Issue 7 - January 2011

Kelley Bee News

Modern Beekeeping

In This Issue

The Buzz

Happy New Year!

January is upon us, and what a long month it can be. Not only are there the typical weather challenges (and bills, and extra holiday pounds), but for beekeepers, it's another month of worrying about what's going on in the hive. (Keep in mind, there's probably nothing wrong. And even if there was, there's practically nothing that can be done about it.)

What is going on inside the hive? Master Beekeeper Kent answers that question—see his fascinating article in this issue. Humorist Charlotte has another take on what might be happening there—check out the last page.

If the cold weather is getting you down, you may want to flip to our new monthly feature: Bees Overseas. This month a beekeeper in Antigua describes practices in this Caribbean tropic, where the average January temperature is balmy and enviable 81° F. We're very enthused about this new regular feature, and owe it to you readers who have volunteered to share insights into how bees are kept overseas. Thanks!

In the months ahead we'll be taking you to Africa, Europe, and South America (without any controversial TSA patdowns.) If you have a beekeeping connection overseas whom we can interview, please let Camilla know at kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com

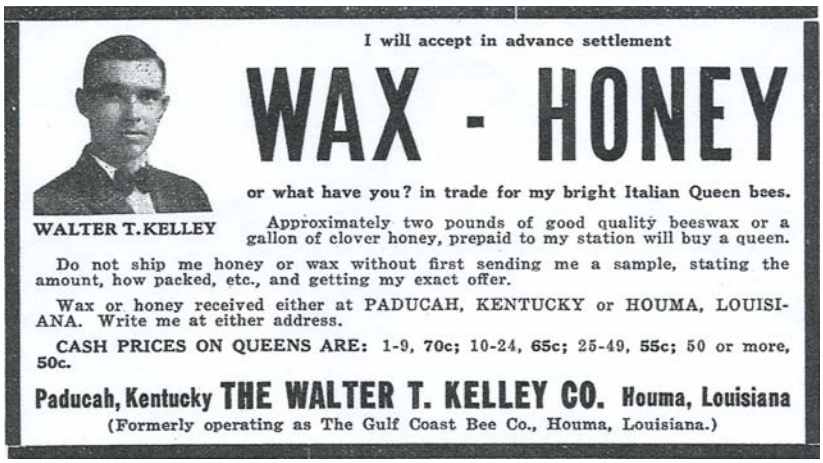
Did your Christmas involve getting beekeeping equipment for the first time? Kelley's will be holding a 101 class in January, see inside for details. If your knowledge is beyond the introductory level but you still have questions, please call, or email us at kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com. We've been here for you since 1924, and 2011 will be no different. Our focus is taking care of customers.

You wonderful readers / customers are making this newsletter grow, with your ideas for articles, favorite recipes and photographs, and feedback. We had so many comments about Top Bar Hives that this issue contains a special article with more discussion.

February's issue will feature, among other things, articles involving the love we all have of honeybees. If you haven't yet answered, we'd love knowing why you're a beekeeper (again, kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com.) Among the other articles with a "valentine" focus, we'll be sharing some of the entertaining and enlightening reasons you've sent.

Thanks for your business. We look forward to serving you.

Jane Burgess
CEO / Partner
The Walter T. Kelley Company



Possibly the one and only time an advertisement offered a trade for "what have you."

Becoming a Master Beekeeper

By Kent, Master Beekeeper

In 2002 I attended the annual Conference for the Eastern Apiculture Society (EAS), held on the campus of Cornell University. At this Conference I became acquainted with several EAS certified Master Beekeepers, and learned about the Master Beekeeper community that exists under the umbrella of EAS.

The following year I submitted an application to take the required exam, traveled to the site on the campus of Bowdoin University in Maine, passed the exam, and became an EAS certified Master Beekeeper.

The EAS Master Beekeeper program is one of several master beekeeper programs presently in existence. All such programs have value to beekeepers, and are worthy investments of time and study. There is a moderate amount of variation in requirements between programs, with some involving a series of classes, and at the end there is a test. Others simply offer the test part of the admittance procedure. Some programs are extremely comprehensive, while others deal more with practical application of general beekeeping knowledge. Some programs require, or at least encourage, continuing education and/or periodic renewal or retesting; some require or encourage members to be active in the beekeeping community by teaching, speaking, publishing articles, or completing projects related to the craft.

I am familiar with the EAS program, and can describe it more accurately than other such programs. The EAS program does not require continued education or community outreach or activity...but these things are expected of successful Master Beekeeper candidates.

The designation of "Master Beekeeper" by any organization or body is not intended to set individuals on a pedestal. The designation, however prestigious it may sound, is actually intended to serve the same purpose as a neon sign—acting as a guide to a source of knowledge for both beekeepers and the general public.

Many beekeepers apply to take the exam because of their desire to have the title of Master Beekeeper in front of their name. Other applicants want to see how they stack up with their peers in the world of beekeeping knowledge. Still others see the achievement as a rung on their career ladder. All of these reasons for taking the exam are valid, and are based on very "human" characteristics. A pat on the back is always welcome. We all, at some level, want to keep up with the Joneses, so we need to know where we stand; and anyone serious about their career wants to progress rather than stand still or regress.

In some cases the reason for taking the exam goes through a sort of metamorphosis; that is my personal story. Originally, I wanted to become a Master Beekeeper for the title, the prestige. Not just any version of master beekeeper, but the EAS certified version. The Master Beekeeper program adopted (co-opted may be a better term) by EAS originated at Cornell University under the direction of Dr. Roger Morse, and was among the first—if not the first—such program so designated. It is considered by many to be the forerunner, the "granddaddy", of other such programs. That is not to say it is any better or worse than other programs, just to say it has been the model most other programs drew from for beginning their particular version of a master beekeeper group.

Being raised in a Christian culture, and practicing, studying, and teaching this culture over the years has naturally caused many comparisons I give to be related in some way to my faith. I think this particular comparison would translate into many other belief systems as well. When I was young I made a commitment and joined a church. The primary reason I made this decision was to avoid the going-to-Hell part of dying. Eventually, as I matured, I realized there was a lot more expected of me than just skipping Hell.

In comparison, when I took the exam for Master Beekeeper, my intentions would best be described

as "elitist." I was almost on board for a real ego trip. Once I passed the exam, it very soon became obvious to me that there was a lot more expected of me than just having a title, certificate, and pin.

What can a person do, or is expected to do, after achieving the position of Master Beekeeper? We, as Master Beekeepers, are expected to be the people in the forefront of everyday beekeeping—of the laity, so to speak. We are expected to keep ourselves current on all beekeeping issues, and to teach, or train and encourage others to teach, the craft of beekeeping to the next generation—whatever their age—of beekeepers.

If "Joe Beekeeper" becomes a Master Beekeeper, he should become the "go-to" guy in his beekeeping community. There will also be increasing opportunities to speak on subjects related to beekeeping. These opportunities will include speaking to garden clubs, school kids, beekeepers' groups, the media, and maybe even major Conference audiences.

So maybe "Julie Beekeeper" is already involved in these types of beekeeping outreach...if so, what would be her benefit in becoming a Master Beekeeper? In the case of Master Beekeepers, the personal benefit is not in the title; the benefit for a beekeeper, regardless of experience, is in the study.

Beekeeping 101 Class

On January 15th Sean Burgess of the Walter T. Kelley Co. will lead a beekeeping 101 class. This class will appeal to new and first year beekeepers. This is a 1-day class, with a lunch break from 12 – 1. Lunch is on your own and there are many restaurants within 10 minutes of Kelley's.

This class will cover:

- Basic choices in equipment and an overview of assembly procedures
- Optimal hive set up locations with ground condition improvement
- Package bees vs. nucs—pros and cons
- How to install packages & nucs
- How to prepare queens for installation
- Feeding and caring for your bees
- Healthy brood patterns and what to look for
- How to diagnose most common problems in beehives
- An overview of pests, predators and diseases of bees
- Medication options and alternatives
- When to add deeps and supers
- When to remove supers
- Getting your bees ready for winter
- Winter observations
- Opening your hives in the spring
- A walk in the Kelley apiary
- Various handouts

Registration can be by phone or online.

If weather permits we will do a hive inspection; students may want to bring a veil.

At A Glance

Date: 1/15/11

Time: 9:00 am central time – ending at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Cost: $30.00 per person

Location:

Walter T. Kelley Co.
807 W Main St.
Clarkson, KY. 42726

Register by phone: 800-233-2899

Online: www.kelleybees.com

Beekeeper Sean Burgess

The benefit is in the instant accountability group that will hold your feet to the fire to make sure the study, learning, and outreach does not stop.

If you want to become a Master Beekeeper, you might check with your State Beekeepers' Association or your State Extension Service to see if they offer a program. They will be able to guide you through the protocol.

If you want to take the EAS version of the Master Beekeeper exam, there are a few pre-requisites that must be met.

- You must have a letter of recommendation from an officer of a beekeeper's association, from a certified apiary inspector, from an extension agent, or from a current EAS Master Beekeeper stating that you have "kept" a minimum of five (5) colonies for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years, and in their opinion would be a good candidate for the position of Master Beekeeper.
- The exam fee of fifty dollars ($50.00) must be pre-paid at least two weeks prior to the Conference.
- You must travel to the Conference site for the exam, which will be held on Thursday (allot the entire day for the test) during the week of the Conference.

As stated earlier, different programs have specific guidelines for continuing membership or involvement. In the case of the EAS program, once you become a Master Beekeeper, you are expected—but not required—to be, or to become involved in the beekeeping community in the areas of education and outreach.

In closing, I would like to encourage anyone interested in taking a master beekeeping course, or exam, to make plans to do so. Whatever the outcome, you will gain a lot of knowledge in the preparation for the exam, or in the participation in the course...and that is always a plus.

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Beekeepers Ask EPA to Remove Pesticide Linked to CCD; ABF Signs Letter in Support

In light of new revelations by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a November memo that a core registration study for the insecticide clothianidin has been downgraded to unacceptable for purposes of registration, the American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) has recently signed a letter to the EPA, in support of a request that the agency take urgent action to stop the use of this toxic chemical. The letter was written as a joint effort of the National Honey Bee Advisory Board (NHBAB) and two environmental groups, Beyond Pesticides and the Pesticide Action Network.

Clothianidin, used extensively for seed treatment on corn, canola, cereal grains, soybeans, sugar beets and sunflowers, has been banned in Germany, Italy and Slovenia. France declined to even register it. It is believed to be a major player in losses being described collectively as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). All beekeepers should be paying close attention to the handling of the clothianidin problem.

Below is a reduced copy of the press release distributed December 8, 2010, by Beyond Pesticides and the Pesticide Action Network. If you have any questions, please contact David Mendes, ABF president and NHBAB member, at davidmendesn@aol.com.

Beekeepers Ask EPA to Remove Pesticide Linked to Colony Collapse Disorder, Citing Leaked Agency Memo

Pesticide Already Illegal in Germany, Italy & France Based on Scientific Findings

SAN FRANCISCO and WASHINGTON, D.C.—Beekeepers and environmentalists today called on EPA to remove a pesticide linked to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), citing a leaked EPA memo that discloses a critically flawed scientific support

study. The…memo identifies a core study underpinning the registration of the insecticide clothianidin as unsound after EPA quietly re-evaluated the pesticide just as it was getting ready to allow a further expansion of its use. Clothianidin (product name "Poncho") has been widely used as a seed treatment on many of the country's major crops for eight growing seasons under a "conditional registration" granted while EPA waited for Bayer Crop Science, the pesticide's maker, to conduct a field study assessing the insecticide's threat to bee colony health.

Bayer's field study was the contingency on which clothianidin's conditional registration was granted in 2003. As such, the groups are calling for an immediate stop-use order on the pesticide while the science is redone, and redesigned in partnership with practicing beekeepers. They claim that the initial field study guidelines, which the Bayer study failed to satisfy, were insufficiently rigorous to test whether or not clothianidin contributes to CCD in a real-world scenario: the field test evaluated the wrong crop, over an insufficient time period and with inadequate controls.

"We are losing our livelihoods at a time when there just isn't other work. Another winter of 'more studies are needed' so Bayer can keep their blockbuster products on the market and EPA can avoid a difficult decision, is unacceptable."

According to beekeeper Jeff Anderson, who has testified before EPA on the topic, "The Bayer study is fatally flawed. It was an open field study with control and test plots of about 2 acres each. Bees typically forage at least 2 miles out from the hive, so it is likely they didn't ingest much of the treated crops. And corn, not canola, is the major pollen-producing crop that bees rely on for winter nutrition. This is a critical point because we see hive losses mainly after over-wintering, so there is something going on in these winter cycles. It's as if they designed the study to avoid seeing clothianidin's effects on hive health."

… According to James Frazier, PhD., professor of entomology at Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, "Among the neonicotinoids, clothianidin is among those most toxic for honey bees; and this combined with its systemic movement in plants has produced a troubling mix of scientific results pointing to its potential risk for honey bees through current agricultural practices. Our own research indicates that systemic pesticides occur in pollen and nectar in much greater quantities than has been previously thought, and that interactions among pesticides occurs often and should be of wide concern." Dr. Frazier said that the most prudent course of action would be to take the

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released the 2010 Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) Progress Report highlighting current research on this still mysterious disease affecting the nation's honey bees.

The report, mandated by Congress in 2008, summarizes research by federal agencies, state departments of agriculture, universities and private organizations to find the cause of CCD and how to stop or mitigate its impact.

The 2010 CCD Progress Report is available online at:

http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/br/ccd/ccdprogressreport2010.pdf.

pesticide off the market while the flawed study is being redone.

Clothianidin has been on the market since 2003. With a soil half-life of up to 19 years in heavy soils, and over a year in the lightest of soils, commercial beekeepers are concerned that even an immediate stop-use of clothianidin won't save their livelihoods or hives in time.

"We are losing more than a third of our colonies each winter; but beekeepers are a stubborn, industrious bunch. We split hives, rebound as much as we can each summer, and then just take it on the chin—eat our losses. So even these big loss numbers understate the problem," says 50-year beekeeper, David Hackenberg. "What folks need to understand is that the beekeeping industry, which is responsible for a third of the food we all eat, is at a critical threshold for economic reasons and reasons to do with bee population dynamics. Our bees are living for 30 days instead of 42, nursing bees are having to forage because there aren't enough foragers and at a certain point a colony just doesn't have the critical mass to keep going. The bees are at that point, and we are at that point. We are losing our livelihoods at a time when there just isn't other work. Another winter of 'more studies are needed' so Bayer can keep their blockbuster products on the market and EPA can avoid a difficult decision, is unacceptable."

… "The environment has become the experiment and all of us—not just bees and beekeepers—have become the experimental subjects," said Tom Theobald, a 35-year beekeeper. "In an apparent rush to get products to the market, chemicals have been routinely granted 'conditional' registrations. Of 94 pesticide active ingredients released since 1997, 70% have been given conditional registrations, with unanswered questions of unknown magnitude. In the case of clothianidin those questions were huge. The EPA's basic charge is 'the prevention of unreasonable risk to man and the environment' and these practices hardly satisfy that obligation. We must do better, there is too much at stake."

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Bee-Havior

Inside the Wintry Hive

By Kent, Master Beekeeper

In cold weather, honeybees, one of the few insects who survive winter as a hive, cluster in a well-defined manner to keep warm. A cluster begins with an interior temperature in the mid-fifties, and contracts and expands as the temperature falls and rises.

But, how does this work? What happens in the cluster? We turned to Master Beekeeper Kent for answers, along with a few other sources.

Bees create a cluster around the queen, her survival is critical. The bees within the cluster move about freely—in cold weather there is an almost constant circulation in the cluster.

At the core of the cluster are the "heater" bees, who will have their heads in the cells on each side of the comb, and will be working their thoracic (flight) muscles in a method different from flight (the muscles contract against each other, not against the wings.) Heat is created.

The next layer of bees will be the "replacement" bees who are either returning from, or going to, the food source. These bees will next replace either the "heater" bees, or the "insulator" bees.

The outer layer of the cluster is comprised of the "insulator" bees. These bees strive to maintain a temperature of 48-75° F.; the inner cluster ranges from 64° F. to the low 90s, largely depending upon whether brood production has begun. The insulator bees do not participate in working their muscles to keep the hive warm—they are strictly insulation. If, on these outer ring, their thorax dips below 48° F., they can no longer activate their flight muscles. Inevitably they fall into a coma, and fall off the cluster where they likely perish.

When inspecting a "dead-out", or hive that died, during winter, it is common to see a small cluster of dead bees with the underlying layer of bees, with their heads pointed into the empty cells. A natu-

ral assumption is that the hive starved, and in the most basic definition, it did starve. The real reason the bees have their heads in the cells is not because they were searching for food, but because they were the "heater" bees, and simply ran out of fuel...and starved.

A dead-out sometimes has honey within a couple of inches of the dead cluster. This is a perfect example of a colony that reclustered at the edge of the food stores, then experienced a further drop in temperature, which caused the cluster to constrict to better insulate the center of the cluster. When the colony/cluster constricted, it lost physical contact with the food source, and within a couple of days was dead.

In the winter, if a colony is truly at risk due to lack of stored food, the most feasible plan for feeding is to place a large (think "size of the inner-cover, one-half inch thick") sugar patty directly atop the frames where the cluster is located. This must be checked regularly to ensure the cluster is still in contact with the patty, and to replace or move the patty as needed. A similar, and also feasible, feeding plan for at-risk hives in cold weather is to make a candy board, and place the candy board directly atop the cluster. You can see, the idea in both of these options is to cause direct contact between food and cluster. Sometimes the best real solution is to join a marginal hive—if it is healthy—with a larger hive that has ample food stored.

There is the case of the occasional hive that dies with fifty pounds of honey two inches from the colony. There is not a reasonable answer for avoiding this, other than maybe moving the bees to Florida for the winter. There are manipulations that may be done to such a hive, such as placing a frame of honey within the cluster...but opening a hive in cold weather creates a paradox—you may be doing the hive some good, or doing it in. The best option by far is to make sure the hives are healthy and heavy with foodstores in October, then monitor the colonies on warm days throughout winter, feeding sugar patties or candy boards as needed.

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Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Top Bar Hives Revisited

Last month's informative article about top bar hives (TBH) led several readers to comment. We've shared a few of them below.

M.R. Thompson, a member of the Indiana Bee-Keepers Association, built a Kenyan TBH, using 1-inch thick Eastern Red Aromatic Cedar. His rationale for this wood selection? "It is supposed to be close to a natural hive, making the bees think they are working inside a hollow tree."

He continued: "The top, the window (so we can spy on them) and bottom are hinged with a brass piano hinge. I sealed the top with 6-inch wide copper eave material; I put a weathervane on top so the bees know which way the wind is blowing when they come in for a landing. I used a wood burner and burned a picture of a bee, and then painted it so the bees would know where their home is. I was going to burn an address on it but my wife Rene said they can't read—that's why I went with the picture.

This hive is a full 48 inches long with 30 bars and two follower boards. It is 38 inches from the top bar to the ground, admittedly "a little tall, but I am over 6 feet tall and this way I will not have to bend over too much to pull the honey bars. I added a step between the legs so Rene, being 5 feet tall, can get up and help me with all the things that need to be done. I insulated the roof with 1-inch foam board

for the winter months and months and months we have here in Indiana."

The frame and legs are milled lumber to a full 2 x 3-inch material; the body of the hive is full 1-inch material. Split 1 x 6 boards were milled to 3/8-inch boards for the roof. All the hardware is stainless steel.

This beekeeper-carpenter hopes it works for anyone who tries it, and says "PLEASE send comments, what needs to be changed or added, good and bad welcome to StungnIndy@aol.com. He shared in summary that "this all very new to me, looking forward to it working …"

A Paraguayan beekeeper weighed in on one of the "cons" listed in last month's article of there being limited access to TBH equipment. "The whole POINT of the top bar is that you can make it yourself without any special knowledge of construction, just a handsaw. There is a reason this type of hive is used in Kenya, Paraguay, and most of the developing world: it requires nothing special.

People can pretty much use whatever TBH design they want, but it does make it exceptionally convenient to construct the hive to the same width as a Langstroth for easy switching around (if you need to do a hive division or fusion, for example)."

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Bees Overseas

Beekeeping in Antigua

This is a new regular feature that will share insights from beekeepers around the world.

We've really enjoyed notes and commentary from readers, and received this one last fall:

> Hello,
>
> Thanks for the Newsletter, wonderful stuff. I will surely share the contents with my fellow beekeepers. We enjoy the wet and dry season here in Antigua at six months intervals.
>
> The bees have bounced back from the mite attack, and so we are inundated with swarms.
>
> The honey flow will soon begin, and so we are getting our honey supers ready anxiously waiting, since we have had no harvest for six years.
>
> Dr. Alvin Langlais

To an editor, an email such as that one is rich with possible stories.

I contacted Dr. Langlais, and asked if he had time to answer some questions. Antigua, an island in the West Indies, in the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean region, has differing beekeeping conditions than what the majority of our readers experience. We thought others would also be interested in keeping bees in a tropical paradise.

Here is his narrative, in response to our questions. Thank you Dr. Langlais!

The following is a short history of the organization named the Antigua Beekeepers Co-Operative Society Ltd. We are a Government Registered Society, since 1993, with a membership of 35, two females inclusive.

In 1998, we had the services of a co-operant from Canada who assisted us with training from the introductory to advance course in beekeeping, utilizing the curriculum of the Gelph University in Canada.

I formed part of this training programme, and have been passing on this training to all members of the Society since then. We continue to use the Langstroth hive system, with European apis miliferra as our bee of choice. The Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, assists us where possible, especially with duty free equipment, and has also leased us a parcel of land on which we have our Bee House, which comprises an office, store, and extraction room.

There are a few garden farmers in our midst, but the remainder consists of part-time and hobbyist beekeepers. In the case of farmers and part-timers, the bees are their crop pollinators, and honey obtained form part of a salary subsidy. For the hobbyist, it is all fun.

In the case of the cooperative, honey obtained in a good harvest is stored in our Bee House, and sold retail or wholesale to the supermarkets and hotel chain. The maximum amount of hives ever manned by any one keeper has not exceeded 100. Antigua is only 106 square miles and the forage area is not as vast and diversified as the other Caribbean islands.

There are a few feral colonies about, and honey hunters usually mutilate those in search of honey. Prior to 2004, before the Varroa mite infestation,

the hive population was about 450 managed colonies; that came down to 30 in the peak of infestation. Most beekeepers were despondent after such a great loss, and actually gave up.

We applied for and obtained a grant from the Global Environment Facility through UNDP for the revitalization of the bee industry some years later, and are still in the implementation phase of that project. As you are aware, the global economic situation has not made things any easier, and the road is rough. We are yet to implement a tree planting project, a component of the grant. We suffer drought here, and when one would be preparing for a harvest of honey, the plants would not redeem their flowers. When it rains, it pours, and that is not good for bees, so that small window between November to April, if things do not materialize in respect of nectar flow, we are in trouble.

Equipment is not a problem, one can always build a box, the frames will have to be ordered.

We do not have any Africanized bees to this day. (Thank God for that).

We once had the services of an apicultural officer—one of our members—attached and paid by the Ministry of Agriculture, but seconded to the beekeepers co-op. All such services, like attending to swarms etc. were handled by him with help of other members where possible.

When the mite took charge, bees were no longer in abundance, and so he too became despondent and resigned. That post has not been filled despite our appeal to the Ministry.

So then, all calls made to the Ministry are forwarded to me and I disseminate where possible or else I do it.

Other then feeding for the drawing of combs and week colonies, it is not our practice to (supplemental) feed normally. We only have a dry season spanning January to June, and a wet from July to December during which time we experience hurricanes. We are in the tropical zone and so do not have snow.

You must visit us some time!

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Know someone keeping bees outside the United States? Would they be willing to share their experiences with all of us for a future issue? If so, please email their contact information to kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com. Thank you so much!

BeeCause

Walter T. Kelley Company Helps Raise Money for OSU Bee Lab

The OSU Bee Lab, led by Dr. James Tew and Sherry Ferrell, has faced a double whammy from the destruction of the Bee Storage barn by a tornado and reduced state funding. In an effort to raise money for the OSU Bee Lab, a team plans to produce and sell 1000 queens in 2011. The Walter T. Kelley Company provided a donation of foundation for frames to put into nucs.

Dana Stahlman, a retired queen producer, has put together a team. Stahlman is the author of Beekeeping 101 Handbook and Guide for Beginning Beekeepers and Beekeeping 101, 201, and 301.

Dr. Tew has loaned the group a number of nuc boxes and some frames, minus foundation for the project. The Ohio State Beekeepers are dipping into their Queen Project fund to help with package bee purchases to stock the nucs; Central Ohio Beekeepers are providing the labor. The queens will be sold to anyone interested. Many clubs in Ohio are supporting the effort by making queens available to their members.

Dr. James Tew, at the site of the building destroyed by a tornado in September.

The mother queens for the breeding stock come from an OSU hive located at a beeyard at Don Scott Field in Columbus, Ohio. This beeyard was maintained by Sue Colby during her tenure at OSU. It was left on its own for over four years without any management or care until Joe Latshaw grafted larva from one outstanding hive in 2010. Some of the virgin queens produced were then artificially inseminated. Four of the artificially inseminated queens were given to Stahlman and some were kept by Latshaw. This is the mother stock to be used to raise the queens.

The drone mother stock is from Marla Spavik hygienic stock developed in California. The breeding yard is located in a limited access township well field. These outstanding queens will be sold for $25 each, with all proceeds going to the Bee Lab in Wooster, Ohio.

In a time when government funding is tight, it is possible for beekeepers and beekeeping equipment suppliers to work together to solve problems which face the industry as a whole. Contact Dana Stahlman regarding this project at: stahlmanapiaries@aol.com.

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New! Bee Craft America

Bee Craft America is a totally new concept in beekeeping magazines brought to you by the gold-medal winning Bee Craft Ltd. Designed specifically for beekeepers in the Americas, it is available in an interactive digital format accessible from a hyperlink directly to your computer.

This new format not only enables you to magnify the text to suit your viewing, it includes a search facility so that you can find your favourite articles. These can be book-marked for future reference and you can even add post-it notes and comments if required. Hyperlinks within the text are active which means you can contact suppliers, visit their websites or follow links to references instantly with a click of the mouse.

Bee Craft America is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. It offers you:

- Instant availability—no printing or postal delays
- Active links to websites/e-mails—instant connection
- A searchable archive—find that elusive article
- Ability to add your own bookmarks and notes—your own selection
- A chance to save paper and storage space—environmentally friendly and green
- Printing of specific articles of interest—only those required
- Zooming text to any size—sharp vector text for easy reading

To view a sample copy, go to:

http://content.yudu.com/A1nm11/BCA1005/

Subscribe for only $10 from the Kelley's website.

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What's New

Because we're beekeepers at Kelley's, who talk to beekeepers all the time, we're always finding or engineering tools to make beekeeping better and easier. Here are some recent advancements you may want to consider for your apiary.

Bakers Drivert Sugar, Cat #660- 50# bag: This sugar is an excellent alternative to feeding bees liquid syrup. The consistency is similar to that of brown sugar and should work great in many feeders without the associated problems of liquid syrup. No drowning, no pumps or over spills, no broken hoses.

Vented migratory screen for 10 frame equipment, Cat # 49-VC: This screen is designed to provide ventilation to your hives. These are great for moving bees and ventilating bees on pallets. Rigid construction, galvanized mesh… there is ½" of space between screen and the top of hive. Simply remove when venting is not required.

Most issues we try to run a beekeeper hint. If you have any insights, hints or advice to share, please email it to me at kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com.

All we beekeepers will appreciate it!

Long Spatula, Cat #202-Spat: This long handled nylon spatula is great for cleaning up creamed or regular honey from tank walls. This measures a full 40" long.

Frame nuc box with vented bottom board, vented outer cover and disc entry, Cat # 94: This is a quality nuc box. Simply remove the vented screen when venting is not required.

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What constitutes a windbreak?

We're interested in how your hives are sheltered from wind during these wintry months. Please send photos (300 dpi or higher) to kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com. Thanks!

FAQs

We regret that we can't answer each and every question here; we'll select ones that have broadest appeal for the time of year. If you have a question, you can always call us and we'll try to help.

Phone-answering beekeeper Jennifer shared that a majority of callers this time of year are asking the same two questions. So, here they are, along with answers!

Q: When can I order package bees?

A: Now! Delivery starts around the first week of April. Orders must be prepaid, and can be done with major credit or debit cards, check, or money order.

Q: When is it too cold to check inside the hive?

A: The rule-of-thumb is that it must be at least 50 degrees, no wind, and preferably, sunny. Don't check because you're curious—only open the hive for a specific purpose (i.e., Are they still alive? Do they need food?) Make your time in the hive as brief as possible, or the brood will become chilled (likely fatal.)

Not sure if it is 50 degrees out, or 46, or 52? A good indicator that it is OK to briefly open the hive is if there are bees flying about.

Other questions from readers …

Q: Can my Dad / Uncle / Sister / Cousin get the newsletter?

A: Absolutely! They can subscribe via the Kelley website: www.kelleybees.com.

- Select EDUCATION from the upper right.
- Select NEWSLETTERS on the submenu.
- Select Newsletter Signup, (bottom right corner) and fill in appropriately.

Or, you can forward them this link:

http://bit.ly/i5rVWP

Q: There were a lot of dead bees "on the doorstep" of my hive when the first snow fell. How many is too many, and would that mean there's a problem?

A: "How many is too many" varies by such factors as the size of the colony, whether most of the drones

"How many is too many?" is a tough question when it comes to dead bees.

had been cast out when the snow came, the health of the hive, whether the cold came suddenly, etc. This is a ratio thing, If you have 50,000 bees in a hive and you see 50 it probably isn't a problem—they're drones, dead from natural attrition, dead robbers and defenders etc.

So, there's no good rule-of-thumb for "how many is too many." Keep in mind that the number of bees you see in the snow may be alarming, but it might be because you're not used to seeing a bunch of dead bees in front of the hive. If there's snow on the ground, then they're lying against a contrasting background, and in a concentrated area (as opposed to dying in the field while foraging.)

Unfortunately, even if it is "too many," there's little you can do. You can only check (if the weather allows) that they have sufficient stores…and of course, keep your fingers and toes crossed.

Q: I made too much 2:1 syrup this fall. Can I save it until spring?

A: Unfortunately, we have a variety of answers for this! So, I'll start by asking for more opinions and insight—please send them to kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com.

A couple very seasoned beekeepers replied that they do it all the time—they just keep it in the fridge all winter, noting that it has to be reheated come spring. Another senior beekeeper suggested it be tossed, why take the chance?

A chemist said it sounds like a bad idea—that it would be a rich breeding ground for bacteria and mold, possibly even invisible to the naked eye, and why risk your bees health?

Your thoughts and experiences?

Q: Should I add pollen patties to my hive? If so, when?

A: Depending on your plans for your hives and the area of the country you live in, adding pollen patties on a warm January day will provide a brood stimulus for your hives in temperate climates, like here (west central Kentucky.) Hives should then be busting with bees by March and ready to split provided you have a source of mated queens. Mature drones are not available here at this time of the year, and walk-away splits will not work. (Thanks Kelley beekeeper Sean Burgess!)

K

Why are you a beekeeper?

The love of honey? For the money? 😉

We're getting some interesting answers—look for them in an upcoming issue.

We'd love to share yours as well, please email me at KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com. Thank you!

RECIPES

Editor's Note: We asked for any favorite recipes the last few issues, and we received some mouth-watering ones.

We'll have more the next issue. And, if you have 1, 2, 3 or so to share, please send them to me at: KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Thanks!

Holiday Party Punch

2 cups Boiling Water
3/4 cup Honey
4 cups Cranberry Juice
2 cups Orange Juice
1 cup Lemon Juice
1 qt. Ginger Ale
Ice Cubes
Sliced Lemons, Oranges, or Strawberries (optional)

Combine boiling water and honey, stir to dissolve.
Chill.
In large punch bowl, combine cranberry, orange and lemon juices.
Stir in honey mixture.
Just before serving add ginger ale, ice cubes and fruit garnish.
Makes about 12 servings.

Courtesy of Nancy Eads

Green Onion Honey Dip

1 cup sour cream
2 Tablespoons honey
2 Tablespoons chopped green onions
1 teaspoon salt

Place all ingredients in a small bowl and mix until well combined.
Great with fresh vegetables.
Refrigerate until ready to use.
Makes 1-1/4 cups.

Courtesy of Beth A. Boggess

Nutty Banana Whirl

1 cup milk
1 banana, peeled and thinly sliced
1 teaspoon honey
Dash of lemon juice
2 oz. almonds, chopped

Blend all the ingredients for one minute in a blender until frothy.
Pour into tall glasses and serve immediately.
Serves 2

Courtesy of Russ Dean & Angela McCall

Sweet As Honey

We recently started this monthly section because readers are sharing their input on this newsletter (see Top Bar Hive follow-up article in this issue), and offering up sweet kudos, as well as insights and advice.

Thank-you for taking the time to tell us and / or offer suggestions—it is as sweet as honey! Please keep sending your feedback to kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com.

Walter Kelly Folks,

Just a simple "Thank You" for your recent "no shipping charge" days. The sale allowed my wife and myself the chance to purchase more of your woodware than possible if shipping was added.

We received the order promptly and the quality / workmanship is excellent. We are new customers and feel we have found the ultimate supplier in Walter Kelly.

Again, thank you and we look forward to a long relationship with your company.

~ Lindsey, TN

Thanks for having great people working for you. It would be unfair to single any one person out, all are above the call of duty.

And of course Jane you are there to help me and that nice man who answers the phone—very helpful, give him a raise.

Beekeeper Mike S. suggested another item for "What Beekeepers Want," (featured last month):

The Kent Williams modified hive tool, Product 152-KW, SKU e5960f7121.

I want to tell you how much I like the Walter Kelley Newsletter. I don't know whose idea it was but it was a good one. Very informative.

~ George T., Ohio

Now that you can't work your hives, perhaps you're organizing your photos?

We're seeking awesome or unusual bee or apiary photos. Please send photos (300 dpi or higher) to kelleybeeseditor@gmail.com. Thanks!

Have enjoyed doing business with you for the last 36 years or so give or take a year. You have been very helpful in leading me in the right direction, in making the right choices.

~ Ollie

You requested info about our favorite equipment. We've been really appreciative of the heated honey tank we got from Kelley.

I think it's called the grocer's tank and holds about two and a half sixty pound pails of honey.

This time of year, our pails of honey are crystallizing so we pour them into the tank as needed, heat it to 110 degrees and bottle from the tank with a spring loaded gate.

It works great for our size operation (30 hives).

~ Leigh Wiley

K

Droningsfrom a Queen Bee

Making It Through The Winter

By Charlotte Hubbard

Last fall I attended a local bee club meeting. The speaker shared an introductory slide about the evening's presentation that went something like this:

Questions To Be Answered

- How do I prepare my hives for winter?
- What about winter feeding?
- What will I do with myself when I can't work my bees?

The latter question drew many laughs…nervous laughs. We all knew what he meant, we all had wondered that same thing. In response to that final bullet point, the guy next to me murmured "Gosh, guess I'll have to pay some attention to my wife…" (He didn't sound particularly excited about this.)

People ask me how much time keeping bees requires. My honest answer is "every spare second I have." That's because when I'm not actually doing things to assist the colony (adding a super, checking brood patterns, etc.), I'm doing other things to assist the colony, like planting more beds of bee-feeding flowers. And when each long day of summer is done, I'll finally go inside to dream of things I MUST HAVE from the Kelley's catalog, or lose hours on the internet in some bee forum.

The biggest time consumer of beekeeping however is watching them. This has whittled away an exorbitant number of hours, especially because I have multiple hives. If I spend fifteen minutes squatted by the doorway of the blue hive, always forgetting that it'll be impossible to get up after that, then I have to spend equal time squatting at the other hives. They

The hive containing the spelling bees has an unusual inner cover.

all deserve the same comical show of the beekeeper falling over as she tries to get up on cramped legs.

Now that winter has fallen, along with plenty of snow here in Michigan, I'm wondering what to do with myself now that I can't work my bees. Mind you, there's a pile of broken frames to be cleaned and repaired. It would make sense to organize the bottles and caps, and scrub the feeders so they're ready to go for spring.

Probably not going to happen.

That's about as much fun as paying bills, cleaning cobwebs, and packing away summer clothes—all things that need to be done inside my own hive. Maybe I'll wear my bee suit around as I'm dusting just to reminisce about better days. With the furnace running non-stop, another layer can't hurt.

Daily (during the shortened hours of winter that can be called "day") I wander to each hive, brushing the snow from the front doors, and praying that they're playing Scrabble and quilting, and not ailing from the dark cold surrounding them. I do spend too much time wondering, and worrying, about them. If only we had bee-mail.

Kent's article, earlier in this newsletter, describes what goes on inside a hive in the winter. It's probably quite accurate. I however, like to let my imagination run wild. I like to think that my winged buddies, sitting at the queen's feet, are buzzing with great exaggeration about that last, grand stand of goldenrod they found in October. The elders are spinning tales to wide-eyed, emerging new bees of how, just for fun, they chased the beekeeper two miles…between detailing maps of where the best flowers were and the most efficient routes to get to them. All the while of course, there's a non-stop game of Scrabble with words like "pollen" and "venom," (there are spelling bees) and production of quilts with garden scenes that feature giant flowers and humans weeding, somewhat like the garden scenes with honeybees that we humans quilt.

The quilting thing, by the way, is not a figment of my imagination. Why else would the term 'quilting bee' originate?

I hope when the bees do sleep, that they sleep well and warm…and, like me, dream of summer days and sweet smelling blossoms in a tree buzzing with their production.

The session at last fall's beekeeper meeting tried to answer "how do you get your bees through the winter?"

We need another session for "how do I get through the winter without my bees?"

K