whole host of animal related occupations such as scientists, animal breeders, teachers, fishermen, and as a group are growing daily. Won't you please take this opportunity to join us in our quest to bring the facts to the public and some reason to a sometimes irrational movement. You have a great deal to contribute."

If this is of interest to you, Patti Webb can be reached at PO Box 66579, Portland, OR 97290; her telephone number is 503-761-8962; the NAIA web site is www.naiaonline.org.

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Oregon's Just an Ocean Away

By Dan Hiscoe, Tualatin Valley
Beekeeper's Association

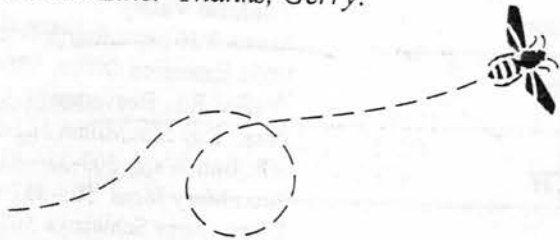
From Germany to our east and Thailand to our west, one of our fellow beekeepers has made the most of his winter travels.

While blending with bamboo, he charmed a swarm or three into posing for his camera. Some of the Thai bees are smaller than ours, so it's difficult to tell if they are smiling, but close up they are. With Dr. Burgett showing Gerry Veley around, the slides taken for this presentation are of high quality and especially good is the narration.

At first glance the topography of his slides from Germany tend to make an Oregonian feel right at home, but it's not long before the evidence reveals a colorful contrast to our local methods.

This presentation has content of fact, interest and entertainment, and the Tualatin Valley Beekeepers Association enjoyed every minute. Gerry has offered to share this meeting with those clubs interested. Please invite me to the second viewing. Encore!

Editor's note: Gerry Veley has indicated he would be willing to give his presentation to other clubs interested in it. He can be reached at 503-324-8062. Gerry has also offered to help prepare an article for the Bee Line. Thanks, Gerry!



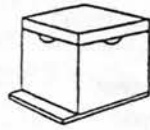
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Treas.: Jerry Schwanke 503-357-9284

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For those of you who want to make tax-deductible contributions for honeybee research at OSU, make your check payable to Agriculture Research Foundation (ARF) and send it to Dr. Royce at OSU (see her address on page 10).

For those of you who want to contribute to OSBA above the \$15 membership dues, please note a new line item on the form below. Your contribution can be earmarked for the Research or General Fund (specify your choice). The Executive Board wants to hold the line on increasing dues across the board but recognizes that some members would like to make one-time or ongoing contributions. Thank you for your support!

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.

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Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association
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