

"Promoting the Craft, Science, and Future of Beekeeping since 1947"

# THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi Central Iowa Beekeepers,

Well it is September 5th, my 68th birthday, and by now you should have your honey supers off and mite treatment on your hives. Andy Joseph said at our last fall meeting, that you want to have two hatches of clean brood going into winter. Dr. Larry Connor stated in the American Bee Journal, that this is the beginning of the bees year. From now on the bees will produce bees that last all winter or as he called them: fat bees. So now is the time to get your bees cleaned of mites and see that they have at least ten frames of honey or start feeding them 2 to 1 sugar syrup.

We have a great meeting planned for Saturday September 17 @ 7:00 pm. Andy Joseph, Iowa State Apiarist, will be our speaker and will talk briefly about wintering your hives and then show how he makes his wax art. For those of you who have wondered what to do with that cappings wax, well this presentation is for you.

In addition on Saturday we will have a Gadget & Gizmos session with members bringing in things that you made to help with your beekeeping. For example, Mike Sander has made a simple device to help with preventing robbing. I have seen many of your devices and I would like you to share them. I have a system of beeyard feeding that prevents bees fighting and drowning.

And last but not least, I am looking ahead to our January Winter Seminar and I am excited to announce Michael Bush as our speaker. More details will follow. CIBA and the Des Moines Backyard Beekeepers (DMBB) will be co-hosting this event. I would like to thank the CIBA and DMBB members who contacted Mr. Bush and are making the arrangements for this seminar. THIS IS A BIG DEAL and I expect over 100 people to attend.

Looking forward to our September meeting. Hope to see you there and BRING your GADGETS & GIZMOS to SHARE!

Arvin (515) 509-9630 [ajfoell@huxcomm.net](mailto:ajfoell@huxcomm.net) --(note this is the new phone number Arvin announced at the last meeting)

Issue: Fall 2016

### MEETING INFORMATION

Date: September 17, 2016

Time: 6:00 pm Dinner on your own

7:00 pm Meeting

Where: Bonanza Steakhouse

5029 N.E. 14<sup>th</sup> St.

Des Moines, IA 50313

Agenda: 1) Business meeting  
2) IA bee update, overwintering and wax art by Andy Joseph  
3) Gadgets & Gizmos

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER IS: Dec. 1, 2016

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## **Saturday Sept 17, 2016 CIBA Meeting**

The Fall CIBA meeting is Saturday September 17 at Bonanza in Ankeny. Dinner on your own starting at 6:00 pm. Business meeting starting at 7:00 pm. Andy Joseph will give a brief update on bee status in Iowa today, talk on winter preparation and then show us his wax art. The second part of the program will be a Gadgets & Gizmos show-and-tell where members can share beekeeping equipment and apparatus they have made to help them tend the bees. **So bring those Gadget & Gizmos to share at the meeting.**

## **Winter Seminar--Reserve the date: Jan 21, 2017**

Mr. Michael Bush, Bush Farms, Nehawka, NE will be the speaker. Mr. Bush is author of several bee books, has spoken all across the US, and has an informative website at <http://www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm>. The meeting will be co-hosted by the Des Moines Backyard Beekeepers and CIBA and will run from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM with a potluck luncheon over the noon hour. Additional details and registration will be available shortly. Plan to attend as this is a great opportunity to hear Michael Bush talk on multiple subjects including Realistic Expectations, A Few Good Queens/Simple Queen Rearing, Spring Management (especially swarm prevention) and Alternative Equipment.

## **CIBA Board Meeting Saturday Sept 24**

CIBA will have a Board of Directors meeting Saturday, September 24 at 2:00 PM at the Cafe Diem meeting room, 2005 S Ankeny Blvd Ste 800, Ankeny, IA 50023. This is an open meeting and members are welcome to attend. We will be devoting the first portion of the meeting to organizing the Winter Seminar with the Des Moines Backyard Beekeepers followed by discussion of other CIBA business.

## **Spring Meeting notes and Treasurer's report**

The Spring CIBA meeting notes and the current Treasurer's report will be distributed at the fall meeting.

**Varroa Update** From Catch the Buzz--Beekeeper Newsletter, August 15, 2016 (a free email service of Bee Culture magazine)

**Bombs Away** (and away with bombs): Dr. Dennis van Engelsdorp and his BIP team at the University of Maryland have done a great job gathering and disseminating information on bee problems, esp. varroa. Dennis emphasizes that just one bee colony with high varroa populations can spread varroa through a multi-colony apiary (and neighboring apiaries). Randy Oliver, and others, have taken this to heart and isolated these "Varroa Bombs" from their other colonies. Dennis, and others, propose a *Community Treatment Day* three times a year – possibly subsidized by the government. Encourage Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton to incorporate *Make Bees Great Again* into their campaigns.

*(Note from Bee Culture's September issue: The evolving consensus of some beekeepers and researchers is that it is becoming prudent to consider the beeyard as the organism rather than a single colony. Both Jennifer Berry and Kim Flottum have explored this topic in the September issue {of Bee Culture}.)*

**Varroa – When Will it End?** A consensus is solidifying on the part of both beekeepers and bee scientists that varroa, and the viruses (esp. DWV {ed: Deformed Wing Virus}) spread by varroa are the major cause of Colony Collapse Disorder. U.S. beekeepers probably spend \$20 million dollars annually on

varroa control. Sub-optimum nutrition exacerbates the problem by impairing bees' immune systems. That *Amitraz* (the primary ingredient in Tactic and Apivar) still works after 30 years is surprising to many and is the main reason that many beekeepers are still in business. There are disturbing signs that varroa mites are building resistance to Amitraz, as they have done with Fluvalinate and other chemicals. There is a crying need for new methods of varroa control and there are many dedicated scientists in the U.S. and abroad working on the problem.

Many beekeepers have moved up the "fall treatment" for varroa to August. They have found that going for that last drop of honey in August just isn't worth it if colonies don't maintain winter populations due to varroa. Dr. vanEnglesdorp claims that colony failure the following spring is likely if colonies go into winter with more than 1 to 3 mites per hundred bees. Isolate (or destroy) "varroa bomb" colonies.

### **Questions and Answers** submitted by Margaret Hala

Q.) ***What's the difference between nurse, guard and field bees, and how can I tell them apart?***

A.) A bee goes through several stages in its' life. A newly hatched bee will feed and orientate itself to the hive, then begin cleaning the cells and taking nectar and pollen from returning field force bees. Then comes caring for the queen then guard bees and finally field force bees before quietly leaving the hive to die. They all look the same, except for the newly hatched bees. They're fuzzy looking.

Q.) ***My electric uncapping knife overheats. Do I have to get a new one and where?***

A.) No, you don't have to get a new one. Ours overheats also and we went to an electrical contractor and had them make us a foot pedal to use. It's just like for a sewing machine, but will require a heavier duty foot pedal and cord. Step on the pedal, the knife heats, lift your foot and the power is cut to the knife.

When the knife does finally quit working, get another knife from the CIBA Auction from someone who doesn't know this trick. Or is you want to get a new one, any beekeeping supply catalog has them.

Q.) ***If I feel I should supplement feed my colonies to ensure winter survival, how much, when and how?***

A.) Obviously this is dependent on location and how harsh your winter usually is in your area. It also depends on if you're feeding honey, sugar syrup or corn syrup. Here, in Central Iowa it is recommended that colonies have at least 60 pounds of honey left on them as food. Many think this is not enough and say 90-100 pounds is much better.

Some falls have a good honey flow and some have almost none. Getting the honey off your colonies before Sept. 1 means you will have to feed them less.

A 2:1 ratio of sugar to water is best for fall feeding. If feeding corn syrup ask you supplier if he's added water and how much. Straight corn syrup needs about 1 gallon water to 4-5 gallon corn syrup or it will sugar too fast. (Spring ratio of sugar/water is 1 to 1.)

As for how---you can open container out of a barrel or bucket, but this draws other bugs, coons, possums, etc. You can use an entrance feeder in the fall, but bees will not come down to it in the

spring. A hive top feeder bucket or container works best. You can see how fast they are taking the food just by lifting the outer cover is there is a box around the bucket.

As for when to feed----when you pull the honey crop, check the frames in the top brood chamber. If they aren't full you need to feed. They will take food till it gets too cold to break cluster.

We have fed 100-150 colonies in an urban setting with hive top buckets.

**Q.) *Now that I've gotten my honey extracted, how do I clean the extractor? I can wash off the honey, but how about the propolis?***

A.) The best way is to use a power washer with hot water. DO NOT EVER USE BLEACH ON STAINLESS STEEL! If you do not get all the propolis off, it can build up over the years and you will have to use more than a power washer. That's when using a paste of baking soda and salt helps. Scrub and rinse. Hot cooking oil emulsifies the propolis. Use it as hot as you can get it without the oil smoking and wear gloves. Saturate the propolis and then use soap and water to remove the oil. If you don't want to do this every year, maybe every other year.

Another way is to use denatured alcohol to remove the propolis and WD-40 to remove wax build-up.

**Q.) *Why won't the bees leave the brood chambers sometimes? I use BeeGo and usually have good results.***

A.) Check for brood in the super. If there is none, you'll have to use a bee brush or blower and remove the frames one at a time. This happens sometimes but the bees think they have a reason for staying. Maybe you used too much BeeGo.

**Q.) *How do I get rid of the smell of Bee-Go spilled on wooden ware?***

A.) One way is to use ammonia, but I've seen no directions as to how or how much.

**Q.) *How long are mites able to survive in winter without brood to breed in?***

A.) It's a loooong time. As long as they can feed on adult bees they will survive easily till spring. In an empty stacked pile of boxes with frames----up to 7 days.

**Q.) *I plan to paint/treat my supers this fall as I put them away for the season, to prepare them for next year. What do I paint/treat them with?***

A.) This mixture can also be used to treat brood chamber, but all wood MUST be unpainted, so you'll have to scrape any paint of supers.

You use:

1 quart linseed oil

1 quart paint thinner

1/2 pound paraffin wax

1 gallon copper naphthenate paint

Mix paint thinner and wax together and let set overnight at a temp of at least 70° F. The next day mix all the ingredients together.

This must be painted on unpainted wood and above 50° F. The wood can be weathered about 6 months before painting, so you can treat in the fall and paint in the spring, but after painting air at least 60 days, so don't wait too long. Or you can treat in the fall and paint and let air all winter.

Each ingredient serves a purpose. The boiled linseed oil forms a hard coating on the wood. The paint thinner dissolves the paraffin wax which fills the pores in the wood thus supplying water proofing. The copper naphthornate kills termites and maybe ants and preserves the wood from mold and rotting.

You can also dip and treat new wood, especially bottom boards. Dip mitered corners of hive bodies before assembling. This extends the life of the wood for many years.

**Q.) *This morning I found the front half of a bee lying in front of the hive, still kicking. I couldn't find the rest of the bee and there was no sign of any other injury, just the missing abdomen. What is going on?***

A.) Sounds like a wasp attack. It's common and poises no problem unless there are several wasps trying to gain entrance to the colony, as can happen at this time of the year. Bang on the side of the hive to rile the bees up for defense of the colony and chase the intruders out. Then reduce the entrance to make defense easier. One wasp can kill hundreds of bees before it gets killed, so several wasps can wipe out a hive.

Enough for today.  
Margaret

### **Plastic Cartons as Winter Wraps** submitted by Phil Ebert, Ebert Honey Co., Lynnville, IA

I get questions from time to time about the cartons we use for wintering bees. To my mind they don't do anything to keep the bees alive unless you have boxes like we do that are well ventilated. We have been upgrading our equipment the last couple of years but we still have a goodly number of religious boxes (hole-y). The cartons block out the wind and the mice. Cold weather does not kill healthy bees. The problem is that some of those big colonies that look good to the eye are the first ones to die. Don't waste your money on cartons if you are not doing anything for mite control. Mite control is the key to survival. Cartons will not replace this.

The real value of the cartons is in the spring. The black cartons absorb heat from the sun. It allows the cluster to loosen up. Division board feeders have their downside but we have one in every box. We have found the big clusters will take feed when daytime highs are in the upper 30's. This allows us to feed our colonies syrup in late February and early March if they need it. The bees have to be next to the feeder for this to work. Our good colonies will be wall to wall. If they are not, they probably don't need feed anyway. Ideally, we get enough syrup in the colonies in the fall but with 1300 colonies, we sometimes don't get our work done on time.

Our cartons have four flaps on top. Two of them span the width of the carton. This provides extra insulation. We have a piece of ½" R-board on top of each colony. The addition of the carton flaps gives us almost an inch of insulation. We have bought these from three places. The first ones, we got from Des Moines Custom Box. They have since been absorbed by Container Corporation of America. They are located near Waterworks Park in Des Moines. I bought the second lot from them. The last ones we got were from Packaging Corporation of America in Conrad. Those were around \$15 each in a quantity

of 275. They get even more expensive in smaller quantities. The material looks like cardboard but it is plastic. It is very durable unlike the cardboard ones that warp horribly when they come in contact with moisture.

We use migratory lids but we still use inner covers. It gives us a place to put the meds and is part of our wintering scheme. The rims of the inner covers have a notch cut in them. We drill a corresponding hole in the carton so the bees have an upper entrance. This is important!!

We used to use Colony Quilt that we bought from B&B. It is also effective and durable but it is time consuming to put on. It is also a poor thing to use with pallets and migratory lids. There is not enough space to get it around the colonies on the pallets in speedy manner and the seam under the lid remains open. The bees seal it to some extent but the wind can blow in there. It works fine if you have individual bottom boards and telescoping lids. I have a lot of colony quilt that I would be happy to sell at a bargain price.

There used to be a guy in Southern Iowa that painted the front of his colonies black. I don't recall his name. He always faced his colonies to the south so the sun would hit them. It may have provided the same effect. I don't know if he had a problem with too much heat in the summer time. There have been a few years when we did not get our cartons off until early May. If you have the entrance blocks out, the bees will ventilate just fine.

If you have any questions, I prefer that you e-mail me at [ehoney37@netins.net](mailto:ehoney37@netins.net). Phone calls really jam me up.

(Editor's note: This is a follow up to the information Phil gave at the 2015 Iowa Honey Producers Conference where he described these boxes during the overwintering round table discussion he participated in. Presently CIBA member Jamie Beyer is pursuing sourcing the manufacturing of these plastic boxes based on Phil's leads and finding a local beekeeping supplier or suppliers that will have these for sale. There are similarly designed boxes made of waxed cardboard for sale by Mann Lake, but my personal experience has not found them to be durable enough to last more than a season and I found them to be loose fitting. The plastic boxes Phil is describing should last for many seasons.)

**TIPS for August** from Joli Winer, editor, The Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers' Association, The Bee Buzzer, August 2016 as published in the American Bee Journal Extra, August 15, 2016 (a free email service of the American Bee Journal magazine)

(Editor's note:-Don't let August in the title fool you, these are suggestions that apply this month also.)

- Use the weed eater and mow around your hives so that the bees can get in and out.
- After pulling off your supers check your hives to make sure they have laying queens.
- Provide water for your bees if they do not have a water source.
- Bees are hanging on the outside of the hives to help keep it cooler inside the hives — not much honey coming in so they are just keeping cool.
- Harvest any fall honey & get it extracted. Any honey that you pull off to extract should be extracted within a few days. In this heat wax moth damage can happen in just a few days. Small

hive beetles can also do a great deal of damage to your supers and your honey. Don't pull your honey off until you are ready to extract.

- Check the moisture in your honey — moisture is running very high in some states.
- Complete a fall inspection for each hive
- Take an inventory at your bee yards to see what equipment you need to repair or replace over the winter.
- Get your entrance reducers on towards the end of September to keep mice out of your hives. Check for mice before installing mouse guards. Check your bottom boards for holes big enough for a mouse to go through.
- Store any frames with drawn comb in paradichlorobenze (moth crystals). Wax moth damage can be devastating to your combs. Store them in a cool ventilated area. Do not store your supers in plastic garbage bags as this acts as an incubator for the wax moth!
- Update your record book - you won't remember in the spring!
- Check your hives for stored honey. Most colonies will need 40 - 60 pounds of honey to winter successfully. The top deep super/hive body should be packed full of honey. If it isn't you should feed the bees some syrup. If mixing your own syrup in the fall the mixture should be 2:1 sugar to water by weight. That would be 4 lbs. of sugar to 2 lbs. of boiling water. You can also get high fructose corn syrup. However, you may not use corn syrup or any type of syrup that you purchase at the grocery store. It has things in it that can cause problems with your bees. NEVER feed honey purchased from the grocery store - it can spread American Foulbrood disease to your bees.
- Here are the reasons bees die over the winter. Make sure you take care of these problems in the fall:
  - Bees run out of honey.
  - Too few bees to maintain the cluster.
  - The bees' digestive tracts compact with too much waste matter.
  - They exhibit parasitic mite syndrome.
  - Check your colonies to see if you need to treat for Varroa mites.
  - Combine a weak colony with a stronger colony. Colonies may be split again in the spring.
  - Keep a vigilant eye out for small hive beetles. Inspect you hives to make sure you have a good laying queen. You should see brood in all stages (eggs, larvae, capped).
  - If treating for mites get your treatments on as soon as possible. Mark your calendar with the date they went in and the date they should come out. The earlier you can get your treatments on for Varroa mites the better chance you have of getting healthy young bees into the hive to make it through the winter.
  - Make sure your brood is in the center of the bottom hive body. Arrange honey frames on the sides and in the top hive body — it should be full of honey. If it isn't, feed your bees syrup.
  - Make sure your hives are tipped forward, just slightly, so water doesn't pool on the bottom board and cause moisture problems.

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