Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 25—JULY 2012

Modern Beekeeping

What a bouquet of pollen! Photo courtesy of Shannon Tieken.

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The Buzz

While we can't out-buzz bees, there's plenty to buzz about in this issue. It marks our third year of this e-newsletter, and we're overwhelmingly grateful to you readers for providing so much great content, ideas and support.

As we start off on our third year, here are some interesting factoids about the last 25 issues:

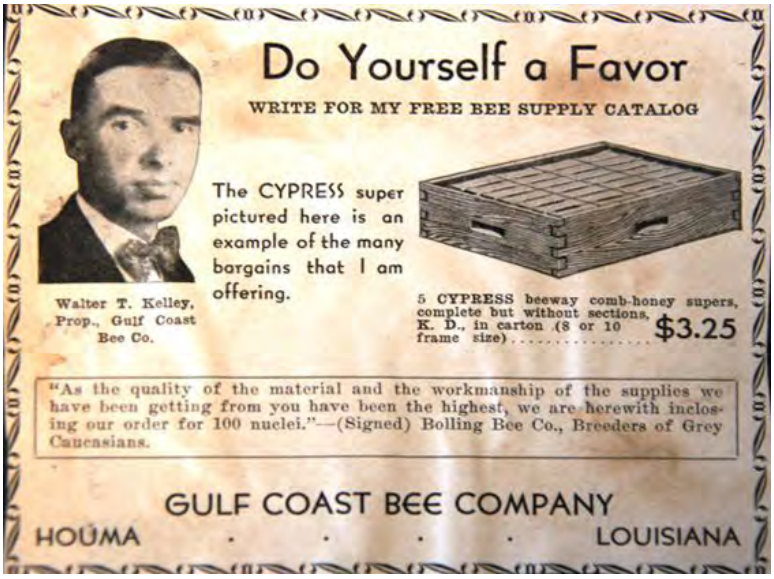
- 30ish pages is now the average, from an inaugural 11-page issue. We realize it can be overwhelming to read so we're going to try to keep it around 30 except when there are key seasonal topics.
- 18,000 subscribers: Please keep passing on the word that this newsletter is free; anyone can sign up at www.kelleybees.com.
- 493,104 bees featured in photographs, although that number may be slightly off. Like in this issue's bearding photographs, sometimes they're hard to count precisely.
- 1 international award won, from the Society for Technical Communications International Summit Awards, 2010-11.
- 2 major layout redesigns based on your feedback on how to make it more readable, especially as device-reading becomes more common.
- 30 historic ads from Walter T. Kelley.
- 3 versions of "Walter Bee," the man-insect icon that's recognized worldwide.
- Too many typos—sorry!
- Not enough cute beekeeping kids photos; please keep sending them!
- 100s of priceless comments and suggestions from readers. Please keep sending your comments and suggestions, now easier via the blog feature or at KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

In honor of our third anniversary, when you provide helpful feedback we'll send you a small but fun token of our appreciation. (See "All I Need to Know..." article in this issue.) We want to keep making this newsletter something you use and look forward to receiving.

Thanks for your continued loyalty.

Sincerely,

Jane Burgess
CEO/Partner
The Walter T. Kelley Company



Healthy Bees

Queenright

By Michael Bush

Editor's Note: Last month we ran this article with an advanced apology, as we'd misplaced the information on who provided it.

We've since learned it came from the esteemed Michael Bush, who recently spoke at Kelley's Field Day. Thanks to those of you who let us know, and Michael, I apologize!

This article is so helpful that we're running it again this month.

We are coming into the time of year that you'll be doing inspections and finding queens that are failing, missing, or you're not sure what the deal is but you think some hives are queenless. The problem with the situation is you may think they are queenless when actually they have a virgin that isn't laying yet, or you may think they have laying workers, when actually the queen just hasn't hit her stride yet and laid multiple eggs. How can you do the right thing when you are not certain?

Panacea

There are few solutions as universal in their application and success than adding a frame of open brood every week for three weeks.

- It is a virtual panacea for any queen issues.
- It gives the bees the pheromones to suppress laying workers.
- It gives them more workers coming in during a period where there is no laying queen.
- It does not interfere if there is a virgin queen.
- It gives them the resources to rear a queen.
- It is virtually foolproof and does not require finding a queen or seeing eggs.

If you have any issue with queenrightness, no brood, worry that there is no queen, this is the simple solution that requires no worrying, no waiting, and no hoping. You just give them what they need to resolve the situation. If you have any doubts about the queenrightness of a hive, give them some open brood and sleep well. Repeat once a week for two more weeks if you still aren't sure. By then things will be fine.

National Honeybee Day

National Honeybee Day this year is August 18th, with the theme "Sustainable Agriculture Starts with Honeybees!" There are a variety of programs and opportunities to participate; check out http://www.nationalhoneybeeday.com.

If you are afraid of transferring the queen from the queenright hive because you are not good at finding queens, then shake or brush all the bees off before you give it to them.

If you are concerned about taking eggs from another new package or small colony, keep in mind that bees have little invested in eggs and the queen can lay far more eggs than a small colony can warm, feed and raise. Taking a frame of eggs from a small struggling new hive and swapping it for an empty comb or any drawn comb will have little impact on the donor colony and may save the recipient if they are indeed queenless. If the recipient didn't need a queen it will fill in the gap while the new queen gets mated and not interfere with things.

Michael Bush has had an eclectic set of careers, currently he is working in computers. He has been keeping bees since the mid 70s, usually from two to seven hives up until the year 2000. Varroa forced more experimentation which required more hives and the number has grown steadily over the years from then. By 2008 it was about 200 hives. He is active on many of the Beekeeping forums with last count at about 45,000 posts between all of them. He has a website at www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm.

Michael Bush

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Small Hive Beetle (Aethina tumida)

By Sean Burgess, Kentucky State Apiarist

What the heck are these things?

Some beekeepers who are not familiar with the Small Hive Beetle, henceforth called SHB, may wonder what these small brownish black beetles are running around in their hives. Let me tell you they can be real trouble. These pests are not native to the US but have now established permanent residence. They are here to stay and we need to learn how to deal with them.

Originating in sub-Saharan Africa this beetle is considered a minor pest in that region. Africanized honey bees have evolved to be able to deal with these pests as they have been pressured by them for a long period of time. It is thought that the Africanized honeybee has a stronger mandible and is able to bite and damage the beetle. European honeybees do not have this ability. First discovered in the US in 1996 in Charleston, SC, probably coming from Africa with a load of fruit, the SHB have now spread to almost all states to some degree. They seem to thrive better in warmer climates that have milder winters, but they can and will winter over with colonies in the north. While they cannot handle the cold, the warmth of the winter hive provides them protection.

What they do

SHB are attracted to the smell of wax, honey, pollen and to some degree the smell of alarm pheromone being emitted by stressed bee colonies. SHB fly and are able to spread by this means. The guard bees of a colony will challenge these beetles as they try to gain entry to the hive but sometimes the number of beetles trying to get in will be so great as to let some of them slip by.

The female SHB will lay eggs in the cracks and crevices within a hive that the bees can't reach and sometimes slit the caps on developing brood and deposit their eggs here. The female SHB can lay up to 1,000 eggs. As the eggs hatch the larvae will feed on the brood, honey and wax within the colony, tunneling through the comb as they go.

As they feed they defecate, causing the honey and nectar to ferment and ooze from the frames. This is called being slimed and is really an unpleasant situation for the bees to deal with. The honey will discolor and take on the smell of decay.

The larvae, having grown by feeding in the hive, will now migrate to the hive entrance and drop to the ground to pupate in the soil. Most SHB larvae will burrow into the ground within a foot of the hive if the soil conditions are correct. They prefer sandy soils to compact soil and will scurry some distance to find the correct conditions.

The adult SHB will emerge in about 3-4 weeks to seek out hives and mate. The female will begin to lay eggs in about a week, with the eggs hatching in 2-3 days and the life cycle repeats. Depending on your weather conditions, number of colonies and the feeding and reproducing opportunities, you may have 3-5 generations per year of the SHB. Remember that they can and will overwinter with the colonies. Adult SHB can live for up to six months.

Prevention

As in most pest situations the first line of defense is to maintain strong colonies. If you have weak colonies you will need to keep an especially close eye on them for infestation. Keep your entrances reduced on weaker colonies so the bees are better able to defend them and consider combining hopelessly weak colonies with strong ones, as long as it is not a disease or infestation that has caused this weakened condition.

Avoid opening your hives more than necessary for inspections. One of the things the bees will do is corral the SHB adults into tight spots and propolize them in. When we go into the hives we may free many of these trapped beetles.

By keeping our hives in direct sunlight we may also reduce the number of SHB. They do not like direct sunlight and this may help tip the odds in our favor. Remember to allow your hives to vent in some fashion to let the bees maintain preferred temperatures.

Another consideration would be a ground treatment around our hives to kill pupating larvae. GardStar® is a commonly used insecticide which contains a percentage of Permethrin. This is applied with a watering can around the hives with care to not let it come in contact with the hive itself. Depending on rainfall this will need to be reapplied occasionally. I have also heard of people using diatomaceous earth around their hives and in some bottom-mounted SHB traps. This earth has ground-up marine life in it and the larvae are cut as they crawl through it, causing them to bleed out.

Beneficial nematodes are another option. They are mixed with water and introduced to the soil around the hives, where they seek and destroy pest larvae.

After experiencing terrible losses in south Mississippi last year to SHB I have found some benefits to using salt in various ways. Purchasing the mineralized salt sold by the farm stores (used as a mix with animal feed) I will combine roughly 3/4 of a pound with two gallons of water in a weed sprayer. I will spray this mixture around my hives to kill pupating larvae in the ground and to act as a weed control. Remember after use to clean your sprayer with water to prevent corrosion of any metal parts.

In the case of using solid bottom boards you can also cover the bottom boards with salt. This is detrimental to any larvae crawling through it as the salt will desiccate them. Avoid getting salt on any frames as this can be lethal to the larvae of bees as well. If using a screened bottom board you may be able to remove the screen and move your debris board up into its position and salt that. While I have heard some experienced beekeepers say that bees do not need or seek salt, I beg to differ; I constantly have bees on me licking the

salt off my arms. In addition I have a swimming pool and live on a small lake and the bees use both. I am convinced it is the salt that they are seeking.

I have also set up a bird bath in which I mix three teaspoons of salt to a gallon of water and provide it to my bees. This may also help to keep them out of your or your neighbor's pools. If your neighbors are not beekeepers this can become a real problem. One of the things you may suggest to them is hanging a towel over the edge of the pool to try to attract the bees to using only one area.

Traps

There are many beetle traps on the market today. Some fit in between the top bars of your frames, some are bottom mounted, some may trap the beetles as they try to enter and some may be homemade from CD cases or the like. Some use both an attractant and a killing agent once the SHB is inside, such as poison, oil to suffocate, or diatomaceous earth to cut them.

I encourage you to research these traps to find out what is legal and which ones work best. Some researchers are working on traps and pheromones that will draw the beetles and contain them prior to them entering the hives. While I hope this works I can't help thinking of the time I put up Japanese beetle traps around my property. It seems that you want to put these traps on your neighbor's property instead as they seem to draw every beetle in the county.

Squishing

When I am opening my hives for inspection sometimes I will see SHB running around on the top bars. This is where I take some satisfaction in killing as many as I can with my hive tool. While this is not the most effective means it does give me pleasure. You may also want to overturn your outer cover and set your top box on it. As the beetles run from light they migrate down onto the overturned outer cover providing more squishing opportunities.

Harvesting

When you remove your supers for harvesting it is important that you get them extracted as quickly as possible or the hive beetles may have a field day in your honey house if you don't. We like to freeze our frames immediately after harvest to kill any eggs that may have been deposited by the SHB—24 hours should be enough. If you're not returning the supers to the hives, be sure to tightly seal them to protect them from SHB even after freezing.

What to do if I'm overrun

Sometimes things will get away from us and we will open a hive and see the devastating effects of a SHB invasion. While we still have bees and a queen it is obvious that if something is not done we will lose the colony. I would immediately transfer any unaffected frames and bees into clean equipment. Kill as many SHB as you can, as you go. Take affected frames and freeze them. Only give the bees as much room as they can defend. Either move the hives to treated ground, or treat the ground they are on. Reduce your entrances as this will help the bees to defend. Remove any pollen substitute from the hive as this can be a magnet for SHB.

Employ any or all of the above mentioned remedies I have described. Take your old boxes and bottom boards and clean them up well, scraping out the slime and washing with a bleach solution and salting them when dry. Monitor this hive closely and feed if necessary.

Summary

While there does not seem to be a magic bullet for SHB, I believe by using the above methods you can minimize the damage caused by the little buggers. By using multi-pronged approaches we can certainly go a long way to helping our bees defend against them.

Perhaps our bees, after being pressured by these pests for a while, will develop better ways of dealing with them. I know I have witnessed hives that seem more predisposed to dealing with them and the genetics of hygienic behavior may have something to do with this. One other interesting and disturbing fact of the SHB is that they have learned how to beg like a drone and in some cases the bees will feed them!

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Wax Moth Damage

The wax moth is an opportunistic pest that takes advantage of weak hives, as well as unprotected comb, like extracted supers sitting in the garage.

The adult is about three-quarters of an inch long; the larvae are fat worms that can be about an inch in length. Unchecked, this pest will wreak havoc inside hives and to comb outside of hives by chewing through it, eventually destroying comb and woodenware.

Strong and healthy bees are the best way to "treat" wax moths, as there is no approved chemical treatment for killing wax moth inside the hive. Moving infected frames / woodenware to strong hives may be an option; the strong hive can usually amend the situation. If that's not an option, freezing the impacted comb in a plastic bag in the freezer for 48 hours is effective.

Summer provides a great opportunity for this pest to gain a foothold inside the hive, especially if you are supering too fast such that the bees can't patrol and protect all the foundation, or if a colony is just not coming up to speed.

What does wax moth damage look like? Reader Daniel Sefton shared these photos of devastation. Sefton has recently released an app on honeybees; look for more information in our August issue.

Readers, we LOVE your photos and sharing your knowledge. Please send comments / questions / photos to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Photos courtesy of Daniel Sefton.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Bee-Havior

Bearding

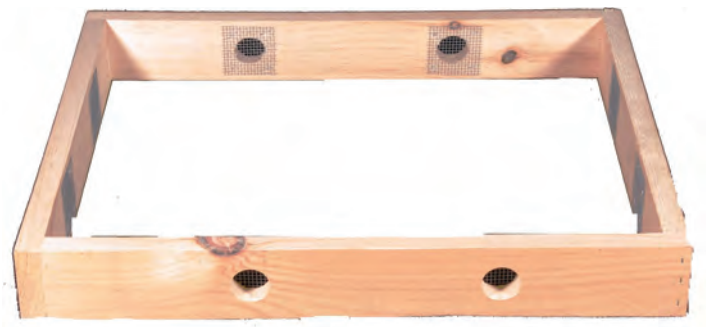
In the heat of the summer, with peak populations, this amazing conglomeration called "bearding" may be a common site on your stronger hives, especially in late afternoon / early evening. If it is warm and humid enough, they may also stay out all night. In less strong hives, there may be "moustaching."

There are various theories as to why they do this; most are along the line of too many bodies and high temperatures in the hive. Consider helping circulation with some or all of the following:

- A screened bottom board.
- A vent super.
- Another hive body (see Beekeeper Hint in this issue).
- A forced air gap (see Beekeeper Hint in this issue).
- Available fresh water that they can take back to the hive to fan and cool the hive—sponges floating in a bird bath are a great way to give them a landing pad to rehydrate.

While it is very common and not usually a cause for concern, be sure your bees have room to work. This massive gathering may also be a sign of an overcrowding, so it may be time to split the hive or add a honey super.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.



A vent super enhances air flow. Cat # 12-VS.

A screened bottom board allows air flow, helps control Varroa. Cat # 57A.

Never Pair Hives Facing Each Other

By Willard Silvey

Just a friendly letter. I have quit bees as I am 87 and have given your catalogue to a nephew of mine and my few hives of bees. I do not know if he will develop.

Here is something of interest. When I was 14, some "idiot" published in a bee journal that it was a good practice to pair your hives so they face each other–he stated bees could tell left from right–so I paired 6 out of my 16. I veiled up in the first week of September, when I had not visited the hives for a month or more. I smelled something rotten and found the paired hives had big piles of dead bees in front and lighting on the comb. Little or no honey had been made and they were so weak I feared moths would move in! NEVER pair hives facing each other.

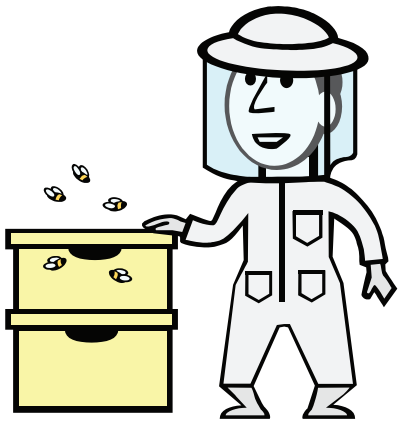
As we all know, each hive has a different smell which constantly is changing. I have found this condition only twice in my life. On one occasion I deliberately split a hive and left them split for five days, then I put them back together. They did not fight, but acted nervous and jumped at each other so as to say, "You do not smell quite right to me!" Under such conditions it is impossible to unite two swarms! They will kill each other on contact!

Beek Hint

Wade Lawrence of Michigan keeps an empty medium box atop each of his hives, just over the inner cover, year-round. It provides several advantages:

- In the heat, it provides a protected place, similar to a front porch, for the bees to hang out.
- It also keeps the hive interior cooler by increasing the distance between the sun-baked cover and the upper combs.
- In the winter, it provides another level of dead space and assists with ventilation. He puts plastic or aluminum push-pins on its top edge to provide a quarter-inch gap between it and the top cover.
- When working the colony, the empty box makes a convenient place to set other boxes to keep them off the ground.
- It is also a handy place to store hive-related items, such as mouse guards or entrance reducers.

It is usually an old cracked or damaged box—unfit for use as a hive body, but not quite yet ready for trash. And any of us beekeepers driving by will be impressed at how strong and tall his hives look!



Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Walter T. Kelley Summer Field Day, 2012

By Camilla Bee, Editor

If you could specify the weather you'd want for an outdoor event you'd say, "exactly what we had in 2012 on the first weekend of June in Clarkson, Kentucky." The event planners for Kelley's Field Day—and its 300+ participants from all over the U.S.—could not have enjoyed more ideal weather. The air was freshly cleaned from rain, the grass green and lush, the sky clear so the sunlight could pour through, with the temperature hovering in the high 60s so the undiluted sunlight felt just right.

Attendees gathered under the big tent for the keynote speech.

Perhaps the only thing more perfect than the weather was the tasty pulled pork sandwich, or the perfect buffet of "bee industry rock stars" who shared their wit and wisdom throughout the day.

Field Day 2012 began with the keynote address "Making Hard Decisions About Your Honeybee Queens" by Dr. James Tew, of Alabama Cooperative Extension System at Auburn University. Although tethered by a short microphone cord, Tew's bigger-than-life personality was undiminished as he shared wisdom from his years of beekeeping and industry research. A key point he repeatedly stressed is that things don't always go as planned, a point he humorously illustrated with anecdotes of how even highly credentialed experts, with all the resources imaginable, get it wrong.

Dr. James Tew gets the crowd laughing right away.

Tew encouraged us to raise our own queens, noting that while we may occasionally make mistakes, bees make mistakes too. If you don't believe him, he advised you to check the grill of any vehicle in the summer. Tew continued to entertain and educate throughout the day, heading up later sessions on handling hot hives.

Michael Bush discusses top bar hives.

Following the keynote speech, attendees were forced to make tough decisions between a variety of speakers. Continuing the rock star line-up was Michael Bush, probably best known for his extensive writings, including many for this newsletter

in 2012. Bush spoke on wintering nucs, top bar hives, swarm prevention and splits, and his "Four Simple Steps to Healthy Bees." Highlights of the latter session will be covered in a future issue of this newsletter. While Bush has certainly done the research and gained the experience through three decades of beekeeping, he additionally offers an extensive command of what has been researched and pondered by others, and supports his insights by referencing other industry experts who have advanced our knowledge of beekeeping.

Making his nearly annual appearance at Field Day was rock star Dr. Tom Webster, of the College of Agriculture, Kentucky State University. The amiable Dr. Webster headed two sessions—Drone Congregation Areas (DCAs), and Queen Rearing.

While an international shortage of helium prevented Dr. Webster from launching a queen attached to a small weather balloon and drone "umbrella," he showed the equipment used for such research, and promised to make it happen in the future. Webster's insights into DCAs also will be shared in a future newsletter.

The other speakers arguably don't have the same national / international status as the big three, but in overhearing comments about the other sessions, it was clear they had their share of "groupies" who appreciated the knowledge they imparted. They include:

Cleo Hogan, pulling in such large crowds you'd think we were all bees and he was wearing queen pheromone, covering his swarm harvester and making a split.

In making a split, Hogan strives to put two frames of brood in each nuc, a dark-capped one and a lighter one. This allows the nuc to have a "soon" hatching of bees, as well as a later boost. In demonstrating split-making, Hogan found the queen and announced this to the many captivated folks gathering around him. One attendee later shared that the group swarmed the frame Hogan was holding to see this monarch of the hive. I guess Tew, Bush and Webster weren't the only rock starts in attendance?

Dr. Tom Webster.

Cat # 890-SH, the Swarm Harvester, of course available from Kelley's!

Everyone wants to see the queen.

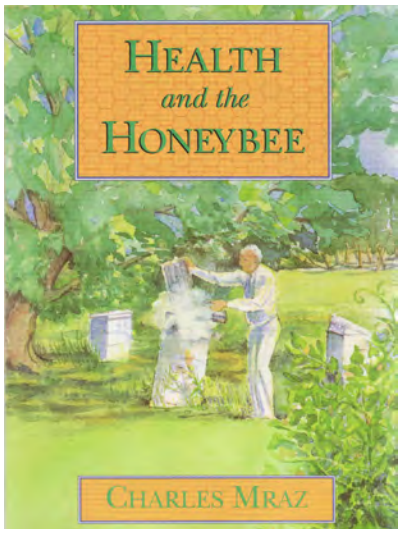
When making a split, Hogan isn't concerned about finding the queen. He makes the split, and knows she's either ending up in the nuc or staying with the parent hive. He prefers the former, as moving her may help diminish any swarming urge, but notes either way typically works. Weather permitting, he gives the splits about two days before adding a queen to the queenless hive. He noted it's usually fairly easy to tell which one of the two it is; a queenless hive will be agitated and restless. Unlike some of the other speakers, Hogan has no issue with purchased queens, obtaining them (of course!) from Kelley's. He doesn't like being queenless for a month and a half while the bees make a queen.

Charlotte Hubbard and Cleo Hogan, who introduced Charlotte to the crowd as "his mother." It was worth a laugh because obviously, she's really his identical twin sister.

Tamara Rahm, returning again this year, covered "Cappings to Candles" and then "Extracting." Tamara inspirationally makes it look so easy—experience will do that!

Tamara Rahm

Charlotte Hubbard spoke on "Bee Issues Worldwide," an overview of some of what she observed at Apimondia 2011, the international bee show, held in Argentina last fall. Apitherapy was a big topic at Apimondia, and this session at Kelley's morphed into an open discussion amongst participants. A few participants shared their absolutely positive testimonials to the use of apitherapy, via stings, for their personal medical conditions. Willis Willoughby strongly recommends it, adding that he follows Charles Mraz' book, Health and the Honeybee, available from Kelley's.



Cat # 383, this informative book was recommended by attendees who self-administer apitherapy.

In a later session, Hubbard humorously detailed nearly two dozen "oopsie" lessons she's learned in her years of beekeeping. A couple of these have been shared in her "Dronings from a Queen Bee" column, which anchors the back page of our monthly newsletter.

Joe Taylor, past President of KSBA and long time beekeeper and Kelley customer, helped attendees understand what to look for in pulling supers.

Taylor, also an annual favorite, led additional sessions on pollen collection and hive inspections. Hive inspections sessions were offered throughout the day, also led by Sean Burgess, Mike Taylor, and Trevor Qualls. Other

ongoing sessions included hive management, covered by Bush, Rahm, Burgess, and Hogan.

Beekeeping has so many dimensions, and Kathy Sherrard was very instructive in sharing information on making lip balms and lotions.

Somewhere in the schedule participants had to find time to enjoy their complimentary picnic lunch. While I wanted to figure out how to finagle a second lunch ticket to have another excellent pulled pork sandwich, I didn't dare give up on any afternoon sessions to feed my face. You can find pulled pork at other places. All that bee knowledge at one easily accessed location on one day? You have to be at Kelley's annually for that.

Queen rearing is becoming a more mainstream topic, and many attendees swarmed to a presentation by John Pace on non-grafting queen rearing. Pace is a longtime Glasgow beekeeper and owner of Green Palace Meadery.

Back again this year was Trevor Qualls, to share his knowledge of one of the pests we all hate, the Small Hive Beetle. Qualls, as usual, packed the session with people eager to learn from his experience. Qualls is owner of BonAqua Springs Apiaries and Woodenware, in Tennessee.

Kelsey Salmon, Indiana State Honey Princess, shared some wonderful honey recipes. Some of these recipes appear in this issue and future issues.

John Seaborn was also on-site this year with a variety of information on natural treatments for bee conditions. Seaborn is owner of Wolf Creek Apiaries, dedicated to the organic management of bees.

Concurrent to all the sessions listed above were tours of the Kelley facility with a bit of history, led by Kelley's President Jane Burgess, and Earl King.

From registration beginning at 7 a.m., to door prizes at 3 in the afternoon, the Walter T. Kelley Field Day was jam-packed with information, fun and sharing of knowledge. If you weren't there, you missed a great, helpful and very enjoyable gathering.

Field Day is held annually, the first Saturday of every June. Mark your calendar for next year.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Joe Taylor

John Pace

Trevor Qualls

Kelsey Salmon (left)

Lyme Disease Link?

By Daniel Sefton

Editor's Note: We recently received this very interesting email from Daniel Sefton, a Connecticut beekeeper, regarding his bee venom allergies. Dan's been keeping bees since he ordered his first packages from Kelley's nearly a quarter-century ago, and now considers himself "a full-fledged novice."

Dan raises some very intriguing questions about stinging, and Lyme disease. Readers? Please share your thoughts and experiences, thanks.

Three years ago I got stung a few times and developed a moderate systemic reaction, including swelling on my face, itchy palms and coughing. I visited an allergist, and to make a long story short I have developed an allergic reaction to honeybee venom (and bald faced hornets, but that isn't a major concern).

My allergist said, "Um, it would be a good idea to give up beekeeping." I laughed and he said he figured so, but he had to make that recommendation. For the past few years I have been undergoing immunotherapy. I now look forward to getting stung, to see how I react. There has been no major reaction since the first, but I keep an EpiPen® handy. A theory I have heard is that as beginning beekeepers, we get stung a lot. As we develop experience, our sting rate goes down, and that is when most beekeepers develop an allergy. Evidently getting stung frequently keeps the toxin levels high in the blood, but when they drop you somehow are more susceptible to developing a reaction.

Another thought: For the past ten years, Lyme disease has been a significant disease that my wife, children, neighbors and everybody has contracted multiple times. It is a major part of our life nowadays. Although it is now a threat all over the world, I take some pride in that I live in East Lyme, CT, where it was first described.

Anyway, talking with other beekeepers we realize that none of us has had Lyme disease. A little internet searching will turn up anecdotal evidence that some of the proteins in bee venom actively kill the spirochete that causes Lyme. Have you any thoughts on this? Anyone else reported or discussed this in beekeeper circles?

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Show Schedule

Heartland Apicultural Society Annual Conference

- Thursday Jul 12, 2012
- University of Missouri at St Louis

Apitherapy: Apilarnil

By Lady Spirit Moon

Apilarnil is an acronym:

- Api – bee
- lar for larvae
- n for Nicolae, the first name of the man who discovered Apilarnil, and
- il the two initials for the discoverer's last name, Iliesiu.

About 30 years ago in Romania, Nicolae discovered when he fed his chickens and ducks dead bees, the weak ones not only got stronger, but the birds grew faster than normal.

Apilarnil is the white, almost fully formed, drone larvae. When ground, strained through special filters, and added to bee pollen, Apilarnil has compositions similar to and is administered like Royal Jelly. It is anti-viral as Royal Jelly. It's high in nutrients for memory, and is good for male sexuality and gastro-intestinal use. Often it is administered in powder or tablet form.

Like many bee products, Apilarnil's medicinal properties are undergoing constant research and discovery. These are amazing insects!

Editor's Note: Lady Spirit Moon is an ambassador for the Center for Honeybee Research, www.chbr.org. We featured the Center a few issues ago, and are making it easier for our readers to help the Center help honeybees. Go to www.kelleybees.com, where you'll see a link to the Center for Honeybee Research's home page. The Walter T. Kelley Company will donate a dollar for every contribution our readers make. Thank you!

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

All I Need to Know...FREE

You can learn plenty of important things from honeybees, and we've captured some of that with our exclusive magnet.

We can learn plenty from each other, as well as deepen our appreciation of these fascinating insects. One of the best things about this newsletter is the reader interaction.

In honor of our third anniversary, we're asking readers to share their feedback to any or all of the following questions. If we use your feedback in a future issue, we'll send you one of these fun, insightful magnets.

Questions:

1. What's one thing you wished you'd known / understood when you started keeping bees?
2. What do you like or dislike about this newsletter?
3. Why do you keep bees?

Conditions:

Be sure to include your name and snail-mail address with your feedback email.

Valid for feedback received no later than July 31, 2012.

Send your email to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Thank you. We all look forward to the insights we know you'll provide.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

BeeCause

Bees?!? What Are You Thinking!?!?

By Mary Beth Cappell-Bovee

On the day the delivery from the Walter T. Kelley Company arrived, I knew we were entering the adrenaline-charged world of "NewBees." This is our story.

Once upon a time, at a "castle on a hill," the activities department for the McGregor Home hired me, Mary Beth Cappell-Bovee—a landscape designer and avid people-person—as a Horticultural Therapist.

Since the day I was hired at this senior health campus, my duties have expanded to become McGregor's Design Consultant, Grant Writer and Co-leader of the McGregor Seed to Feed Community Garden.

My lifetime interests are in all things green, growing, and outdoors. These interests were put to the challenge one day in November, 2011, while meeting with a group of our East Cleveland, Ohio, community gardeners. These members of the "Growing Green" initiative started discussing the idea of having honeybee hives in our city to increase garden yields through better pollination for all the area's community gardens.

At this meeting, my ambling thoughts came sharply into focus after noticing that the whole group had turned to me with an expectant look. "And we think McGregor is the perfect place for bee hives."

Thinking to myself, BEES!?! What are you thinking?!?, I calmly said, "Anything's possible but first I will need to run this by the McGregor Home administration and the residents."

At the time, I thought I had dodged that bullet (and additions to a fairly full work load), so you can imagine my surprise when I received a call from Stan Hockey, a local BEE!?! keeper. During my conversation with Stan, he revealed that my contact information had been provided by Nicole

Residents helped make the hives distinctive. Photos courtesy of Mary Cappell-Bovee.

Wright, the Ohio State University Extension Agent Extraordinaire; a very skilled woman who maintains her sanity remarkably well, given the riveting (to us) and obscure (to her) questions that community gardeners throw her way. I agreed to meet Stan, accompanied by some McGregor residents.

Our discussion with Stan was more like an interrogation as residents Leon Walker and Andrew Knauer badgered—I mean asked—Stan about his working knowledge of BEE!?! keeping.

Finding Stan's approach to be informed, concise, and very thorough, we invited him, along with any of our facility's interested residents, to a meeting at McGregor.

Part of me hoped our residents would throw up roadblocks upon learning that I had invited them to a presentation on BEES!?!

Well, somewhere between those machinations and mostly positive feedback, a thought crept into our minds at McGregor: "Why not?"

Having honeybee hives at the McGregor campus would help all of the community gardens in any direction within a two-mile radius (I had been listening while Stan was talking). In addition, our own community garden would have something of value to take to the local farmers market—honey!

I ran the idea past my garden co-leader, Dorothy Greer, a computer class instructor at the East Cleveland Public Library. Dorothy is known for her methodical and steady approach, but, to my surprise, she was somewhat hesitant about potentially swarming wildlife in our community garden. "BEES!?! What Are You Thinking?!?"

After hearing the facts Dorothy suggested we get not one but four hives. She agreed that the following points could work to our advantage:

- Organic honey—great fit with our organic garden.
- Organic honey is very desirable and could be sold at the farmers market
- The "honey money" (we were already spending it!) could save Dorothy and me from spending many tiring hours of grant-writing for our garden.

- And most compelling of all, as innovative "rockstar" community garden leaders, we would be invited to give talks all around Cleveland. Well, that's another story.

Fast-forward with us to May 2012. The Walter T. Kelley Company has generously donated hives, hive bodies et al to our organization. Amidst the excitement and anticipation, our McGregor residents have cheerfully divulged any bee allergies while we proudly decorated our McGregor honeybee hives, and Stan has conducted beekeeping classes for us at McGregor—classes which were open and offered to the greater Cleveland area.

We have gathered loose-fitting, white, button-down shirts (bees like light colors), surgical gloves (stopping the spread of germs across America), and we've made our protective head gear.

At the end of April, Stan successfully installed the bees in their new hive on the grounds of the McGregor Home. NewBees meeting new bees for first time went fairly well. Then we waited.

Well, we would have waited, except Stan, the beekeeper, called within five days of installation and left the message, "You have to feed the bees."

So there Dorothy and I were, on a cool morning, wearing our white button-down shirts and netted garden hats, feeding and TALKING TO THE BEES!?! My daughter had suggested as we planted wildflowers around their new hive, "You have to let them know McGregor is a good place for them; it's their new home."

Photo courtesy of Mary Cappell-Bovee.

Not that they couldn't find flowers somewhere on their new 32-acre home, but when our landscape guys (from the same company for over 35 years) found out about "BEES!?! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!?, we thought it may be a nice idea for the McGregor bees to have a buffer garden from noisy lawn equipment.

May you live in interesting times,
Mary Beth Cappell-Bovee
mb.cappellbovee@mcgregoramasa.org
The Gardens of McGregor

From the Author: Two years ago we started the McGregor Seed to Feed Organic Garden, a site for our neighbors to come and garden, meet new people and work alongside our seniors. This year we are dedicating some space for a honeybee hive on our property as a way to help all the community gardens (there are 9, last count) of East Cleveland.

Please note the names have not been changed to protect the guilty.

Dorothy and Mary Beth are currently working on getting a fruit tree orchard for the McGregor Honeybees. If you would like to cast your vote to help please visit www.CommunitiesTakeRoot.com and vote for The McGregor Community Garden.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Featured Products

Nothing Between You and Your Bees?

By Camilla Bee, Editor

If you're like many beekeepers, practically nothing comes between you and your bees. You've been late to family gatherings, missed your favorite team's playoff games, cut vacations short because something needed doing in the beeyard.

However, there are a few things that should come between you and your bees, like protective clothing. Granted, not everyone feels that way. At Kelley's annual Field Day in early June, I was involved in discussions about whether a beekeeper even needs to wear protective clothing. There was more than one beekeeper insisting that if you listened and observed your hives appropriately, you could discern danger and avoid getting into it or get away before things go stingingly awry.

If you're one of those beekeepers, more power to you. This article is for the rest of us, who use protective clothing.

We recently caught up with Stephanie Slayton, head of the sewing department at Kelley's, to learn more about Kelley's comprehensive line of "bee-wear." (Or should that be "bee-ware?")

Stephanie first emphasized that they want suggestions! After all, we wearers are the ultimate "field testers" of products. If we have thoughts and ideas about what should be changed, or even how things could be improved, please let them know. Stephanie noted we don't have to have the solution. The creative sewing team is full of options and ideas; but they need to know about opportunities to make improvements. For example, a customer recently stopped in and showed why he feels there's a vulnerable spot in a certain type of veil. "We figured out a way to make it better and will do that going forward," said Stephanie. "We love it when customers help us make our products better."

The Sewing Department's hive at the Walter T. Kelley Company.

Like most folks at Kelley's, most of the seamstresses are also beekeepers. In fact, all work teams at Kelley's have their own hive on company property, so any employee who isn't a beekeeper now can be. Stephanie had never kept bees before "the sewing hive" but loves it, and hopes to get hives of her own at home for next

year. "Working first-hand with bees helps us make our clothing more effective," she added. "We take extra caution in making sure our seams are bee-proof."

Quality is key in everything Kelley's produces, which is why so many of the bee-ware items are 100% made or finished by Kelley's. Stephanie shared that veils, arguably the most critical piece of protective clothing, are all made "from scratch." They cut the screens, the bottoms, the tops, the Velcro, and make sure each piece comes together with no gaps or weak spots. While they've made hundreds of thousands of veils at Kelley's, they are also always undergoing enhancements.

"Thanks to a customer's suggestion," said the upbeat Stephanie, temporarily putting down her scissors, "we've switched from cotton tape to vinyl tape. Over time the screen would poke through the cotton, but not any more."

While some parts of Kelley's operations are seasonal (like package bees), the Sewing Department works year-round. By the time this goes to press they should be through the seasonal backlog and started stitching on next year's protective gear. The five seamstresses love sewing. "Most of us even go home at night and sew," laughed Stephanie.

Sewing day after day, year around, could get tedious. But, with such a vast product line, it doesn't. And, there are always the "very fun" product development projects. Stephanie proudly talked about helping design the queen muffs Kelley's offers, and the upgraded

From left to right, the ultimate sewing bees Amy Carroll, Danna Saltsman, Stephanie Slayton, Helen Smith, and Barbara Kerr.

Cat # 190-Z

Cat # 141-D

Cat # 240-LLS

leggings that feature several advancements, like nylon instead of cotton making it tougher for bees to get a grip.

While innovation is fun, so is custom work. Kelley's will tailor suits, repair clothing, and retrofit coveralls—like with the double-pull zippers to take advantage of hood advancements—for a modest labor charge. To take advantage of this very reasonable, professional service, contact Sales at 1-800-233-2899.

Cat # 61-M

Stephanie and her team take pride in the comprehensive clothing line they produce. They also take pride in their "bestsellers," products that customers use and highly recommend. these include the round drawstring veils, the hat-veil combination, and the gaining-in-popularity goatskin gloves with long, nylon sleeves.

Cat # 64

Want (almost) nothing to come between you and your bees? Kelley's has you covered.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

More Featured Products

If your hives aren't all first year hives (which, if starting from nothing, may not produce any honey for "others" the first year), it is the sweet season!

In addition to turning to Kelley's for hive bodies, foundation and containers, check out our vast line of processing supplies, including these:

Cappings Scratcher, Cat #110

Kelley Electric Knife, Cat #186

9-Frame Hand Crank Extractor, Cat # 3100-H

FAQs

Please note: Correspondence submitted to the Kelley Bee News Modern Beekeeping newsletter (or subsequent publications) becomes the property of the Walter T. Kelley Company. We reserve the right to print or not print any correspondence and it may be edited for length and/or clarity. It may be published or republished in any format or medium and/or licensed to others for publication. If we publish your correspondence, we may attribute it to you and may include your name and city, unless you expressly request that you remain anonymous.

Q: Hello to all of you at Kelley Company who make it happen. I have two questions. But first, I would like to say how wonderful and exciting your newsletter is to me. That thing is beyond description. I am a beekeeper, one year May 2012. I have one hive and one swarm that I just caught. You said in your newsletter that this is the time that beekeepers are busy. But I am not busy—why? What should I be doing? I have one hive, with two deeps full of honey, and it looks like they're getting ready to enter the first super. Is this normal? My swarm is pulling comb out, but will it have enough food stored before the season is over?

I have heard of other beekeepers who are already extracting honey. Why am I not? What have I done wrong?

I would like to be a good beekeeper. I keep calling other beekeepers and asking questions. It seems as if everyone does things a little different? Also where are you? I would like to come and see you in action.
T. King, AR

A: We responded to T. when we first received his email, as time was key to his questions. In case there are others of you with similar questions, here's what we replied:

T., with two hives, you're right, you're probably not too busy with bees at this point (this was early June). Early June, in most climates is about hive checks to ensure the brood patterns are respectable, and that you're giving them plenty of room to work and motivation to grow, while ensuring pests aren't taking over (beetles, Varroa).

Geographic area has much to do with the colony's progress, but chances are, a hive getting ready to move to a honey super in June is a good thing. Southern hives are ahead of that; northern hives are, in many cases, just starting to build up their second deep. When the queen fills up several frames of that second box with eggs, and those then become bees, then that hive will be very busy, and you will have to watch to make sure they have room to put all that honey they'll want to make.

For beekeepers with more hives there's obviously more to check. Many of us are also doing things like making splits (which you should consider). That's a lot of fun, and causes a bit more activity for the beekeeper, but more hives provide more resources from which to draw to help all hives.

It sounds like you're doing one of the best things you can do: talking with other beekeepers in your area. While frustrating, there are few truly right and wrong answers, so experience and shared insights are the best way to figure out what works for you. And of course, reading our newsletter!

(June) is probably a bit early to begin worrying about food for the season, by which I suspect you mean "winter." The best thing you can do is ensure they have sufficient nutrition to build their numbers for gathering enough to make honey for winter starting around July-August. If conditions are dry, you may need to supplemental feed, for example. Beekeepers who are already extracting honey (in May and June) likely had hives that came through winter strong, and were able to take advantage of the early spring. We're not all in that lucky boat!

The Walter T. Kelley Company is in Kentucky. Check out www.kelleybees.com for more information on location, hours and tours. We'd love to see you.

Q: I bought a lot of stuff from y'all and have it now all painted up and ready for occupancy. I have had three nucs for months but other things just kept my attention. Is it ok to transfer the five frame nucs over to just one 10-frame box for each nuc? Very warm weather here and bees are active.
John H. Alderman III, Oxford, GA

A: Yes, transfer each nuc to its own box placing the 10-frame box in the same location where it sat in the nuc. This is a fairly simple thing to do—pull your nuc box and place the 10-frame hive / bottom board / stand etc. in that location. Transfer the frames, making sure they go to the new box in the exact same order as they were in the nuc. Put new comb on the outside of nuc frames to complete the box, add your inner and outer covers, and you're done.

Q: I'm using the Swarm Harvester on an out building, and I want to get the queen out. Last year at the Field Day, Cleo had said to use uncapped brood to draw the queen out. My question is how long will the brood last without bees attending to them? The building is 45 minutes away; will they make the trip?
Thank you for your time, D. Neubert

A: Cleo Hogan, inventor of the Swarm Harvestor, shared, "If the temperature is 80 degrees F or above, brood on a comb will last for several hours without bees. If it is below 80 degrees F, hang the frame in a nuc or 10-framer, put it in the floorboard of your vehicle and run the heater.

Kelley's CEO Jane Burgess and Cleo then provided more comprehensive information on this situation.

Jane says: If the Harvester has bees coming and going and it is in close enough proximity to their opening to the hive they should start treating it as an extension of their hive. You may be able to pull a few swarms out before actually going after the queen.

When the hive seems to have less bees coming and going then is the time to add some brood in hopes of drawing the queen out. If you put brood in now and they are using the Harvester as the entrance the bees will care for them. However it is probably too soon to draw out the queen.

Cleo adds: Buildings are the hardest to get the queen (trees are easiest), because, typically, the brood nest is not where the bees enter the building. Queens will not travel long distances, but, if the unsealed brood is close to the brood nest, the queen will come out to investigate. Specifically, she will be looking for the queen that laid those eggs you put in the trap.

Once she comes out, and does not find another queen, she will typically lay a few eggs in any open cells, then return to the primary brood nest. After that, she will move back and forth between the two brood nests, like moving from one deep super to another. If the queen does not come out to investigate, nurse bees will tend the brood until it emerges, then the bees will likely use the trap for honey stores.

Actually you are likely to entice the queen to come out any time you add unsealed brood. I always check within 24 hours of introducing the unsealed brood the first time, and I have found that that is the best chance at getting her. Of course as you diminish the bees in the feral colony she has to make a choice: the trap or the house. More than likely she will choose the trap since it is closer to the outside, and in a house there is typically so much space there may not be enough bees left to tend the comb and it becomes susceptible to small hive beetle and wax worm attack.

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.

Sweet as Honey

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It was a very unusual spring, and at least one beekeeper has reaped its benefits. This Kentucky beekeeper reported these enviable numbers from harvesting his seven hives in early June:

> 19 supers; 5 shallow,14 medium
> Average 2.7 supers per hive
> 24.4 frames average per colony spaced 9 in a box
> 700 pound yield, averaging 100 pounds per colony
> Average 8.3 gallons per colony or 33.2 quarts
> Average retail worth at $12.00 per quart and $398 per colony, for a total retail value of $2788

Congratulations! And this must mean, at times, money can be made in this beekeeping business! Regarding our June issue:

> Loved It! Especially Charlotte Hubbard's "big hand" from the Africanized bee! Great articles—all of them! Thanks, and don't stop!
> J. Henderson, Canada

> I am fairly new to beekeeping. I have placed several orders with you this year. I just wanted to thank you for your great products and customer service. Keep up the good work.
> Thank You,
> J. Lowery

> All these pictures are amazing, but thought folks would really appreciate the one of the honeybee captured stinging a human, slide 12 at http://photos.msn.com/slideshow/photo/must-see-photos/23aelnx6.
> J. Sonday, Virginia

©Kathy Keatley Garvey

“Once again, thanks so much for your help [during our visit to your facility]. We enjoyed the visit very much and had a great afternoon at home with the bees. This is our first hive and we were impressed / surprised with how docile the bees were. We transferred in the early evening as the sun was low and the temperatures were cool. We gave them a little bit of smoke before transferring the nuc but even before and after they seemed to be curious.

We took some great photos of the hive setup and nuc transfer—hope you enjoy them. Caron looked splendid in her new beekeeping wardrobe.

Joseph had as much fun as Caron. We didn't buy him any protective clothing as he would have ripped it off or otherwise destroyed it within the first minute of wear, but he was still in on the fun. While Caron and Claudia worked with the bees, I took the pictures and kept pulling Joseph away from the hive area. A testament to the docile nature of these bees, with no protective clothing and his persistence (boldness) on picking up individual bees—and he successfully picked up three or four of them—no mishaps were had. Amazing.
Warmest regards,
The Allen Family,
Robert, Claudia, Caron (5), Joseph (3)

Photos courtesy of the Allen family.

Foraging for Fun

Beekeeping Jokes

By Camilla Bee, Editor

This month's collection of beekeeping jokes run from clever to groaning to "Wow, I could almost see myself doing that!" Our thanks again to Stuart Ching, editor of "The Eke" (UK), for these beekeeping funnies.

We'd like to share other laughs, so please send your beekeeping / bee jokes and funnies to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

With two burnt ears this beekeeper went to the doctor who asked what had happened.
"I was in my apiary when my mobile phone rang, and I accidentally picked up the smoker."
"What about the other ear?"
"They called back!"

The forager said she grew strong from all her dancing, but none of the other bees believed her. It was obvious to all that she was bearing waltz fitness.

A long time ago, there was a beehive in the middle of an American forest. Every day, as worker bees do, they would go out into their fields, gather pollen and bring it back to make honey. The bees had a problem because every so often an intruder would come around, such as a bear that wanted the honey or kids who thought it'd be fun to throw rocks at the hive.
Finally, the bees got tired of it. Being the intelligent insects that they are, they built an alarm system for the hive. They built it in such a way that one bee pulls a lever which triggers the alarm that the bees will hear in the fields and then the bees can come back to protect their home.
There was one bee that was exclusively assigned that job and she was aptly named the "Lever Bee." Her job was to watch for potential adversaries and pull the lever to raise the alarm. Now, obviously, the security of the hive depends on this one Lever Bee. So she has to be constantly ready and on the alert to be able to do her job.
And that, friends, is why people say, "I'm as ready as a Lever Bee."

How is it one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to light a smoker?

A married couple had a terrible disagreement over a hive base the beekeeping husband wanted for his apiary. He had rather grand ideas, while the wife wanted costs kept to a minimum. The man won out, and the construction bill climbed higher and higher.
I dropped by one day, when the base was near completion, and was surprised to find the

wife smiling from ear to ear as the workmen smoothed over the surface.
I remarked how nice it was to see a grin replace the frown she had been wearing lately. "You see where they're smoothing that cement?" she replied. "I just threw my husband's hive tools, smoker and beesuit in there. He doesn't realize yet he has given up beekeeping and I have the patio I have always wanted!"

"The President of the Association was introducing the speaker and tried to impress him with his efficient running of local beekeeping.
"Oh yes. In the neighboring county I have heard that half the beekeepers treat for Varroa and half don't. In my Association the opposite is true!"

"Q: What's the difference between zombies?
A: Zombies make honey, and zombies don't.

Recipes

Thanks to Kelsey Salmon, presenter at Kelley's Field Day 2012, for these tasty treats!

WHITE BEAN & TUNA SALAD

1 (19 oz) can white cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
1/4 cup olive oil
1 1/2 Tbsp lemon juice
2 tsp GOLDEN BLOSSOM HONEY
1/2 tsp dried oregano
2 (6 oz) cans white albacore tuna, drained and separated into chunks
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
1 small onion, minced
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Place cannellini beans in a large bowl.
Combine olive oil, lemon juice, honey and oregano in a jar.
Cover and shake well.
Pour over beans.
Add remaining ingredients and toss to combine.
Chill well.

CANTALOUPE HONEY SMOOTHIE

1 c cantaloupe
1 banana
1/2 c plain yogurt
1 Tbsp honey
Combine ingredients in blender.
Process until smooth.

We love to eat!

And would like to publish your favorite honey recipes.
Please send them to:
KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Bee Disease

By Charlotte Hubbard

My nephew Chad is a junior at the University Of Michigan.

I mention U of M because approximately 67% of my children attended this "Harvard of the Midwest." Having written lots of checks for lots of dollars to this university, I try to promote them whenever possible. Also, putting "Go Blue" in print gets the attention of readers in the state of Ohio, specifically those near, say, Ohio State. (Go Blue, Go Blue, Go Blue!)

Chad's world at the U of M is a far world from beekeeping. Because he's a devoted student, I suspect when he hears "bee," he thinks about a grade he doesn't want to receive. When he hears "honey," he thinks of the cute coed down the hall, but hearing those two words together? Probably doesn't happen much in his world.

Nonetheless, Chad recently helped me work bees on my dad's farm. I think it was because he wanted something to do. I pretended it was because he wanted to spend quality time with his favorite aunt. I also hoped that it was because—while he'll someday have a brilliant career in conquering the world—he has a minor interest in this critical insect.

Chad and his absolute favorite aunt.

Chad was an excellent beekeeping partner for a rookie, because he took direction well and didn't freak out. That he could lift deep boxes effortlessly was also a bonus; God bless that young, strong back!

After the first hive or two, Chad seemed to have more than a "just helping favorite aunt" interest in beekeeping, much to my delight. About a week later, his minor interest was confirmed. He shared that he'd sent a photo of him working bees to a high school friend who keeps bees.

His high school buddy, with whom he hadn't really talked with much for a couple of years, had gotten right back to Chad, sending him a photo of a swarm he'd recently captured.

The young man was still so excited about the swarm that sharing a photo wasn't enough. He followed that up with a call to Chad.

"I just can't believe how pumped he was," Chad said. "He just went on and on about capturing that swarm and bees in general."

I nodded. "Your buddy has bee disease."

Chad looked at me with momentary alarm.

"Yes, bee disease. SUPER contagious. It runs rampant after you've been exposed to a hive or two of bees. You can fight it for a while, but usually after a couple exposures, you get it."

Understanding the twinkle in my eye, Chad asked more about this malady, like what are the symptoms?

I caught bee disease in the summer of 2008 and haven't shaken it yet, so I'm quite familiar with how it can manifest.

Bee disease starts with a longing to work bees even though you may have just worked them, say, that morning. Because you typically catch bee disease when you just have a hive or two, and you know working that hive twice a day isn't good for them, you address the craving to "bee" amongst honeybees by getting another hive or two (or six).

You know the infection has gained hold when your judgment is impaired. For example, you wander down to the apiary to check on the bees for 15 minutes, and you swear it was only 15 minutes, but your family wonders where you've been for two hours. You now let the dandelions grow in your once "weed"-free yard, because you hate to mow down anything that your new best friends enjoy. If a plant with pollen sprouts in the crack in your driveway, you water and fertilize it.

Occasionally, there are physical symptoms of having bee disease, like that ache in your lower back from lifting honey supers, and occasionally, a hard, itchy swollen area where you've taken a sting (or three).

"Wow," said Chad. "So what do you do about it?"

An interesting question. Bee disease is probably more harmful to the friends and family of the person who has it. They're the ones who must endure sticky doorknobs, bee "deposits" on the lawn chairs, and trying to park in a garage full of hive bodies. It is hard on them, but you can hopefully soothe their anxiety and worry with honey.

But what do you do if you've caught bee disease?

That's easy. You just enjoy it!

Questions or comments about this article?
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog.