
THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 25, Number 2

March 2000

Orval Bassett 1912-2000

Long-time beekeeper Orval Bassett died January 11th at the age of 87 years in Pleasant Hill of age-related causes.

Orval was born on November 17, 1912 in Chehalis, Washington. He grew up in Raymond, Washington and moved to Eugene, Oregon in 1948 where he went to work as a mill supervisor for Giustina Brothers.

Orval married Marjorie Stewart and they had three children: sons John of Junction City and Byron of Federal Way, Washington and daughter Marjorie Omev of Kent, Washington. He had six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

One of the first honorary life-time members of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association, Orval was known to be an excellent beekeeper. He was well-known to folks in the Eugene/Pleasant Hill area as someone happy to share and teach others what he knew about bees.

Besides beekeeping, Orval enjoyed gardening, hunting and fishing. He also enjoyed woodworking, especially making spinning wheels. He belonged to the Eastern Star Meridian Chapter No. 179 and was a life member of the Wayfarer Lodge No. 213 AF & AM.

His family suggested memorial contributions be made to a charity of choice.

Amended Coumaphos Exemption Granted

The EPA notified the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture late in January that the exemption request granted under the provisions of Section 18 was being amended.

The amended language includes more specific and detailed instructions for use, and re-emphasizes timing of the application of Check-Mite strips and subsequent placement of honey supers. **Read pages 3 and 4 of the label carefully** when using the Check-Mite strips (coumaphos). The language in bold type under "Directions for Use" concern placement and removal of the strips, followed by a **waiting period of 14 days before placing honey supers.**

Also note again that **sale of comb honey from hives treated with the Check-Mite strips (coumaphos) is prohibited.**

Bayer has updated the current label to show a date of 02/01/00 in the bottom right corner of each of its four pages. **Be sure the label you read has the 02/01/00 date**, not the earlier January date.

See related articles inside for more information.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Bee School Schedules
 - *Check-Mite (coumaphos) News
 - *Apicure: Formic Acid Becomes a Reality
 - *Powdered Sugar Shake for Varroa Detection
-

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.

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TODAY

President's Notes

by Ray Varner

Medication programs/New legal medications
Decision time/What to use?/It's time!

Last issue I indicated it was time to fight the Varroa resistance to Apistan. At that time the "CheckMite+" Bayer Bee strip (coumaphos) was the available legal alternative. There is now a second choice: "Apicure" (formic gel packs). There are articles in this issue on both products that can help you decide on your medication program this year. If you have questions or need more information, get a copy of the "Material Safety Data Sheet" (MSDA) from the Bayer Corporation for the "CheckMite+" strips (phone 913-631-4800) and contact your local bee supply company for a copy of the "Apicure" pamphlet.

There are some key things to note about both products:

CheckMite+: Time in the hive 42-45 days (no more, no less); don't add honey supers for 14 days; don't produce comb honey on a colony that's been treated with this product; wear gloves designed for protection from chemicals; follow label directions.
Apicure: Time in the hive 21 days; don't add honey supers for 28 days; you can produce comb honey; product will not vaporize if outside temperature is consistently under 45 degrees. In addition to temperature, vaporization rates appear to vary depending on colony strength, sun exposure, air movement and other factors. Apicure controls tracheal mites and suppresses Varroa mites. Apicure warns that its use may temporarily reduce brood production in the spring, and if treated during hot weather the bees may temporarily cluster outside the hive. Wear protective chemical gloves; follow label directions.

My colonies that were treated with the Bayer bee strips last fall all survived the winter. The hives are color-coded and no comb honey will be produced from them this season. I have my chemical protective gloves that I use only for application and removal of this product.

(cont. on page 3)

(cont. from page 2)

Your medication program is your choice, but whatever choice you make, protect yourself, your product and the environment.

There have been several recent articles in newspapers about Varroa resistance in California, and resulting hive losses. I heard of very large colony losses from a commercial operation in Idaho and an 800 colony Oregon operation that is now a 100 colony operation. If resistance is not here yet it's very close. We need to make some changes in our plans or pay the price. Keep up to date on products, be safe and keep your feedback coming.

Good luck and have a great season!

Northwest Beekeeping

March: Fruit tree bloom starts mid-March through April, although this can vary about two weeks

- Swarming season starts; be observant on each inspection. Queen cell construction on the frame bottom can be seen from congested brood area, hive confinement, low quality stores, predators or queen over a year old. Remove each queen cell found on the bottom of the frames. Queen cells in the brood area (sides of frames) indicate a failing queen. Requeen.
- Dust your colonies three times at seven day intervals with a 2 Tablespoon portion of Terramycin (TM25) mixed with eight parts of powdered sugar. Sprinkle on top of the brood frames, towards the end bars, being sure not to douse the brood.
- Don't let colony stores get below 15 lbs. (3 full frames on honey). Feed light colonies sugar syrup (1 or 1 ½:1 ratio) or diluted (2:1) honey (if no American Foulbrood in honey).
- To equalize stores between the colonies, rob combs of honey from colonies with excessive stores. (Put the empty replacement frames back in the strong colony next to the brood nest, to expand egg laying). When equalizing brood, do not remove over 20% of the sealed brood per

- colony. Give special attention to the feeding needs of colonies that donated brood and stores.
- A strong colony can also be placed over a weak colony by placing a sheet of newspaper and a double excluder between them. Use a separate entrance for each hive.
- Unite queenless colonies with those needing bees, unless there are laying workers. If so, smoke well and shake all bees from frames and supers onto the ground 50' away. Leave their hive space empty and most will unite with adjacent colonies.
- Remove mouse guard screens.
- Look for colonies with nosema/dysentery (fecal matter streaked on the hive). Treat with Fumidil B according to label instructions.
- Clean existing bottom boards.
- Place hives on stands about 12-18" above the ground where skunks are a problem.
- Check stored frames for wax moth infestation.

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar. 18** Lane County Bee School, Eugene (see related article)
- Mar. 20** Deadline for *The Bee Line*
- Apr. 10, 17 & 24** Willamette Valley Bee School, Salem
- Apr. 22** OSBA Field Day, Colton
- Apr. 29-30** Ag-Fest, State Fairgrounds, Salem
- Nov. 2-4** NW Corner Fall Conference Hood River.

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Lane County Beekeepers Host Bee School

The Lane County Beekeepers will be holding a Bee School on March 18th in Eugene at the OSU Extension Service facility, 950 W. 13th Avenue (near the Lane County Fairgrounds). Topics include spring hive management, disease and pest control, swarm control, equipment basics, honey extracting and wintering your hives.

Fee for all sessions will be \$25 per family. Registration is at 8 am with a no-host lunch from noon to 1 pm. Classes will finish at approximately 4:30 pm. For additional information, contact Chuck Hunt at 541-607-0106, or by email to Ken Ograin at woodrt@pacinfo.com. To pre-register, send checks to Lane County Beekeepers Association, c/o Nancy Ograin, 88632 Faulhaber Road, Elmira, OR 97437.

Lane Community College to Offer Backyard Beekeeping Classes at Cottage Grove Center

As spring brings pollen, Lane Community College will again be offering a class in "Backyard Beekeeping" at both its main campus and the Cottage Grove Center beginning the last week of March. Classes will be held one night per week from 7-10 pm for a total of thirty hours of instruction. Registration begins March 8th.

The instructor for the classes will be Lane County Beekeepers Association President Chuck Hunt. Chuck is also the Willamette Valley representative for the Oregon State Beekeepers Association. He has been teaching this course for several semesters now. For information about the class, contact Chuck at 541-607-0106. For registration information contact Lane Community College at 541-726-2252.



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Tales from the Hive

PBS aired a wonderful Nova episode on January 4th that followed bees in flight to capture close-ups of honey bee behavior. Visit Nova's website at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/> and see the Anatomy of a Hive, the Buzz about Bees, Dance with Bees, the Making of the Film, plus a listing of additional film resources.

Check-Mite+ Label Re-approved in Florida

from Dr. Lynn Royce, excerpted from "Apis Monthly Beekeeping Newsletter", University of Florida

The gods have smiled again on Florida beekeeping. According to a letter from Agriculture Commissioner Bob Crawford dated Jan. 31, 2000 to Richard Gaskalla, Director of the Division of Plant Industry, the USEPA under provisions of the Section 18 of FIFRA has issued a specific exemption for the use of Check-Mite+ Bee Hive Pest Control Strips (coumaphos impregnated plastic strips) to control Varroa mites and the small hive beetle in beehives. This emergency exemption will expire Jan. 18, 2001.

This is good news for Florida beekeepers but carries some important caveats. A new 14-day waiting period is established before supers can be replaced and there is no sale of comb honey from hives treated for either Varroa or the small hive beetle. This is because the label is granted as a non-food use. Other specific provisions of the label are that strips used for Varroa control can only be left in for a maximum of 45 days and once in place, they must remain for at least 42 days. The latter ruling means that removing the strips prematurely is a violation of the label, even though in many pesticide situations, using less than prescribed treatments is not considered a violation. For small hive beetle, the label says to leave the strips and cardboard on the bottom board for at least three days and remove after 45 days. The label also directs that there should be no more than two treatments a year for Varroa nor four per year for small hive beetle. Strips cannot be reused.

The commissioner's letter states that all provisions on the label must be closely monitored by the Division of Plant Industry and Division of Agricultural Environmental Services. The commissioner's letter also says that the decision to approve the exemption was made only after considerable deliberation due to the potential for residues to occur if the Check-Mite+ product is not applied in strict accord with the specific exemption. The commissioner's office must immediately report any adverse effects or misuse under the exemption to

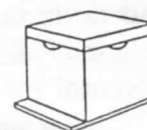
the EPA. The following information will also be required to be reported by July 1, 2001: 1) The total number of beehives treated and total number of Check-Mite+ strips used, 2) brief discussion of the effectiveness of the Check-Mite+ strips, and 3) a description of any unexpected adverse effects which may have resulted from the use of the Check-Mite+ strips under this exemption.

There's a lot at stake here for all parties concerned. Both bee inspectors and pesticide compliance inspectors will be on the lookout for improper use of the product. It goes without saying that using any other formulation containing the active ingredient coumaphos is prohibited. A key issue is potential contamination. There is a real possibility that a single documented case of product misuse or use of any non-labeled product would be grounds for the Check-Mite+ Section 18 label to be revoked. This would leave Florida beekeepers with no labeled product that is effective in controlling Varroa mites. Beyond the contamination, there is the possibility that mites will become resistant to coumaphos. This has already been reported in Italy, where other formulations have been in use.

Discussion at the Honey Bee Technical Council was also oriented toward beekeeper safety. It was reiterated that coumaphos, the active ingredient in Check-Mite+ strips, as an organophosphate, is much more toxic to mammals (humans) than is fluvalinate, the active ingredient in Apistan. The material is easily absorbed through the skin and may affect both the immune and nervous systems. The label requires use of chemical resistant gloves for this reason. The warning, statement of practical treatment, and environmental hazard potential as listed on the label should be taken seriously.

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South Coast: The Coos County group reports membership growth and increased involvement in club projects. They report an extremely successful educational booth at the Coos County Fair, thanks to lots of hard-working volunteers. Members also entered honey at the Fair and took home three prize ribbons. Bruce Yeager was honored for his years of dedication and guidance in club affairs. Thank you, Bruce! The group is now busily making frames and supers for this season, and reports that they have an expanded library, a new honey extractor and electric uncapping knife available for member's use. Lots happening at the South Coast, and they love to have visitors!



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Tualatin Valley: Plans are underway for the second annual Field Day in April. Details to be announced. Chuck Sowers needs help working his bees, making nucs, etc. in Boring and Canby. If interested contact him at Sowers@Canby.com.

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Willamette Valley: Ag-Fest planning is at the top of the list for this group. Ag-Fest is held in Salem at the State Fairgrounds April 29-30. Richard Farrier heads a group of dedicated volunteers crucial to putting together an educational display. Several thousand people get to see the bee cage, display hives and other exhibits. If you can help, call Richard at 541-327-2673.

Check out our new Website! It has our complete catalog, used equipment, and all sorts of tips, links and information for beekeepers

Portland Area: Two projects are on the agenda for the Portland area group. The OSBA Field Day is set for April 22nd at George Hansen's in Colton, and these folks provide all the signs, beverages and snacks (sorry, no plant sale this year). The second project is revising the Northwest Beekeeping guidelines to include updated information on medications, etc. Call Rosemary Marshall at 503-631-7313 for more information or offers of assistance on either of these projects.

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Lane County: See the two articles on page 4 regarding the two Bee Schools Lane County is hosting. Chuck and Kathy Hunt also recently attended the ABF Conference in Ft. Worth, courtesy of Mann Lake.

The Powdered Sugar Shake: Detecting Varroa without Killing Bees

from Dr. Lynn Royce, excerpted from "Apis Monthly Beekeeping Newsletter", University of Florida

Why did it take so long? That's a question that comes to mind, when contemplating the newest technology to determine the number of Varroa mites in a colony. The powdered sugar shake is taking Florida apiculture by storm. The technique separates Varroa mites from honey bees, as is the case for the ether roll, but the bees survive the procedure. This was first reported by University of Nebraska graduate student Paula Macedo, according to the January 2000 edition of Bee Tidings, a cooperative publication of the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service and the Nebraska Honey Producer's Association, written by Dr. Marion Ellis

(<http://ianrwww.unl.edu/ianr/entomol/beekpg/tidings/btid2000/btdjan00.htm#Article2>).

Dr. Ellis suggests three reasons why this might work:

1. Varroa mites have a sticky pad called the empodium that helps them adhere to their host. The presence of powdered sugar could make it difficult for the mites to adhere to their host.
2. Powdered sugar stimulates the bees' grooming behavior.
3. The powdered sugar on the mite's body stimulates mites to release from feeding to groom themselves.

To use the technique as described in Bee Tidings, one needs the following: a wide-mouth canning jar with two-piece lid, #8 mesh hardware cloth (or any other mesh that will retain the bees while letting Varroa pass through), and window screen or any other fine mesh hardware cloth that will let the sugar pass through but retain the Varroa.

Cut the #8 mesh screen to replace the circular center portion of the lid. Collect 200-300 bees in the

jar. A funnel can be used to facilitate the process. Replace the modified lid and add about a tablespoon of powdered sugar through the screen. Roll the jar to distribute the sugar. Wait a few minutes, swirl the jar again, and pour the sugar and mites through the screen into another container. The mites can be separated from the sugar by pouring the mixture through the window screen. The bees can be returned to the colony where their hive mates will lick them clean.

This technique works well, according to this article. It is superior to the ether roll, separating up to 90% of the mites from the bees. The Florida Bee Inspection Service has found this to be the case and is shifting over to its use. The Chief, Mr. Laurence Cutts, believes the powdered sugar shake may well mean more Varroa testing by beekeepers now that their bees don't have to be sacrificed as part of the procedure.

When Varroa was first detected in Florida, Dr. William Ramirez of Costa Rica described to me his experimental treatments using dust to control Varroa. I believe he used flour, but he said anything would do, including crushed dried leaves. Again, his reason was that any dust would prevent the mites from hanging onto the bees. Unfortunately, Dr. Ramirez' studies, conducted in France, could not be replicated to others' satisfaction and so the idea never really caught on. Dr. Marion Ellis writes in Bee Tidings that the powdered sugar technique cannot be used as a treatment either. If only dislodges a few mites, and those Varroa that fall off simply crawl back onto the bees. In addition, mites in brood are protected from dust treatments.



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Apicultural Notes from WSU

By Dr. Steve Sheppard (reprinted from the Washington State Beekeepers Association newsletter, February 2000 edition)

Beth Kahkonen completed the requirements for her Master of Science degree from WSU (you may remember Beth from the NW Corner Beekeeper Conference). Her thesis "Botanical Oils for the Control of Tracheal Mites: a Large Scale Field Study in the State of Washington" is currently being edited to produce a paper for a bee journal. For those of you who can't wait, a synoptic view of her research is on our laboratory web site:

<http://entomology.wsu.edu/apis/index.html>. Beth will continue on as a research technician in the Apiculture program this spring. She recently began weight lifting. She says it's only for recreation, but given her dedication, we suspect she intends to maximize her ability to life bee hives.

Jamie Strange (another Conference presenter) will complete the data collection needed for his MSc degree this spring. He has been investigating the timing requirements for optional Varroa control. A brief summary of his research in progress follows: In an experiment initiated in the spring of 1999, we tested the timing of treatment dates for the control of Varroa using Apistan. We began by mixing bees from overwintered colonies in a population cage, dividing brood and food evenly among the colonies and from this made 56 packages (approx. 2.5 lbs. each). Each colony was requeened with sister queens. Because of this mixing process, the mite levels in each colony at the beginning of the season were relatively similar. We sampled for mites using ether rolls, sticky boards and washing bees in alcohol.

Groups of eight colonies were used for the various treatments: Spring Apistan treatment, Fall Apistan treatment, Spring/Fall Apistan treatment, Summer Apistan treatment, Control (no treatment), continuous treatment (except during honey flow) and a Spring Coumaphos treatment. We followed the label requirements for length of treatment and number of strips. At the end of the first treatment, we again sampled the mite levels in all the colonies. In August we sampled for mites, removed honey and treated the Summer treatment group of colonies. We treated the Fall group at the end of September. At

the end of the final treatment, all the colonies were weighed, mites were counted and bees were sampled for laboratory analysis of fat body content. We will sample for the final time in the Spring of 2000.

Through the time of Fall treatment, preliminary data show that the level of mites in the Spring treatment group (.505 mites/100 bees) remained low in comparison to the continuously treated group (0 mites/100 bees) as did the Spring/Fall treatment group (.43 mites/100 bees). The group treated in August (Summer treatment) also had low mite levels (.588 mites/100 bees). The Control and Fall treatment groups had mite levels of 16 mites/100 bees and 13 mites/100 bees respectively. Of course, following Fall treatment, the mite levels in those colonies were very low also, so we have to wait until Spring to see if their earlier mite loads affected overwintering success. After the Spring sampling date, we will have a much better idea of the efficacy of Fall treatment. Additionally we will use these data to determine treatment thresholds for mites on sticky boards or mite in ether rolls.

Wilderness Genetics Project: A proposal was submitted to survey honey bees from areas far from where acaricides are used. The mite and disease tolerance characteristics of honey bees collected from these regions will be compared to existing managed honey bee populations. The hypothesis we propose to test is that natural selection, acting in undisturbed wilderness areas, can select for genetic adaptations in honey bees that lead to resistance to diseases or pests. Further, the rate of selection for resistance is likely to be greater than in areas with managed colonies. Why? The use of acaricides in managed populations allows honey bees that are susceptible to Varroa mites to contribute genetically to the next generation, thus reducing the "pressure" that natural selection can exert for the development of mite-resistant bees. Early evidence for this difference can be seen in examining honey bee populations where Varroa resistance has been reported to occur (Brazil, southeast Italy, far-eastern Russia). In all these cases, the honey bee populations were "untreated" for Varroa mites for most if not all of their history. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to incorporate disease or mite resistant characteristics from wilderness populations into managed stocks.

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The Bee Line

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