



The Buzz

Newsletter of the Iowa Honey Producers Association



August 2013

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August 8-18th Iowa State Fair
September 29th IHPA Board Meeting, 3pm at DMACC/Ankeny
October 31 IHPA Board Meeting, 7pm at Marshalltown prior to the Annual Meeting
November 1 & 2 IHPA Annual Meeting in Marshalltown, IA



MERCHANDISE PRICE LIST

New lower prices

	BUZZ (includes shipping)	NEW BUZZ PRICE (includes shipping)	PICK UP PRICE	NEW PICK UP PRICE
HONEY POT	\$22.00	\$21.00	\$15.00	\$14.00
UTENSIL CROCK	\$36.00	\$33.50	\$25.00	\$22.50
100th ANNIVERSARY HIVE TOOL	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$15.00
COFFEE CUP WITH SPOON	\$17.00	\$12.50	\$10.00	\$5.50
MAGNET	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
COOK BOOK				
1-9 BOOKS	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$5.00	\$5.00
10 OR MORE	\$5.50	\$5.50	\$4.00	\$4.00
IHPA BALL CAP	\$8.15	\$6.65	\$10.00	\$8.50
IHPA VISOR	\$15.00	\$13.50	\$10.00	\$8.50
T-SHIRT				
YOUTH S,M,L	\$15.00	\$11.00	\$12.00	\$8.00
ADULT S,M,L,XL	\$15.00	\$13.00	\$12.00	\$10.00
ADULT 2X, 3X	\$17.00	\$15.00	\$14.00	\$12.00
POLO SHIRT				
ADULT S,M,L,XL	\$35.00	\$29.00	\$31.00	\$25.00
ADULT 2X, 3X	\$37.00	\$29.00	\$33.00	\$25.00
APRON	\$12.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$8.00

T-Shirts - we have a few of the 100th anniversary shirts left. Please indicate if you would like the 100th Anniversary T-Shirt if available in your size. We will make every attempt to fulfill your order as you request. There are a limited number of Honey Pots, Crocks and

Hive Tools left.

Please contact Rhonda Heston, IHPA Treasurer, at 515-724-2124 with questions. Please send your check payable to Iowa Honey Producers to 52735 187th Ave, Chariton IA 50049

The Buzz Newsletter Article Submissions

Please send submissions, classified ads, and photos to Alex` Ebert by email to **TheBuzz@ABuzzAboutBees.com** (also alex.ebert@eberthoney.com) or by mail to The Buzz, c/o Phil Ebert, 14808 S. 102nd Ave. E., Lynnvillle, IA 50153. **The deadline for submissions is the 10th of each month to be included in the following month's newsletter.** The Buzz is a monthly newsletter published by the Iowa Honey Producers Association which is an affiliate of the Iowa State Horticultural Society.



State Fair Booth Help

Hello everyone, hope your honey supers are full. I know this is a busy time of year for us all, I would like to ask everyone to please work during the fair at our booth a shift or two. I know many of you have already signed up to work and I thank you for supporting the IHPA. State Fair dates are August 8-18.

[Open shifts are being posted and updated on the IHPA website at www.ABuzzAboutBees.com]

If you haven't signed up, please give Eli a call or email her @ **641-512-4728** or **fieldstonefarms.netins.net** You're welcome to bring family members.

Several years back, for 2 years in a row, Peggy's brother and his daughters helped Peggy and I several nights during the evening shift. We were short handed and the help was greatly appreciated, and the girls still talk about working at the "honey booth" with Uncle Pat and Aunt Peggy during the fair.

Remember, we give you get free entry into the fair working a shift for the IHPA!! I personally enjoy working the fair and meeting the many beekeepers from our state that I don't normally get to meet the rest of the year.

Thank you for your consideration to work at the IHPA booth and hope to see you ALL there.

BEE HAPPY!!
Pat Ennis

Foraging for Fun Beekeeping Jokes

By Camilla Bee, Editor Kelly Bees News
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.



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 care-less 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!"

Re-print permission: Kelley Bees News:
Modern Beekeeping |
Issue 25, July 2012



Yummy Recipes

Are you looking for something to hand out at your Farmer's Markets? We have pads of Cooking with Honey recipes for beef and Cooking with Honey recipes for pork. If you are interested, please let Rhonda Heston know. We can make arrangements for these to be picked up at the Iowa State Fair or we can mail them to you with you footing the bill for the postage.

We also have 100th Anniversary brochures. These can also be picked up at the Fair or we can mail them to you with you paying the postage.

These would be great to have on your table at Farmer's Markets promoting Iowa Honey.

Rhonda can be reached at 515-724-2124 or r.heston@yahoo.com.

Quilt Raffle Tickets Available

Quilt Raffle tickets are now available. The ticket prices are \$5 per ticket or we'll make you a deal 5 tickets for \$20. You know everyone likes a deal!

Please contact Rhonda Heston for tickets and picture if you need one. These can also be picked up at the Fair while you are there volunteering at the Booth. Look for the Buzz Quilt to be displayed somewhere at the Iowa State Fair.

Rhonda can be reached at 515-724-2124 or r.heston@yahoo.com.

FOR SALE: Husky 10 cu ft. 2 wheel wagon, used very little, \$110.00 (new \$140) Great for moving hive bodies/supers around avoiding heavy lifting over long distances.

Bee Blower with new hoses. Same as shown in Dadant catalog page 68 (M00780 - MRP \$529), only with Tecumseh engine. \$225.

Fieldstone Farms
Call: 641-477-8521.



2013 IHPA Summer Field Day

We couldn't have asked for better a day! I would like to say a big thank you to our speakers; Becky Tipton, Joli Winer, Alex Ebert and Bob Fassbinder and Andy Joseph. Also to everyone who came to this event, to those people coming from the south who persevered in finding an alternative route around State Center and those who helped behind the scenes.

Our speakers did such a great job with their presentations, many people left the field day feeling "I can do this", which made it all worthwhile. There was a lot of good information, demonstrations, handouts, samples and great insight into queen rearing which included some hands on for those interested.

Thank you to American Bee Journal and Bee Culture for the extra copies of magazines and the nice door prizes they provided, as well as B & B Honey.

When I first met Becky and Joli at a Master Beekeeping Workshop at Nebraska University in 2012, I was eager for them to share their knowledge and experience with our members. I must admit I was a little concerned that the lotion and soap session would only interest our female members, and the queen rearing interest our male members, so you can imagine my delight when there was a good percentage of both men and women present that were

enjoying the day's activities.

Thank you again to everyone, this event wouldn't have been possible without your participation.

If you have an idea for next year's Summer Field Day, please let me know.

One last thing, if anyone is missing a travel cup, please let me know as two were left behind at the field day.

Eli
IHPA VP
fieldstonefarms@netins.net



2013 Iowa Honey Queen Hannah VanWyk draws for one of the many door prizes given out at the IHPA Summer Field Day.



IHPA 101st Annual Meeting

Iowa Honey Producers Association – 101st Annual Meeting
will be held November 1-2 at the Best Western Regency Inn,
Marshalltown, Iowa.

Speakers include:

Randy Oliver. He has over 40 years of practical beekeeping experience. Randy researches, analyzes, and digests beekeeping information from all over the world in order to not only broaden his own depth of understanding and knowledge, but to develop practical solutions to many of today's beekeeping problems, which he then shares with other beekeepers through his various articles in bee magazines, such as American Bee Journal.

Jackie Park-Burris. She has been producing queen bees all her life. Since 2012 she decided to market her own queens under the Jackie Park-Burris Queens label in California and also continues to support her families queen operation under the Wooten's Golden Queen label. Her business produces 20,000 queens a year, along with nuc sides for sale, honey and almond pollination.

Keep your eyes peeled for more information in next month's publication of the Buzz. If you have any questions, please contact Eli Kalke (IHPA VP). Phone: 641-512-4728 Email: fieldstone-farms@netins.net

Eli Kalke
Vice President
Iowa Honey Producers Association
Tel. 641-512-4728



More volunteers needed for the State Fair, please help!

We need more people coming forward to volunteer at the Honey Booth for the Iowa State Fair, as we still have a lot of openings. We welcome IHPA members, friends and family and will provide each volunteer with a pass to get into the fair free of charge.

Please let me know which day and shift you can work, more information can be found on page ? of the buzz. To check available time slots, please refer the main page of the IHPA website www.abuzzaboutbees.com or contact Eli Kalke at 641-512-4728 or email fieldstonefarms@netins.net.

We have 3 shifts each day that need filling, and need the help of our members to do this, without your generous support the booth will not run as smoothly. It is fun to do and you get to meet lots of people, plus you get to spend the rest of the day to enjoy the fair.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks

Eli Kalke
IHPA VP

FOR SALE: Clean five gallon buckets with lids-\$3 each. Contact Phil Ebert at 641-527-2639 or e-mail at ehoney37@netins.net

Beekeepers of the Month



Dad worked for the state of Iowa for 48 years. At I think 64 he bought his first hive and package of bees. They made no honey that summer, so he got 2 more the next year. That fall he harvested honey and thought he had too many bees. For four years he had those 3 hives and was happy with it. These years I traveled for work and had never even been in the bee yard. In the fall of 2008 I helped pull supers and extract honey, and got a little interest. Still in the fall we went to B+B Honey Farm to get dad some equipment and got very interested. In the spring we



Elijah and Noah, the 4th generation of beekeepers, are off to a great start in beekeeping.

went back to B+B and I bought two hives for myself. On April 24th my 14 month old son and I went to mom and

dads to set up my hives. My wife had the flu and was 37 weeks pregnant so she stayed home. That night my son came down with the flu he had a temp of 103. I did my best to stay up with him. At 3:15A.M. my wife's water broke. Noah arrived a few hours later.

I will never forget the day I set up my first hive one long hard day, but well worth it. A week later we got bees and a beekeeper I have tried to become.

In the years to come we have caught a swarm here and there lost a hive or two. In the spring of 2012 we had five hives. We split two and caught six swarms. Three we gave to other people and three we kept.

Over this last winter we lost one hive. So with nine hives we decide to try our hand at splits again. We have pulled seven. Then we have caught four swarms so



Grandpa, Noah, Elijah, and Time Collins all suited up for a day with the bees. The boys, bee brushes in hand, are ready for anything.

with twenty hives now we really have more than dad ever dreamed. Two of the splits we did were for my boys Elijah 5 and Noah 4 each with their own hive and brand new bee keeps. They are the 4th generation of beekeepers as grandpa had bees when dad was a wee boy.

One of the most rememberable events is when dad and I went to help a friend from church with a swarm in his apple tree. They were too high for the ladder and pole saw. So dad tells us he has something in the truck to get the branch down. He comes back with a twelve gauge shot gun. On the second shot down came the branch.

The four of us have been having a frat time with our bees this year hope you have as well.

Tim Collins



2012 HopGuard Experience

As the honey boxes mount on the hives, I'm thinking ahead to varroa control in August and September. I hope my experience using HopGuard last year is useful for others who must deal with varroa in the next couple of months.

Last fall I decided to try out HopGuard on a more extensive basis for varroa control. We had used a sticky board to evaluate its kill potential a couple of years ago, and it seemed promising. It had a respectable fall rate during the first 24 hours, did not involve unpleasant chemicals, and seemed much less unsettling to the bees than some other treatments. We already experienced mites developing resistance against some of the strips that were common in the earlier days of varroa control, so HopGuard seemed worth exploring as an alternative that might be called into action when needed.

It's clear that the makers of HopGuard view the product as a short-term treatment and advocate a series of three ap-

plications. Since workers develop in twenty-one days, three applications spaced one week apart seemed like the best way to achieve a comprehensive treatment that corresponded with the emergence cycle of the worker brood.

Since the recommended application is two strips per box of bees, I mostly treated 2012 singles with HopGuard. Using it in doubles seemed too back-breaking to mess with until we had some results. The applications took place at one-week intervals in August and September in nine different locations. Altogether, 88 singles received treatment in this manner. After treatment, I gave them all a second hive body underneath the bees and fed them for winter. Only 35 made it through the winter. That is a death rate of 60%. Bees that I treated with Apiguard survived at a 90% rate. That was a rather striking contrast.

At this point, I'm only interested in using HopGuard in broodless situations and assume that the effective kill period is way too short to be decisive in fall mite management. For example, this year (2013) I started about three dozen packages in April, and I treated them

with HopGuard before any brood was sealed. It was much more effective when all the varroa were exposed.

Here is an article by someone else who tried HopGuard who didn't realize that the one-week treatments ought to be applied consecutively for the most effective knockdown:

<http://www.honeybeesuite.com/hopping-mad-at-HopGuard/>.

His bees are dead too, but he thinks that my method (three consecutive one-week treatments) would keep them alive. That was definitely not the case in my August/September effort in 2012.

Of course, the intensity of the mite load and the frequency of treatments varies between beekeepers and annual brood cycles. I only occasionally perform a spring treatment, so I usually need the fall treatment to carry me through the next twelve months. HopGuard doesn't do the job that I require in the fall, but it can play a useful role in other situations.

Adam Ebert



One key to keeping bees alive is the ability to monitor Varroa mite loads in the beehive and apply treatments when necessary.

Photo: Varroa Mite on a drone larva.



Honey Queen Report

Hello Everyone,

This summer is going way to fast. This time next month I will be seeing most of you at the State Fair Booth. The rest of you I hope will be busy pulling full supers off of your over flowing hives.

A week after my last report I went out to check on my bees and to see how much honey I could "borrow" from them. I also was going to put on another box

that I am borrowing from Mr. Dennis Nelson. Keep in mind Neill was at work and I was by myself while tending the bees. I put on my suit, filled the smoker, and started voyaging through five foot tall grass. I felt like Indiana Jones discovering a lost tomb of liquid gold. Once I found the hive I set all my equipment down, and started pulling grass and weeds from around the hive. All was going well like the first half of an Indiana Jones movie. I got the smoker started with some paper towels and dried grass. Everything was going great, until my smoker, like Jones's torch, started to go out halfway through smoking the bees down to lower boxes. By this point I had collected enough honey and wax to fill my container, and was just smoking the queen and her subjects down far enough to put the queen excluder on and my extra box. I reached down for more dried grass and searing pain shot through my palm. I thought I stabbed myself with a thorny weed, I was mis-

taken. I quickly ripped my other glove off and scrapped the stinger from the middle of my palm. By this point my Indiana Jones Movie was at the good part. The hero was injured and no one to help. With a ballooning palm and a get even attitude I got that smoker just a billowing thick white smoke. I smoked hard, put that queen excluder on, and the rest of the boxes. I gathered my equipment and like the hero of this story walk away with my head held high and liquid gold in my hands.

That had to be one of the most adventurous honey extracting moments I have had.

Work at Morgan Creek Produce Farm is going great! I have learned tons about vegetable production and sales. It also has inspired me to take a fertilizer class this fall along with a few agronomy science, and vegetable identification classes to compliment what I am learning. I will be at Kirkwood Community College this fall in Cedar Rapids creating a major oriented around organic farming and sustainable agriculture nontraditional ways.

Do not hesitate in contacting Connie Bronnenberg at 515-480-6076 or at cbronny823@aol.com. You can also contact me directly at hannah.vanwyk93@yahoo.com if you have an upcoming event, farmers market or youth oriented day that Rachel, Joy or I could attend. If I do not see you till State Fair stay safe, and keep your bees to the sunny side.

This is a great healthy drink that I slurp up after I take my dog for a walk at night.

Honey Shake It Up Smoothie

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups - milk
- 1-1/2 - favorite fruit, I use strawberries and mangos
- 1 cup - vanilla yogurt, I use Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup - honey, I usually add more.**
- 5 - ice cubes



This is my first bottle of "Queen's Royal" Honey. There will be more where this came from.

Directions

Combine all ingredients except ice cubes in a blender and blend until thick and creamy. Add ice cubes one at a time and blend until smooth. Then slurp it up.

May the bees keep buzzing in your favor.

Safe travels, and happy buzzing,
Hannah L. VanWyk
2013 Iowa Honey Queen



Joy Westercamp our South East Iowa Honey Queen giving her presentation of the life cycle of the honeybee at the Van Buren county fair Sunday July 14th. Submitted by Vern Ramsey

Yummy Honey Recipes

Re-print permission: Kelley Bees News: Modern Beekeeping | Issue 5, November 2010

Honey of a Blueberry Pie

3 cups fresh blueberries (cleaned and washed)
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup honey
1/3 cup flour
1 tsp lemon juice
1/2 tsp cinnamon (optional)
2 tbsp soft butter
2 frozen deep dish 9" pie shells (thawed)

Preheat oven to 425° F.

Combine all ingredients, except the pie shells, in bowls mixing just enough to blend thoroughly.

Pour into one of the pie shells, then invert the other pie shells onto the top of the filling and trim to fit as you press around the edges to seal them.

Cut five or six slits in the top crust to allow air to escape as the pie bakes.

Coat the top crust slightly with a butter flavored cooking spray.

Make an aluminum edging to go around the edge of the crust, so it won't over bake.

Place the pie on a baking sheet and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown.

Serve with ice cream or whipped cream to enhance the flavor of the blueberries.

Will make 8 servings.

Waffled French Toast

2 eggs
1 cup milk
1/4 cup honey
1 tsp vanilla extract
8 slices bread

Break eggs into shallow bowl. Froth eggs, and then add honey, milk and vanilla.

Heat waffle iron after spraying the cooking surface w/ butter flavored cooking spray.

When waffle iron is heated, dip bread, one slice at a time, into egg/milk mixture just enough to coat both sides.

Place bread slices onto cooking surface of waffle iron and cook until bread is golden brown.

Remove waffles and spray again before adding more bread. Continue cooking until all bread is used. Serve hot w/ syrup or fruit. (I usually use honey on mine.)
Make 8 waffles.

PRODUCING QUEEN BEES IN IOWA

By, GLEN STANLEY
State Apiarist, Emeritus
Huxley, Iowa 50124

My family dates back many years in producing queens, using the normal grafting procedures. My Grandfather did that in the early 1900's. As a young man MY Father converted many of my Grandfather's colonies into nuclei for queen rearing. By 1915 he had created a business of raising queens and selling them, mostly through the A I Root Co. branch at Council Bluffs, Iowa.

In 1927, at the age of ten years, I joined in as a partner in the business. It involved dividing standard hives into partitions to accommodate three nuclei. With numerous nuclei we produced a few hundred queens each year starting about the middle of May when there would be adequate drones for mating and a surplus of queen Royal Jelly for grafting.

In 1936 Southern Iowa became parched from drought to the point there was no blossom on which the bees could gather nectar, so we moved the bees to Story County in Central Iowa.

We raised quality queens until 1937 when we discontinued that phase of beekeeping. Some of the queens produced well through the third season. WHY, likely because they were produced by the bees when they were on their normal diet of honey and pollen, NO SUGAR SYRUP.

At that time the production of queens was eliminated and all colonies managed for honey production. We purchased bees and queens from the South (Alabama mainly) to increase our numbers. The cost of three pound packages with queen was \$3.00. The selling price of honey was five cents per pound in the tinned five gallon containers. Queens

sold for 50 & 75 cents, so it took the sale of ten pounds of honey to buy a queen. The

same ratio is true today, then pounds sells for the \$20 cost of queens.

The last contacts I had were with Richard Adee, of Bruce South Dakota, he has 70,000 plus colonies. He produces thousands of queens for his own operation and WHERE, in the South namely, Mississippi.

By 1939 we had purchased bees as fast as we could build equipment and that along with rental colonies we were operating 1300 colonies of bees. In 1941 our bees produced well over a quarter million pounds of honey. The tragedy was "we were not very knowledgeable beekeepers; consequently we were losing more than 25 percent of our colonies every winter. The business was mainly closed during WWII.

Following the war my Brother and I reestablished the business and we bought only queens from the South. Eventually we purchased queens from a producer in California because we found a good Italian bee which was generally easy to work. By taking tips from others, and from information gathered from the research people at Iowa State College and with a few incentives of our own by 1950 we had cut our winter losses to less than two percent. All this was done with queens developed in warmer climates.

I have known Bob Fassbinder since he first started keeping bees. He made his first major purchase of bees from Carl Degraffenreid of Des Moines. He came to my office and inquired about the bees as I saw them. They weren't in the best of equipment but Bob was determined to get into the business.

I know and understand Bob's operation and the system he has for grafting, and I doubt there are any better queens produced in Iowa. With all this and queens produced right here he still reports of having a 25 % loss over winter, so doesn't that nullify the idea that Iowa queens can reduce winter loss?

We cut our losses to less than two percent on Southern and California queens. SO, the proof is it takes something other

than queens to prevent winter losses. I venture to say all those who can and like to produce queens you may save a few dollars from buying queens but no queens from any source will reduce winter losses, it takes special manipulation and care of colonies. All this information is included in my Manual on Beekeeping. Follow it to a tee and you too will see good results. Others have.

Bob would likely do better with fewer colonies and more help providing colonies for winter. It is a little more work but not nearly as much work as cleaning up 400 to 500 hives containing dead bees. Think about it.

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.

** Re-print permission: Kelley Bees News: Modern Beekeeping | Issue 25, July 2012

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HONEY BEES

Honey bees, like all other living things, vary among themselves in traits such as temperament, disease resistance, and productivity. The environment has a large effect on differences among bee colonies (for example, plants in different areas yield different honey crops), but the genetic makeup of a colony can also impact the characteristics that define a particular group. Beekeepers have long known that different genetic stocks have distinctive characteristics, so they have utilized different strains to suit their particular purpose, whether it is pollination, a honey crop, or bee production.

What is a bee stock?

The term “stock” is defined as a loose combination of traits that characterize a particular group of bees. Such groups can be divided by species, race, region, population, or breeding line in a commercial operation. Many of the current “stocks” in the United States can be grouped at one or more of these levels, so the term will be used interchangeably, depending on the particular strain of bees in question.

Wide variation exists within stocks as well as among them. Any generalities about a particular stock should be treated with caution, since there are always exceptions to the rule. Nonetheless, the long and vast experience of beekeepers allows some oversimplifications to be made in order to better understand the different types of bees available. The following is a brief overview of some of the more common commercially available honey bee stocks in the U.S.

The Italian bee

Italian honey bees, of the subspecies *Apis mellifera ligustica*, were

brought to the U.S. in 1859. They quickly became the favored bee stock in this country and remain so to this day. Known for their extended periods of brood rearing, Italian bees can build colony populations in the spring and maintain them for the entire summer. They are less defensive and less prone to disease than their German counterparts, and they are excellent honey producers. They also are very lightly colored, ranging from a light leather hue to an almost lemon yellow, a trait that is highly coveted by many beekeepers for its aesthetic appeal.

Despite their popularity, Italian bees have some drawbacks. First, because of their prolonged brood rearing, they may consume surplus honey in the hive if supers (removable upper sections where honey is stored) are not removed immediately after the honey flow stops. Second, they are notorious kleptoparasites and frequently rob the honey stores of weaker or dead neighboring colonies. This behavior may pose problems for Italian beekeepers who work their colonies during times of nectar dearth, and it may cause the rapid spread of transmittable diseases among hives.

The German bee

Honey bees are not native to the New World, although North America has about 4,000 native species of bees. Honey bees were brought to America in the 17th century by the early European settlers. These bees were most likely of the subspecies *A. m. mellifera*, otherwise known as the German or “black” bee. This stock is very dark in color and tends to be very defensive, making bee management more difficult. One of the German bees’ more favorable characteristics is that they are a hardy strain, able to survive long, cold winters in northern climates. However, because of their defensive nature and their susceptibility to many brood diseases

(such as American and European foulbrood), this stock lost favor with beekeepers well over a century ago. Although the feral bee population in the U.S. was once dominated by this strain, newly introduced diseases have nearly wiped out most wild honey bee colonies, making the German bee a rare stock at this time.

The Carniolan bee

The subspecies *A. m. carnica*, from middle Europe, also has been a favored bee stock in the U.S. for several reasons. First, their explosive spring buildup enables this race to grow rapidly in population and take advantage of blooms that occur much earlier in the spring, compared to other stocks. Second, they are extremely docile and can be worked with little smoke and protective clothing. Third, they are much less prone to robbing other colonies of honey, lowering disease transmission among colonies. Finally, they are very good builders of wax combs, which can be used for products ranging from candles, to soaps, to cosmetics.

Because of their rapid buildup, however, carniolan bees tend to have a high propensity to swarm (their effort to relieve overcrowding) and, therefore, may leave the beekeeper with a very poor honey crop. This stock requires continued vigilance to prevent the loss of swarms.

The Caucasian bee

A. m. caucasica is a race of honey bees native to the foothills of the Ural mountains near the Caspian Sea in eastern Europe. This stock was once popular in the U.S., but it has declined in regard over the last few decades. Its most notable characteristic is its very long tongue, which enables the



bees to forage for nectar from flowers that other bee stocks may not have access to. They tend to be a moderately colored bee and, like the Carniolans, are extremely docile. However, their slow spring buildup keeps them from generating very large honey crops, and they tend to use an excessive amount of propolis—the sticky resin substance sometimes called “bee glue” that is used to seal cracks and joints of bee structures—making their hives difficult to manipulate.

The Buckfast bee

In the 1920s, honey bee colonies in the British Isles were devastated by acarine disease, which now is suspected to have been the endoparasitic (A parasite, such as a tapeworm, that lives within another organism) tracheal mite *Acarapis woodi*. Brother Adams, a monk at Buckfast Abby in Devon, England, was charged with creating a bee stock that could withstand this deadly disease. He traveled the world interviewing beekeepers and learning about different bee strains, and he created a stock of bees, largely from the Italian race, that could thrive in the cold wet conditions of the British Isles, yet produce good honey crops and exhibit good housecleaning and grooming behavior to reduce the prevalence of disease. Bees of this stock are moderately defensive. However, if left unmanaged for one or two generations, they can be among the most fiercely defensive bees of any stock. They also are moderate in spring population buildup, preventing them from taking full advantage of early nectar flows.

The Russian bee

One of the newer bee stocks in the U.S. was imported from far-eastern Russia by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics, and Physiology Laboratory in

Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The researchers’ logic was that these bees from the Primorski region on the Sea of Japan have coexisted for the last 150 years with the devastating ectoparasite (an external parasite) *Varroa Destructor*, a mite that is responsible for severe colony losses around the globe, and they might thrive in the U.S. The USDA tested whether this stock had evolved resistance to varroa and found that it had. Numerous studies have shown that bees of this strain have fewer than half the number of mites that are found in standard commercial stocks. The quarantine phase of this project has been complete since 2000, and bees of this strain are available commercially.

Russian bees tend to rear brood only during times of nectar and pollen flows, so brood rearing and colony populations tend to fluctuate with the environment. They also exhibit good housecleaning behavior, resulting in resistance not only to varroa but also to the tracheal mite.

Bees of this stock exhibit some unusual behaviors compared to other

strains. For example, they tend to have queen cells present in their colonies almost all the time, whereas most other stocks rear queens only during times of swarming or queen replacement. Russian bees also perform better when not in the presence of other bee strains; research has shown that cross-contamination from susceptible stocks can lessen the varroa resistance of these bees.

Other notable stocks

Many other honey bee stocks are worth noting:

~ The Minnesota Hygienic stock has been selected for its exceptional housecleaning ability, significantly reducing the negative effects of most brood diseases.

~The SMR stock, referring to “Suppression of Mite Reproduction,” also was developed by the USDA honey bee lab in Louisiana by artificially selecting commercial stocks for mite resistance. While not an independently viable stock on its own (because of inbreeding), the SMR trait has been incorporated into other

Table 1. Comparison of bees and their traits.

	<i>Italian</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Carniolan</i>	<i>Buckfast</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Russian</i>
Color	Light	Dark	Black	Medium	Dark	Gray
Disease resistance						
<i>Varroa</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
<i>Tracheal</i>	-	-	-	+	0	+
<i>AFB*</i>	0	-	+	0	0	0
<i>EFB**</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Other</i>	0	0	+	+	-	0
Gentleness	Moderate	Low	High	Low-Mod	High	Low-Mod
Spring buildup	Good	Low	Very Good	Low	Very Low	OK
Overwintering ability	Good	Very Good	Good	Good	OK	Very Good
Excess swarming	OK	OK	High	Low	Low	OK
Honey processing	Very Good	OK	Good	Good	Low	OK
Propolis	Low	OK	Low	Low	High	OK
Other traits	Heavy robbing	Short tongue, nice white cappings	Low robbing, good comb builders	Supersedure queens produce defensive colonies	Long tongue	Brood rearing affected by flow, queen cells always present

* *AFB* = American foulbrood

** *EFB* = European foulbrood

genetic stocks so that these stocks may also express this highly desired characteristic.

~The Cordovan bee is a type of Italian bee that has a very light yellow color, which is more attractive to many beekeepers.

Numerous hybrid stocks are also available commercially:

~The Midnight bee was developed by crossing the Caucasian and Carniolan stocks, hoping to maintain the extreme gentleness of both strains while removing the excessive propolis of the Caucasians and minimizing the swarming propensity of the Carniolans.

~The Starline was developed from numerous strains of the Italian stock by Gladstone Cale of the Dadant Bee Company. It was once favored by commercial beekeepers because of its tremendous honey yields, particularly ~The Double Hybrid is a cross of the Midnight and the Starline.

~The "Smart" strains are crosses between the SMR strain and other stocks, such as Italian, Russian, and Carniolan.

Conclusion

While a tremendous amount of variation remains within and among the different bee stocks, some generalities still can be made. Bee differences can be used to advantage by beekeepers, depending on what traits interest them, so using different stocks can be a powerful tool at the beekeeper's disposal. There is no "best" strain of bee, as the traits favored by one beekeeper may differ significantly from another's choice. Thus, it is best for each beekeeper to experience the characteristics of the different bee strains first hand and then form an opinion about which stock best fits his or her situation.

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Honey Bee Genes Changed By Pesticide? Seems so.

New research by UK scientists finds exposure to neonicotinoid insecticides causes changes in honeybee genes.

The University of Nottingham study, published in the scientific journal *Plos One*, was conducted under field

energy to run cells were also affected.

Such changes are known to reduce the lifespan of the most widely studied insect, the common fruit fly, and lower a larva's probability of surviving to adulthood.

"Although larvae can still grow and develop in the presence of imidacloprid, the stability of the developmental process appears to be compromised," Stöger says. "Should the bees be exposed to additional stresses such as pests, disease and bad weather then it is likely to increase the rate of development failure."

The study was funded by The Co-operative Group, as part of its Plan Bee campaign.

"This is a very significant piece of research, which clearly shows clear changes in honeybee gene activity as a result of exposure to a pesticide, which is currently in common use across the UK," coop sustainable development manager Chris Shearlock says.

realistic conditions and showed that a very low exposure of just two parts per billion has an impact on the activity of some of the honeybee genes.

The research, led by Reinhard Stöger, associate professor in epigenetics in the university's School of Biosciences, is the first comprehensive study to look at changes in the activity of honeybee genes linked to one of the recently banned neonicotinoids, imidacloprid.

The researchers found that cells of honeybee larvae had to work harder and increase the activity of genes involved in breaking down toxins, most likely to cope with the insecticide. Genes involved in regulating

"As part of our Plan Bee campaign launched in 2009 we have adopted a precautionary approach and prohibited the use of six neonicotinoid pesticides, including imidacloprid, on our own-brand fresh and frozen produce and have welcomed the recent approach by the European Commission to temporarily ban three neonicotinoid pesticides as this will allow for research into the impact on both pollinators and agricultural productivity."

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