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# THE BEE LINE



*The Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association*

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Volume 25, Number 10

November/December 2000

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## Fall Conference Highlights



*Drs. Diana Sammataro, John Skinner, Michael Burgett, Eric Mussen, Stephen Pernal, Hachiro Shimanuki and Keith Delaplane*



*Bob Allen dissecting bee for tracheal mite*



*Grad student Debbie Delaney and Dr. Lynn Royce*



*Happy Holidays!*

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### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- \*2001 Conference Survey \*\*\*URGENT\*\*\*
  - \*Annual OSU Pollination SURVEY
  - \*Fungicides and Honey Bees
  - \*November in the Beeyard
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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, 1702 Toucan Street NW, Salem, OR 97304

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## President's Notes

by Ray Varner

Wow! What an event! Thanks to all the speakers, participants and attendees at the OSBA Fall Conference. My personal thanks to VP Dave Graber for an outstanding job, and to Sec/Treas Phyllis Shoemake for keeping us all organized.

Many things will be coming out of this Conference that I will report on in coming months. I asked our speakers to contribute an article so all our members can benefit from their presentations (Dr. Mussen's article is in this issue). A new committee has been formed, chaired by Fred VanNatta, to spearhead efforts to secure Dr. Burgett's position at OSU after his retirement. Correspondent John Schmitz is in contact with Conference speakers and will be writing articles for the Capital Press. I am working hard to keep the challenges beekeepers face in the public eye.

A dues increase of \$5 was approved effective January 2001. You are welcome to extend your membership before that takes effect. An increase for Bee Line ads is also being considered. The Board undertook the issue seriously and will be looking into suggested cost containment ideas

I'll respond to some comments. One was that since OSU summer research results weren't available our money was wasted. Definitive results cannot be obtained in one season. Research data is cumulative. There are no guarantees in research, but the alternative is to do nothing, which is not an alternative. The OSBA continues to support OSU Bee Lab research, and OSU will continue to report to us. A second comment was that a speaker was promoting the use of chemicals. The speaker was promoting judicious use of chemicals, only when needed. He reported good news that the use of some hive chemicals had dropped in California. The ideal for agriculture and bees would be that no chemicals are ever used, but that isn't realistic. What we are trying for in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a limited use of chemicals along with other techniques to achieve a manageable level of mite loads, etc. in colonies.

Have a good Thanksgiving, and a wonderful Holiday season! See you in 2001!

## November in the Beeyard

By Dr. Michael Burgett, OSU

Autumn is in full force in the Pacific Northwest in November. The floral resources are absent. Temperatures are such that very little foraging will take place. Inside a colony the so-called "winter cluster" is fully formed and the bees are now set to endure a four month period where they must survive on the honey and pollen supplies stored in the hive. What should you, the beekeeper, the colony manager, the steward of the hives, be doing to assist your colonies at this time of the yearly cycle? Essentially nothing! Your management practices that preceded November, combined with the severity of the winter, will determine the overwintering success of your colonies.

Autumn is a time of reflection on your management system. What can you do differently; what can you do more efficiently; how can you improve your skills and knowledge to make yourself a better beekeeper in 2001? Knowledge is the enemy of failure. Take this time to gather additional knowledge and resources that will make you a better beekeeper. One excellent way to do this is participation in your local and state beekeeping associations. Beekeeping skills are developed over years of learning and a superb source of information is the collective wisdom of fellow beekeepers. Call it mentoring; call it apprenticing; call it learning. Bee associations are full of knowledgeable people who are more than willing to share their experiences.

Good beekeeping involves a strong foundation in honey bee biology and knowledge of the floral resources available to you. So in an attempt to help interested beekeepers better understand the biological foundation of a social insect colony, I would like to present some findings by one of my graduate students. What follows concerns the egg laying cycle of a queen bee. It could be titled: A Time For All Seasons.

Oregon is not tropical! This statement can hardly come as a surprise. One of the many environmental classifications for Oregon is that it has a temperate climate, which means we experience defined seasons, with major temperature and

precipitation variations between seasons. We should therefore expect that the "behavior" of a honey bee colony will not be the same in summer as it is in winter, in spring as it is in fall.

One reflection of the cycle of the bee year is seen in the number of eggs a queen honey bee will produce on a monthly basis. A queen honey bee has two primary functions in a colony: 1) to produce the necessary pheromones that promote what scientists sometimes call "social adhesion" and, 2) to produce the eggs necessary to maintain the adult bee population. In her lifetime a queen will produce about one-half million eggs, and these eggs are normally laid over a two-year life span. Yes, certainly, some queens live longer than two years, but the average life span, which really means egg laying duration, works out to be about 24 months.

About seven years ago I had a graduate student working on a Masters degree and we decided that a good "problem" for him to investigate was the seasonal variation in queen egg laying. So he set about to do this. How does one accurately count the number of eggs a queen produces? His method was to establish four-frame observation colonies and visually observe queens for 15 minute periods throughout the day, counting each egg as she deposited it in a cell. In this manner he was able to compute the average number of eggs laid in a 15 minute period for that given day and thereby calculate the average number of eggs per day. By repeating this with multiple observation colonies, through several calendar years, he was able to accurately describe the egg production cycle as observed in the mid-Willamette Valley.

The figure that accompanies this article is the summary of his work. It is a fascinating visual that has much to teach us. One of the most obvious features is the cyclic nature of egg laying, peaking in the late spring and then declining to a low in November and December, thereafter climbing again. A second observation is that the queen produces eggs every month, obviously with some big differences between months, but no complete cessation of egg laying takes place. This is a little contrary to what many text books tell us, which is that queens supposedly have a short period of no egg (cont. on page 4)



(cont. from page 3)

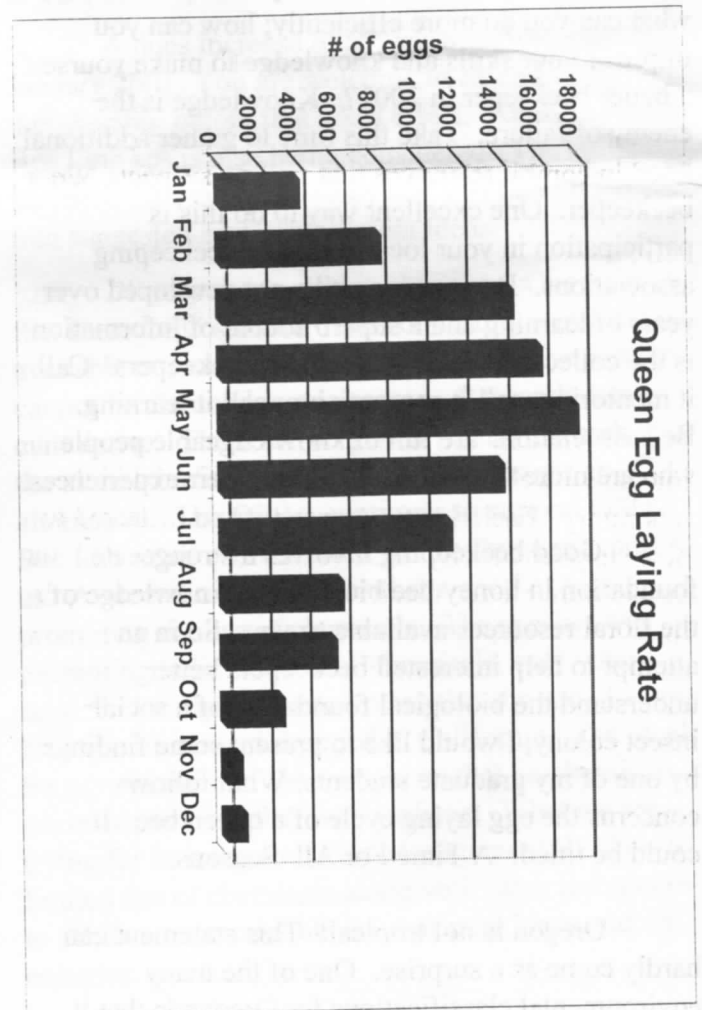
laying; such is not the case, at least in western Oregon, with its relatively mild climate that is moderated by the nearness of the Pacific Ocean.

His work also tells us how important late winter/early spring management is to the future productivity of a colony. The steepest increase in the egg laying cycle takes place from January through April, which translates to the period of greatest colony growth. This is the time when a queen requires an adequate brood nest within which to place her eggs. This emphasizes why reversing brood chambers (supers) is so important in early March because it allows a queen to continue her egg laying uninterrupted. The natural pattern of queen oviposition (egg laying) is in an upward spiral, and by early to mid-March queens are normally found "upstairs" in a hive and they will slowdown their egg laying when the upper brood chamber becomes congested. In March the colonies may appear from the outside to have two brood chambers (hive bodies), but the biological reality is that the queen and her brood nest are "confined" to the upper chamber/hive body.

It is important not to place too much emphasis on the actual number of eggs laid per month as shown in figure 1. Please remember that for this research project the queens were limited to four deep combs in a vertical configuration. A well drawn deep comb (both sides) will have about 7,000 cells. This, multiplied by four, gives a total cell count of 28,000 for the experimental observation hives. If all cells were available to a queen during the peak egg laying period, this would represent about four weeks of "available" space and she could produce eggs at a "standard" rate of about 1,000 per day. (Actually in the "perfect" hive, with "perfect" queen laying patterns, 21,000 available cells would be enough to support a colony). Such is never the case especially with observation colonies which are vertical slices of a normal hive. Observation hives do not possess multiple combs in the horizontal plane. For the four-frame observation hives used in these trials, a practical estimate of actual cells available for a queen to lay in would be around 14,000. This would mean a queen would be restricted to an egg production of about 500 to 600 per day, and that is just about what the "average"

queen depicted in figure 1 achieved in May, the month of highest egg production. This also suggests to us that a deep hive body with 9 or ten combs, if efficiently used by the queen, will nicely accommodate the space requirement necessary for optimal egg laying. But by the nature of the combs, and because of individual differences between queens, it is wise for the beekeeper to provide two deep chambers to insure adequate space for egg laying.

What this small project reveals is the "beauty" of time and pattern for a queen honey bee. It gives us a much better understanding of why certain aspects of colony management and manipulation work. It should make us better beekeepers.



## Fungicides and Honey Bees

By Dr. Eric Mussen, UC Davis

Theoretically, agricultural pesticides are screened for negative effects on non-target organisms (including honey bees) before being registered for use in the field. It is common practice to include data on acute toxicity to adult worker bees in every registration packet. At the time of registration, cautionary statements are developed for the labels of products that are found to be toxic to honey bees. However, a few chemicals are more toxic to brood than to adult bees. Studies on larval toxicity are seldom conducted and even less often reported. Therefore, some honey bee-toxic materials are registered without warnings on the labels.

Beekeepers in California have reported problems with brood disorders ("amorphogenic effects" similar to those caused by California buckeye or deformed wing virus), or loss, following applications of certain fungicides. Historically, the problem usually centered around applications of Captan. More recently, Rovral and Ziram, often used in combination, were becoming suspect. We studied the effects of incorporating small amounts (22 ppb) of various fungicides used in almonds, the food of larval honey bees. The tested products were Abound, Captan, Elevate, Flint, Rally, Rovral, Vanguard and Ziram.

One-day-old larvae were grafted from combs into small wells of royal jelly and incubated in the laboratory. Each day the larvae were transferred to new supplies of jelly. As soon as they defecated, the larvae were blotted clean and placed in tissue-paper lined wells for pupation. In incubators, there are no adult bees that can manipulate larvae or the food and complicate experimental results. The bees were reared to adults and mortality recorded daily.

The results of the experiments substantiated the claims of the beekeepers. Captan, Rovral and Ziram were toxic to developing brood. The rest of the fungicides did not cause effects that could be observed in the laboratory. Additional studies have to be conducted to determine exactly how toxic these chemicals are to developing honey bees. It is obvious that for some period of time there will be

loss of brood in field colonies. However, it has not been determined whether or not the bees can, and do, compensate for the losses as they occur. Also, there is no data on how long the detrimental effects persist in the hive. Since the effects are noticed by only the most observant beekeepers, colonies survive the exposures, and there have been no complaints of reduced colony strength at later dates, it would be inappropriate to recommend that these necessary disease control chemicals not be used in commercial almond production.

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## Auction Thanks

Thanks to all those who contributed items to the silent and/or oral auctions. Both were sell-out events. The OSBA sincerely and publicly thanks all of you. The quality of the items was first rate. Many were hand-crafted by members who also sell them professionally. Preliminary numbers show an income of about \$300 from the silent auction and about \$2,000 from the oral auction. Special thanks to our oral auctioneers: Drs. Mike Burgett, Eric Mussen and John Skinner. A memorable evening!



Dr. Eric Mussen modeling hand-knit watchcap with honey bee design

## Northwest Beekeeping

### November/December

- Order supplies for next year, verifying prices by phone before ordering.
- Disturb the bees as little as possible. Don't break the cluster.
- Check apiary occasionally for blowovers or vandalism.
- Continue the repair and/or assembly of next year's equipment.
- Tally costs for the past year: pounds of sugar used, equipment costs, medication, supplies, etc. Update information on syrup mix recipes and pollen supplement recipes.
- Record yields. Do book research on weak areas. Investigate areas of marketing interest: honey, pollen, propolis, venom, wax, royal jelly.
- Design and build better beekeeping equipment: pollen traps, hive tools, hive boxes, smokers, equipment caddies, etc.
- Mentor a young or inexperienced beekeeper. Donate equipment, scholarship money or expertise to the 4-H Beekeepers Club.

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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## HONEY BEE POLLINATION SURVEY - 2000

The following list of crops grown in the Pacific Northwest either require or greatly benefit from honey bee pollination. If you used your colonies for pollination of any of these crops would you please so indicate.

CROP	COUNTY	ACRES POLLINATED	NUMBER OF COLONIES	PRICE PER COLONY
PEAR	-----	-----	-----	-----
SWEET CHERRY	-----	-----	-----	-----
APPLE	-----	-----	-----	-----
BLACKBERRY	-----	-----	-----	-----
RASPBERRY	-----	-----	-----	-----
BLUEBERRY	-----	-----	-----	-----
CRANBERRY	-----	-----	-----	-----
VEGETABLE SEED	-----	-----	-----	-----
CLOVER SEED				
Red or White	-----	-----	-----	-----
Crimson	-----	-----	-----	-----
Vetch	-----	-----	-----	-----
RADISH SEED	-----	-----	-----	-----
CUCUMBER	-----	-----	-----	-----
SQUASH/PUMP.	-----	-----	-----	-----
WATERMELON	-----	-----	-----	-----
MEADOWFOAM	-----	-----	-----	-----
OTHERS??	-----	-----	-----	-----
	-----	-----	-----	-----
CALIFORNIA				
ALMONDS	-----	-----	-----	-----

The number of colonies you owned in 2000: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated percent split of your annual gross beekeeping income between:  
 honey sales \_\_\_\_\_%      pollination rental \_\_\_\_\_%

*What is your estimated **total** cost (in dollars) to maintain one colony for one year?*      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**For confidentiality, mail in your own envelope to:**  
 Michael Burgett  
 Department of Entomology  
 Oregon State University  
 Corvallis, OR 97331



**2001 Conference Site Survey --- Please fill out and return no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> (email option: [dgraber@aol.com](mailto:dgraber@aol.com) ; Fax option: 503-662-4594. We know this is short notice; site reservations must be made this far in advance. THANKS!**

**Location:** The 2001 Conference will be another joint Northwest Corner Conference. Hood River is the tentative selection, for the following logistical reasons: 1) central location for Oregon, Washington, Idaho and British Columbia attendees, 2) easy access to Portland Airport for pickup of incoming speakers, 3) reasonable facilities and lodging costs, and 4) easy access to nearby restaurants and activities. Facilities elsewhere can't match these criteria (as much as we love the coast!).

Hood River is OK with me \_\_\_\_\_ No preference \_\_\_\_\_

No! I want the NW Corner Conference to be held in \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** Concerns were expressed about having to take time off from work to attend the Conference. In an attempt to sometimes take advantage of a holiday (Veteran's Day), a suggestion was made to change the Conference date to the **second Thursday/Friday/Saturday** in November. For example, the 2001 dates would be November 8, 9 and 10. It won't work every year, but it's an attempt to address the issue raised.

I agree with the suggested date change: \_\_\_\_\_ No preference \_\_\_\_\_

I don't agree, and make the following suggestion \_\_\_\_\_

**Speakers/Topics:** If you have ideas for Conference speakers or topics, please list them here. This is YOUR Conference!

Speakers: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics: \_\_\_\_\_



## 2000 OREGON/WASHINGTON HONEY BEE POLLINATION SURVEY

By Dr. Michael Burgett, OSU

Statistical information concerning the rental of honey bee colonies for pollination in the Pacific Northwest was almost non-existent before 1986. At that time the OSU Honey Bee Laboratory began an annual pollination rental survey. The information gathered over the years has given us a much better understanding and appreciation of the value of honey bee pollination to our region's largest industry (agriculture). From the past fifteen years of survey data we have learned many things; one of the more interesting is that the average per colony pollination fee has more than doubled since this survey first began (average fee in 1986 = \$14<sup>75</sup>; average fee in 1999 = \$32<sup>25</sup>).

We invite and welcome your participation in this year's survey. As concerns any individual beekeeper, all information you provide will be held strictly confidential. In filling out the attached form you do not need to provide your name unless you wish to do so.

Results from the survey will be published in the *OSBA BeeLine*, the *WSBA Newsletter* and the *USDA Honey Market News*.

Please return the completed form as soon as possible, but before **December 15, 2000**.

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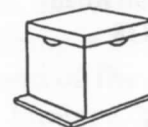
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### REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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Meets 7:30 pm third Friday (except  
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VP: Bruce McDonald  
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## Check your Mailing Label

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 8). 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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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. Membership outside the US is \$23. **Note: OSBA dues will increase effective January, 2001.**

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of a New Year!

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## **PLEASE SEE INSIDE FOR TIME-SENSITIVE SURVEY PAGE**

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Salem, OR

**The Bee Line**  
Newsletter of the Oregon State Beekeepers Association  
Diane Varner, Editor  
P.O. Box 123  
Yamhill, OR 97148-0123  
Address Service Requested