
THE BEE LINE



The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association

Volume 25, Number 3

April 2000

Fall Conference Update

By Dave Graber

It's not too early to mark your calendars for the Oregon State Beekeepers' Annual Fall Conference to be held in Hood River. There are some terrific speakers lined up that promise to make this year's Conference outstanding.

The first speaker I confirmed was Dr. Keith Delaplane. I am sure most beekeepers are familiar with Dr. Delaplane's work as Associate Professor of Entomology at the University of Georgia. He contributes numerous articles to bee publications, including the monthly column called "Strictly for the Hobbyist" in the American Bee Journal. Dr. Delaplane was a featured speaker at our Fall Conference several years ago and we are excited that he has agreed to visit again.

The second confirmed speaker is Dr. John Skinner from the Entomology Department at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Skinner came highly recommended by our own Dr. Michael Burgett. His specialty at the University of Tennessee includes specialty sideliners and hobbyists.

The date of the Fall Conference is the first weekend in November (November 2, 3 & 4). It falls a little later than usual to accommodate beekeepers who attend Farmer's Markets running through the end of October. Your feedback and suggestions of course are always appreciated. You can contact me by phone or e-mail (see page 10 for number and address)

American Foulbrood Control Without Drugs

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

The Florida bee inspection service continues to find AFB that has become resistant to standard treatment. This is bringing into clearer focus the consequences of relying on antibiotics to control this bacterial brood disease. An outline of methods employed in New Zealand to control AFB without using drugs was published in the January 2000 issue of Bee Culture by Cliff Van Eaton, a professional beekeeper from Tauranga. A rise in AFB incidence between 1985 and 1991 prompted implementation of a control program. It was financed and directed by the National Beekeepers Association. The work was carried out by government personnel on contract, and the program also included a significant counseling and research component.

The program by most measures has been successful such that many believe AFB can be totally eliminated from New Zealand in the future. The recipe is simple. Beekeepers use routine and constant inspection, manage their colonies in ways that do not distribute AFB spores and systematically (cont. on page 4)

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Oregon State Beekeepers Association

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President's Notes

by Ray Varner

The Annual Field Day is scheduled for April 22nd this month, and once again George and Susan Hansen have graciously agreed to host it. Rain or shine, come out and learn something new.

Demonstrations will be given by George Hansen, Dr. Lynn Royce, Debbie Delaney, Torey Johnson, Bill Ruhl, and Dr. Mike Burgett. Whether you are just starting out or have been keeping bees for many years, there are always new things to learn, new medications and new challenges. There's no end to learning when you keep bees!

Ruhl Bee Supply has donated a hive of bees for our raffle, so come prepared to win an addition to your apiary.

The Field Day is also a good time to talk with other beekeepers and find out what's going on in their part of the state and the region. The wet Willamette Valley differs from the coastal areas, and while there are differences there are many things to learn from each other. Does anyone have a good source of fireweed honey? Got any tips for keeping the bears out of hives? What about the Apicure gel packs we keep hearing about? Those are just a few teaser questions you will probably find answers to at the Field Day. Call me and sign up; bring a friend or someone you know who's been thinking about getting started.

I'll look forward to seeing you there!

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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.

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.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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.

(cont. from page 1)

destroy colonies that show symptoms. The premise for the program is: most AFB infections in beehives are due to beekeeping practices that are carried out on those hives. Research has shown that materials most likely to carry infective levels of AFB spores are: extracted honey supers, which are taken from AFB hives and then put on clean hives, generally a year later; and frames of brood and honey which are often moved unknowingly from hives with subclinical AFB (those not showing symptoms) to clean hives. The same studies revealed that feral colonies, drifting bees and contaminated hive tools, smokers, gloves, foundation, queens and even the soil in front of hives are of little consequence in spreading the disease.

Mr. Van Eaton, along with Dr. Mark Goodwin have authored a manual, which contains a detailed description of the New Zealand program, called "Elimination of AFM Without the Use of Drugs." The publication has sections on life history, symptoms, spread, inspection and diagnosis, and dealing with infected equipment and hives. There is a most interesting chapter on the natural progression of the disease in a colony. It describes in-depth scenarios of how colonies become infected and how some show symptoms while others may not. Two other specialized chapters discuss case studies of AFB incidence in outfits and specific management plans suggested to eliminate AFB from them.

The book is 78 pages long and contains 24 color photos and 11 illustrations, as well as a glossary of terms and selected bibliography. It is available directly from Mr. Van Eaton, 25 Perkins Drive, Te Puna, RD 6, Tauranga, New Zealand, Ph/Fax +64-7-552-4156; email cliff@comvita.com.

Regional Notes

Lane County: Their regular monthly meeting on April 11th will have Dr. Glen Morgan leading a discussion about bee stings and reactions. Visitors are welcome to attend! This very active group also posted a request for volunteers who might be interested in working with queen rearers in Croatia. Fruit growers in Croatia need help, and volunteers would be working with a Yugoslav breed of bees

called *Apis Mellifera Camica*. A US organization called "Flag" is looking for volunteers; their contact people are Mirsada Madjarevic at mirsada@delin.hr or Frank D. Michael at fmconsult@foxinternet.net.

Lane County Couple Attend ABL Conference in Fort Worth

By Chuck and Kathy Hunt

The organization is made up of more large beekeepers and packers than we had realized. It seemed that there were relatively few small hobbyist or sideline beekeepers at the meetings.

I was amazed by the problems of globalization that I heard and encountered at the meetings. I teach about globalization but usually try to escape such concerns when I keep bees. I was aware of the effects but the discussion of honey prices, importation of New Zealand queens, new diseases and pests, etc. was really quite amazing and enlightening. It is clear that the idea of international free trade is, automatically and without really any deep thought, considered a totally good thing by our government and politicians, and is going to have enormous impact on beekeeping and farming in the future. In many ways, those impacts will be very difficult and damaging despite the mythology concerning the wonder of free trade.

The sessions on Russian Queens and other subjects were excellent. But to be honest, I was impressed by how much of this information is available at our own Northwest Beekeepers Conference. I did not feel that I was ill prepared or ill informed, thanks to our own very fine meetings in the area.

I was again impressed with the difficulties under which beekeepers are laboring in the US at the present. The conference is normally attended by about 650 beekeepers. The Fort Worth conference was actually attended by about 250. Much of this has to do with the low price of honey in one way or another, either directly in considerations of cost of attendance or indirectly due to controversy over an organization that unites both producers and packers, two groups that have considerable animosity between them due to the price of honey in the US market and the role of importation in that price.

FIELD DAY IN THE BEEYARD

Saturday, April 22nd

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Apicure Update

The latest word on Apicure is...well, it varies from hour to hour, and each supplier contacted had been told a little different version by the manufacturer. To summarize all the pieces, it appears that Apicure MAY be available sometime in April, IF the manufacturer can work out a packaging problem, and a shipping problem.

It's a little difficult to time your medication programs based on a lot of ifs, but that's what we face with Apicure. The manufacturer has assured the suppliers that the product would be available for fall medication cycles. Be kind to your suppliers – they are doing the best they can.

Beekeeping at the Oregon Zoo?

By Torey Johnson

Last year I got a call from the Oregon Zoo asking for a colony of bees. It seems they have a need for, of all things, bird food!

In the Aviary Exhibit there are some brightly colored birds from tropical and subtropical regions of Eurasia, Africa and Australasia called bee-eaters. They range in length from 6-14 inches, and they are beautiful. They have a bill that is moderately long, slightly down-curved and sharply pointed. Their feathers are brilliantly colored, with green the predominate color and red, yellow, blue or purple the secondary colors. Many have elongated central tail feathers. Bee-eaters feed on bees, wasps and other insects.

I delivered a single-story colony, which the zookeeper placed in an enclosure that was within the Aviary Exhibit. Every so often (when the Zoo is closed and visitors aren't around) the zookeeper releases some bees for the bee-eaters to catch and eat.

I got a call from the Oregon Zoo in March asking for another single-story colony. Last year's colony had not been medicated, so it's hard to say if it died out from lack of medication, or if the bee-eaters simply ate too many bees.

This is probably the most unusual request I have had for a hive a bees, but if you get a chance to visit the Oregon Zoo, don't miss the bee-eaters in the Aviary Exhibit!



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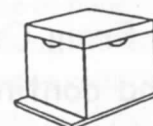
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Nectar Flows and Supering

By Dr. Keith Delaplane (excerpted from "A Year in the Life of an Apiary," reprinted with permission)

If you keep good queens, medicate, feed syrup, equalize and prevent robbing, you will witness a population explosion in your hives. During this buildup period, talk to experienced beekeepers in your area. They will alert you to imminent nectar flows and help you determine the right time to add honey supers.

When I was a beginner, I was impressed when a seasoned beekeeper walked up to a hive, looked at it, and pronounced a nectar flow was in progress. How did he know? This is one of those beekeeping skills that looks uncanny to an outsider, but it's not difficult and actually quite important to know.

There are several indicators. First, bees are actively flying at the entrance. This sounds trite, but there are times in spring when populations are large but foraging resources are few. Large masses of bees will cluster at the entrance during normal foraging times, apparently with nothing to do. In good nectar flows flight activity is intense, especially toward late afternoon. Secondly, bees show little interest in sugar syrup, and there is practically no robbing behavior. In warm evenings, a pleasant musky odor fill the apiary as the bees dehydrate the nectar into honey.

If you look inside a hive there are other indicators. Nectar flows, like syrup, stimulate beeswax production, and newly deposited beeswax is white. Upon lifting the lid, you will see white burr comb between the frames. During nectar flows and wax production, bees hang together in sheets by joining their legs in long chains called *festoons*. The bees are calm and gentle. Comb construction and nectar hoarding noticeably increase. If you shake a frame at this time, thin, raw honey literally rains out of the cells.

When you see these signs, it's time to add honey supers. As a general rule, give bees abundant room for storing honey early in the season (it's opposite in late season; we crowd them). Generous supering early in the season reduces swarming; furthermore, empty combs during a strong nectar

flow stimulate bees to maximum honey production. How many supers should you add? This varies across regions, but as a point of reference add about two supers for the earliest surplus flows. If and when bees begin working the top-most super, add another two, and so on according to the duration of the flow. However, if you put on "too" many supers or if the nectar flow tapers off early, bees will put honey only in the center-most combs of each super, leaving the edge combs empty. These half-filled supers are an inconvenience at harvest time. So, we want bees to have plenty of storage space, but we also want fully-filled supers. This is a balancing act that only experience will teach you. Generously super as long as nectar is coming in, but stop or even remove unused supers when the nectar stops.

Some beekeepers go to great pains to get fully-filled supers during a nectar flow. These manipulations are based on the fact that bees begin filling the center-most combs of a super first, and they work from the bottom of the hive up. Encourage bees to fill out peripheral combs in a super by trading their places with some of the filled-out combs in the center. Bees will then give more attention to the unfinished frames you put in the center. This leads us to the question of bottom-supering versus top-supering. Since bees work from the bottom of a hive up, many beekeepers put new empty supers below the existing supers and next to the brood nest – a process called *bottom-supering*. The idea is that empty supers so placed are closer to the hive entrance and incoming nectar, and bees more quickly fill them up. Since the supers moved to the top are partially finished, bees will continue filling them to completion. The opposite of this method, *top-supering*, is simply placing new empty supers on top of existing ones. Research has found no measurable benefit to bottom-supering; and in the final analysis it really depends on the quality of the nectar flow. If the nectar flow is really booming, our extra manipulations are superfluous.

Supering is also the time to decide whether to use queen excluders. If you do, place them between the brood nest and the honey supers. During subsequent inspections, carefully check whether the queen is on the excluder and don't accidentally trap her above the excluder when you reassemble the hive.

Bee Musings

By Diane Varner

I discovered a love for gardening a few years ago, and planted many wonderful plants that I loved only to lose them to deer. Now I find that I have three strict criteria for planting anything in my garden: it has to be bee-friendly, deer-unfriendly, and not too fussy (I want a low-maintenance garden). I have been moving from standard nursery offerings to more of the wonderful herbs that are found in specialty nurseries.

I have found that most of the herbs I planted during the last two seasons have met all three of my criteria. Deer don't like the strong-tasting plants, bees "swarm" all over the blossoms, and I just stand back and enjoy them. Of course, there are exceptions – deer love the Joe Pye Weed, but it's not a perfect world. You still have to experiment with your deer and your neighborhood. But I'll share my successes anyway.

Lemon balm is so very easy to grow, it spreads quickly, is beautiful and has many practical home uses. It's nickname, *melissa*, means "honeybee" in Greek, and it does attract bees. My plants bloomed non-stop, and any time I trimmed it back I got the most wonderful lemony fragrance. It dies back to the ground in winter, but the following spring you'll have an even bigger plant that freely seeds and spreads.

Anise hyssop is another one of those plants that meet my criteria. Mine flowered from June through August in full sun, with beautiful blue-violet flowers on tall spikes at the top of the main stem. It's a member of the mint family, so it spreads although not nearly as quickly as mint. The leaves have a purplish tone to them; the whole plant is attractive.

If you grow mint (and I do) be prepared to redefine "invasive." It will grow everywhere you want it to, and then some, but the bees love it and I keep a big row of it near the hives so they don't have to go far. If there is a lot of it around you will get a darker honey, and we have customers who specifically look for dark honey. There are lots of

different mints – spearmint and peppermint are just a few. The snipped leaves are great in cooking, and when dried they make wonderful sachets and teas.

I also have some woody shrub plants that don't die back every year. Lavender is spectacular, and having a large sweep of it is my goal. There are so many different varieties that ideally you could have lavender in bloom all season long. This is a plant with lots of other uses, and the only thing it is fussy about is that it needs lots of sun and well-drained soil. No wet feet or shade, please!

Heaths and heathers are not herbs, but they bloom in the middle of winter when nothing else does and the bees love them. Again, all they ask for is well-drained soil and sunshine. It's fun to see broad sweeps of pink and white in January, February and March, and when it's warm enough the plants are abuzz with honeybees.

If you don't have the time, space or inclination to have your own garden, perhaps you can find someone who does and place a hive or two there. Gardeners appreciate all the good honeybees do, and some of our best selling honey came from such an arrangement.

There are lots of specialty nurseries that offer herbs, but if you are out for a drive and want to discover a wonderful nursery with lots of mature displays, try the Thyme Garden near Alsea. They have a catalog (phone 541-487-8671), a web site: <http://www.thymegarden.com>, and email: herbs@thymegarden.com.

Happy gardening!



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Pat Heitkam Elected to American Beekeeping Federation Post

Pat Heitkam was elected Vice President during the American Beekeeping Federation's 2000 convention in Fort Worth. Pat is well-known to Oregon beekeepers as being involved in all phases of beekeeping. He specializes in queens and packages from his Orland, California base. Pat and his son Russ attend the Fall Conference meetings and we always look forward to a good time with them and their families. Congratulations, Pat!

Clint Walker III was elected President. Mr. Walker is a third-generation beekeeper from Rogers, Texas. He has a diversified operation: honey production and packaging, pollination and queens and packages. He was an ABF Vice President.

The ABF members also approved an overhaul of the organization's bylaws to restructure the ABF Board of Directors and give more power to the three ABF Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

In broad terms, the reorganization turns the body which was known as the ABF Directors into the Delegates Assembly – up to three delegates from each state. The new Board of Directors is a much smaller group: the President, Vice President and past President; four Directors elected by the Delegates Assembly; six Directors from the Special Interest Groups (two from each of the three SIGs); and two Directors appointed by the President. Much of the responsibility formerly relegated to the ABF Executive Committee will now be handled by the full Board of Directors.

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Meets 7:30 pm third Friday (except
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Pres: Wade Weathersby 541-756-
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Lane County

Meets 7:30 pm second Tuesday
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In order to stay within our operating budget while providing the best publication possible, expiration dates on mailing labels will be monitored and **The Bee Line cannot be mailed to memberships 60 days past the date code.** As an additional service, a membership and publications form will be printed on page 11 each month. Note additional savings are available when ordering magazines through OSBA.

Research Contributions

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

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