



The Buzz

Newsletter of the Iowa Honey Producers Association



August 2014



**IHPA Booth Shifts Available Pg 2 & 11
Honeybees in the Classroom Pg 5
2014 Field Day Pg 8-9**



August 7th-17th—Iowa State Fair
November 14th-15th—IHPA Annual Meeting—Marshalltown, IA



For Sale: Medium and Deep boxes with frames (no foundations) \$35.00 each. Also have Bottoms, Lids, and other misc. for sale. Also have Top Bars at 30 bars large, very nice, \$375.

Andrew Jenkins
 Tipton, Iowa
 Call 563-889-2632

For Sale: 4 drums of honey. Also several buckets @ \$2.10/lb. Contact Jeremy Van Donselaar Cedar, Iowa, 641-672-9598 or jkctlb17@hotmail.com

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 3 bee smokers
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FOR SALE: Beekeeping Equipment and supplies - Goodell IA
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Call Curtis at 319 480-2915

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\$130.00 each.

Call Curtis at 319 480-4209

2014 Annual Meeting

I know the IHPA Annual Conference on November 14th-15th seems a long way off right now, but it is never too early to make your hotel reservations at either the Best Western or Super 8 in Marshalltown. Not only will you have peace of mind that you secured your accommodation arrangements for this event, by booking early, you will also be able to take advantage of the lower rates we have secured with both hotels, *just let reservations know you are attending the conference so they know to give you the discount.*

More information about this year's Annual Meeting will be published in the next Buzz Newsletter. This year's keynote speakers will be Dr. Keith Delaplane MBA and Dr. Marla Spivak.

If you have any question, please let me know.

Eli
 IHPA – VP
 641-512-4728



IHPA Booth Shifts Available

Shifts are available for the IHPA Booth during the Iowa State Fair August 7-17.

Updated shift availability is posted at www.abuzzaboutbees.com

Help Make the IHPA Booth a Success this year!

The IHPA is once again planning for the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines and are inviting you to be a part of this wonderful calendar event! The dates for this year's fair are August 7-17.

If you like talking to people and lending a hand, this is a great opportunity for you to help support the IHPA and also meet fellow beekeepers. The fair runs for 11 days with 3 shifts per day and have plenty of times and dates to satisfy anyone's schedule, bring your family and friends along too! Every volunteer receives a **free pass** into the State Fair for the day.

We appreciate all your support you have given us in the past and look forward to hearing from you this year.

Any questions call Eli at 641-512-4728 or email fieldstonefarms@netis.net.

Keep on buzzing!
 Eli Kalke

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., Lynnville, 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 Apiarist

Hi all.

Here's hoping by the time you're reading this, the bees have been busy. As I'm writing (Mid-July), the temperature is rising, and things have dried out at least a bit. June for most of us provided plenty of flowers, but not the ideal foraging conditions. My bees, along with most colonies I've peeked into, have made only small gains over the last 4 or 5 weeks. I keep hearing myself say, "at least they aren't eating each other..." There's plenty of opportunity remaining this season to make up for lost time and create a nice heavy crop.

Brood, as a whole, has looked great this year. Much, much better looking frames of bees and brood than what I saw last spring and early summer. While the cold and rainy days through June certainly impacted surplus honey production, the conditions in most areas apparently weren't poor enough to create damaging stresses on the bees. Occurrences of disease have been at a minimum.

Queen problems exist every year, at least in recent history. And probably always have. There have been a lot of reports of near-immediate supercedure of commercially-reared queens, and a few of reports of lower than normal queen acceptance. I don't pretend to have any answers to these problems, other than "try again", and the generic advice to hold the new queen in her cage for a few days before allowing the bees to release her, take care to not disturb the colony for a week or so following queen introduction, and noting that introduction is more successful in smaller-sized colonies than large ones. Along similar lines, prompt replacement is necessary. Most beekeepers with a few years behind them have observed that the longer a colony has remained hopelessly queenless, the less likely they are to accept a new one. Over time, approaching a "laying workers" situation, the workers can begin to emit their own "queen substance", which itself can thwart your efforts at releasing a caged replacement queen.

Varroa loads were relatively low this spring in wintered colonies. Probably the reality is that the severity of last winter eliminated any colonies carrying a high mite count. In more mild winters, untreated colonies with higher mite loads can come through to spring, only to crash during the early summer season, "mite bombing" the rest of us on their way out... that isn't the case this year. Something of note this spring was the number of mites which came as free bonus prizes in folks' package bees. This was mentioned to me by several of you. I don't usually sample new package colonies for mites in our IDALS apiary inspections. My method of sampling (ether rolling) kills a few bees, generally the mite load in brand new package colonies is quite small, and treatment would generally be delayed til after the honey flow at earliest. – if even necessary at that time. But eventually I started seeing mites crawling around in the torn-open seams of drone brood burring the brood boxes together. These counts are likely still relatively low, but it isn't smart to assume anything "safe" about a mite count.

I don't advocate mite treatment without knowing the mite count. Often, someone will ask, "what if I don't take a count – should I go ahead and treat?" My answer has typically been yes... you'd probably want to go ahead and kill whatever mites are in there, rather than blindly assuming you don't have a problem. I'll stand behind this to a good



South East Iowa honey queen Joy Westercamp helped present our bee industry to about 150 kids at the Lee County fair in Donnellson Iowa kids day program on Thursday July the 10th. Submitted by Vern Ramsey



extent, but I'm tired of recommending bad beekeeping practices. Personally, I can't imagine not having at least decent idea of my mite count at any given time throughout the season. It's that important. And even then, the mite numbers in a given hive can pop up and surprise you. Devils...

There are several ways to check a mite count. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. I do a lot of ether rolls. They're simple, quick, and require very little extra junk be carried out to the bees with you. An ether roll gives you an immediate "count" of mites on adult bees. I'm sure there are methods which will technically obtain a more accurate mite count, but I think the simplicity of this makes it worthwhile to know.

Here's how:

Outside your usual beekeeping

gear, all you need is a quart mason jar and a can of starting fluid (ether). Ideally, you'd find a can without any added lubricants, but good luck with that. I haven't found any in years without extra additives. Open the colony using little smoke. The less disruption to the bees, the better. Work your way into the brood area. Choose a brood frame covered in bees. You want these nice, young nurse bees. If you haven't already spotted the queen, search and search the frame to ensure she's NOT on it. If she is, just lift her off and place her back in the hive or just use another frame to collect your sample. Now hold the frame in one hand and lightly "scuff" the bees off the frame and into the jar. I just very lightly comb the mouth of the jar downwards across the frame with light pressure over the bees "backs". As you move the jar over them, they tend to flip backwards diving into the jar. Collect about an inch or so of bees – you're looking for approximately 300 worker bees – no queen. If the colony hasn't been overly disrupted, it's generally pretty easy to pull these bees off of one face of one comb. With the bees now in the jar, place the lid over them, and finish working the colony as you normally would. Close up the colony. Now, give the jar a "bang" to knock the bees into a clump at the bottom. Blast them with a two second (or so) spray of the stinging fluid. They'll die almost immediately. Shake the jar pretty vigorously for 30 seconds or a minute. Any mites in there will detach from the bees and stick to the walls of the jar. Now, simply just hold the jar up to the bright sky and count any mites you see while slowly rolling the jar, turning it in your hands. The number of mites you count gives you a ratio of Varroa mites per 300 (or so) bees. And that's it.

Now, the hard part, what to do with that number...For several years many of us have used a "treatment threshold" for spring and late summer treatments. If the number was higher than 4 – 6 in early spring, treatment would be recommended. If the number was higher than 10 or 12 in late Aug or early Sept, treatment would be recommend-

ed. Now, with more knowledge(?) of the relationship between mites and bee virus titers, along with a lot of general observations that our bees aren't seeming to deal as well with mite levels they may have tolerated a few years ago, the treatment thresholds are sliding lower. These days I'm only "comfortable" with 2 or 3 mites : 300 bees in spring, and maybe 5 or 6 mites : 300 bees in late summer. You'll have to determine what you are "comfortable" with for your own bees... these thresholds should reflect your bee genetics, whether or not you winter in Iowa vs California almonds, etc.

Have fun with the bees, despite all this Varroa doom and gloom. See you all at the fair!

Andy

No Time for Sorrow: Year Two of the Bluff Creek Bee Club

By Stefanie Brook Trout

William Blake said, "The busy bee has no time for sorrow," and the same goes for the busy beekeeper. That was winter's hard lesson for the Bluff Creek Bee Club, a group of Ames-based apiarists now in our second year of beekeeping with the loss of our first two colonies behind us.

For most in the Bluff Creek Bee Club, several of whom are graduate students in Iowa State University's Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing and Environment, this experience is our first exposure to beekeeping. The recent media coverage of bee population declines drew our attention to bees. And when Steve Pett, the recently retired and longtime coordinator of the Creative Writing and Environment program, recruited Arvin Foell of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association to mentor us through our first year, he gave us the opportunity to come together and do something about the increasing loss of pollinators.

As first-timers, the Bluff Creek Bee

Club prepared for the worst, so we were pleasantly surprised when our newly established colonies survived the May snowstorm, when they passed the *Varroa* mite sugar shake test, and when they produced so much honey we needed to borrow additional supers from Arvin, our gracious mentor. After our colonies had done so well, we hoped that we might be able to divide them in the spring. We ordered two additional hive kits from Precious Bees, and we got together to hand-assemble and paint four supers to replace the ones on loan from Arvin.

So when we found out that Iowa's coldest winter in thirty-five years had taken both of our colonies, it was a sobering reminder that beekeeping is not just a hobby: it's a test of resilience. There was no time for sorrow. We ordered new bees from Spring Valley and got our hands dirty cleaning out our hives.

Several members of the Bluff Creek Bee Club graduated in May and will not see the end of our second year. They have been mentoring our new members and sharing their experiences with those who will now get to learn beekeeping from the beginning. As the founding members of our club graduate and leave Ames, these newest members are the ones who will sustain our cooperative effort in the future by contributing to and passing along our growing body of knowledge. When our members do graduate, they will go on to keep bees in their backyards, prompting local discussions about the urgency of beekeeping. And they will write about their beekeeping experiences, promoting more global conversations about why bees are in decline and what individuals can do to help.

We in the Bluff Creek Bee Club keep our bees at the Everett Casey Nature Center and Reserve in Boone County, an ecological learning lab owned by Iowa State University's English Department. To learn more about the Bluff Creek Bee Club and the Everett Casey Nature Center and Reserve, visit the-caseyland.com.

Honey Bees in the Classroom!

We need to get our youth excited about the wonderful hob-



by of beekeeping! My name is Steve Rimathe and I having been teaching third grade at Collins-Maxwell Elementary for 25 years. I am also a beekeeper. I am always looking for things that will get students excited about science. Bringing bees into the classroom seemed to be the answer. For the last 3 years, I have put together a honey bee unit that lasts for about a week. I incorporate all subjects into the unit and at the end of the unit I bring in an observation beehive into the classroom. The students are absolutely fascinated with honey bees! It is very rewarding to see my students so excited about this amazing , valuable insect. It is my hope that they will become future beekeepers and



spread the word about honey bees.

I would like to thank Spring Valley Honey Farm for donating a package of bees for my classroom observation beehive. Their generosity is greatly appreciated!

Submitted by Steve Rimathe



Queen Marking.....Some ready reference tidbits

It is common practice to mark the queen with a small spot of paint on her back (thorax). A color code exists within the beekeeping industry to indicate the year the queen was introduced.

International Queen Marking Color Code:	
Color:	For Year Ending In:
White (or gray)	1 or 6
Yellow	2 or 7
Red	3 or 8
Green	4 or 9
Blue	5 or 0

Model car paint may be used to mark the queen. The identifying mark should be small, so that it does not cover any other part of the queen. A 1/16" stick, lightly dipped in paint, is a good applicator. Generally, queens are marked before being introduced, but they can; however, be marked at any time. Paint should be given ample time to dry before the queen is released into the colony. In fact, queens may be purchased already marked by the queen producer.

Some beekeepers also identify queens by clipping the tip of the tip of one forewing. If queens are replaced every two years, the beekeeper clips the left wing(s) on queens introduced in odd years, and the right on queens introduced in even years. The clipping practice may also supplement the paint spot technique as a back-up should the queen lose her paint mark. If clipped correctly, the queen will not be able to fly. However, if clipped too closely, the queen may appear damaged and be superseded.

Source: <http://www.backyardbeekeepers.com/facts.html>



Greetings fellow bee lovers!

Transferring nucs went late this year, so in early July I was still working on getting the girls situated into their new homes. They won't make much of a crop this year, but next year they will hit the ground running with strong, young queens to guide them. One thing I love about transferring nucs is seeing all the designs on the fronts of the nuc boxes again.



We put designs on the boxes so when the queen returns from her nuptial flight she is sure to find her correct home. Don't worry, if your boxes aren't decorated, your queens will probably still find their home. This is just an extra precaution.

While exploring my hives, I discovered an example of the perfect beekeeping topic to research. My boss had introduced me to the topic of sex alleles, but it took me a little more reading to understand the concept. After some research, I tried to condense what I had learned into a shorter version for my Facebook page. This is what I came up with –

“Do you ever have a few cells missing from your brood pattern and wonder what caused it? The answer is actually quite interesting. From the time we first start studying bees, we are taught female bees are from fertilized eggs and male bees are from unfertilized eggs, but that isn't exactly true. The sex of honeybees is determined by whether or not the egg has dissimilar genes in a specific location on a chromosome. The place where the sex gene is found is called the sex locus. If an egg is unfertilized, it has one sex allele and becomes a drone. If an egg is fertilized and receives two different sex alleles, it becomes a female. However, if an egg is fertilized but receives two identical sex alleles, it becomes a diploid drone. Diploid drones are eaten by worker bees soon after they hatch because they are undesirable. Due to this process, it is important to have diversity available when queens mate. Inbreeding causes more diploid drones because there is not enough variance among the genetic material and identical sex alleles become more common.”

My hives must not have had quite enough genetic material to choose from because I have a few holes caused by diploid drones. It is a common problem, and can't ever be completely fixed, but it is nice to know what causes the random holes in the brood pattern.



On June 29th, I gave my first tour of my hives. I showed a family I'm close friends with where the bees store honey, the different castes of bees, and lots of different tasks bees were performing. The family loved chewing on the comb honey my bees had attached to the lids of the hives.



In early July, I visited some libraries to present at their summer reading programs. To get the kids involved, I had a lot of activities planned. They acted out all the roles in the hive, made seed bombs, and tasted honey.



All the kids did an exceptional job of listening and participating.

On July 12th, I attended the Summer Field Day. I probably saw a lot of you there. While at the field day, I taught beekeepers how to mark queens to make them more visible in the hive. We used drones to practice on. If you don't normally attend the Summer Field Day, I encourage you to come out next year. It is an informational and entertaining day.



The summer is passing quickly, and extraction time is almost upon us. Good luck to all of you in your end-of-the-summer bee work!

Yours,
Gabrielle Hemesath



I was pleased to appear in the 2014 Freedom Festival Parade. According to Robyn Rieckhoff the Executive Director of the Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival over 13,000 people viewed the parade. My theme is that life is sweeter with Iowa Honey and I enjoyed buzzing by.

Jeralyn Westercamp
2014 Iowa Honey Princess

I'm Continuing Draper's Wax Operation!

If you've ever used Draper's Super Bee wax, you know the quality of their filtered wax. I have purchased their wax operation and will continue to uphold their standards! Currently in need of cappings. Please call or e-mail me if you have any cappings to sell or would like to reserve an order of wax as soon as it becomes available.

Royce Blackledge
Black Cat Acres
66435 270th Lane
Nevada, IA 50201

(515) 979-6585

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2014 IHPA Summer Field Day

Firstly thank you very much to our hosts Curt and Connie Bronnenberg for allowing the IHPA to hold this year's Summer Field Day at their honey farm in Perry and time taken with getting things ready. We had about 80 people attend, which was great to see as we weren't sure what impact the forecasted rain would have on attendance. We were blessed, as the rain came in the early hours of the morning and remained dry for the rest of the day.

Special thanks to our presenters, Ray Hansen for the marketing workshop; Charles and David from Prairie Song Apiary for the beeswax candle workshop, Andy Joseph our state apiarist and Amy from ISU for the mini lab workshop, Curt for demonstrating knots, Gabrielle Hemesath and Dale Fields for demonstrating marking drones. Also Alex Ebert, Andy Joseph, Arvin Foell, Curt Bronnenberg, Dale Fields, Pat Ennis, Roy Kraft for the afternoon apiary group sessions. The artificial swarm Curt and Dale tried to create on one of the legs of the awning was interesting to see, even though the bees didn't want to cooperate that day! Not forgetting Rhonda Heston for taking care of everyone registering, merchandise sales, beverages etc, Connie and the many helpers for setting up the table for lunch and chairs for the morning workshops.



The artificial swarm created for a swarm capture demonstration were content to hangout on the tent post.



Charles Carpenter talks about filtering beeswax for candles. He and David Tousain of Prairie Song Apiary gave a great demonstration.



Despite the threat of some rain, the 2014 Field Day drew a great crowd. Here State Apiarist Andy Joseph answer questions during the field demonstrations.



Curt Bronnenberg demonstrates how to tie knots to secure equipment using ropes.



Gabrielle Hemesath (2014 Iowa Honey Queen) looks for drones. Drones were used to practice the queen marking process.



We hope you enjoyed the day's events and came away more knowledgeable. If you would like to make any comments about the Summer Field Day or what you would like to have next year, I would like to hear from you, as this helps us plan future events. Thank you to everyone for all the delicious food that was brought along to share, such a lot of yummy dishes to choose from.

Many thanks

Eli Kalke
IHPA vp



Above: Andy talks about the importance of monitoring the load of Varroa mites in the hive. Varroa mites start to rise in population right along with the honeybees starting in the spring.

Andy continued to explain how good beekeeping practices include monitoring the level of Varroa especially after the honey harvest to make an informed decision about using mite treatments.

He continued his talk with a wonderful demonstration of how to complete an ether roll, a method of mite level detection.



Above: Curt examines a frame looking for the queen bee. True to form the queen seems to hide at the times you are actually trying to find her.

Left: Pat Ennis looks on as Curt begins his demonstration of how to create a nuc. A nuc (4-5 frame beehive) can be used to "store" a queen bee not being used in a full sized hive.

If a beehive should loose their queen, a nuc can be merged with the queen-less bees to save the hive.



Ray Hansen gave a presentation on the marketing of honey. Many beekeepers are involved in farmers' markets and are always looking for new ways to market their honey.



Curt continued to answer questions after completion of the nuc building demonstration. The Field Day was very engaging with a lot of good information for all beekeepers.

Featured Beekeeper of the Month

This month our featured beekeeper is Rhonda Heston. She and husband Steve live on an acreage near Chariton, Iowa. You readers probably recognize her name because she is also treasurer of the Iowa Honey Producers. Rhonda tells us



she and Steve got into beekeeping about six years ago. At that time they were raising raspberries and experiencing low production. Then a swarm of bees moved into an out building. That sum-



mer their yields exploded and they had more raspberries than they knew what to do with. Thanks to the bees, they were convinced it was time to get some hives and the following winter they took a beginning beekeeper class in Indianola taught by Mike Wyatt.

Since Rhonda grew up in Kansas and her family still lives there, she and Steve have bees in Iowa and Kansas. At this time they sell honey, but eventually would like to produce comb honey and lotions and soaps.

Rhonda says she enjoys watching nature and seeing the bees come and go, - each time knowing where home is. "I see the girls working so hard to produce a product that we benefit from, not just the honey but the pollination. Where would we be without bees?" Rhonda says they would like to slowly build up the business and expand into farmers' markets in Kansas.

The Hestons are members of the Friendly Beekeepers of Iowa group, also lovingly known as the FBI's. It's an informal group having round table discussions and speakers sometimes. Pat Ennis was a guest lecturer during their beginning beekeeping classes this winter when they had 50 participants. There are 25-30 regular members, who meet the 4th Thursday of each month, March through October at the Annette Nature Center, located South of Indianola, at 6:30 pm. Rhonda is co-president along with Judy Spencer. They help keep the beginning beekeeping classes going.

The FBI's also mentor scholarship recipients for IHPA and sponsored the 2013 Honey Princess, Rachel Stika. The group even hosted an extracting party in August encouraging their beginning beekeepers to bring a super to extract.



In addition to treasuring the IHPA, Rhonda organized the IHPA First Annual Buzz Quilt in 2013 and has sent the blocks out for the Second Annual Buzz Quilt this spring. The plans are to have the second quilt completed by the Field Day in July.

Rhonda seems to think bee stings are inevitable and suggests taking a Benadryl tablet and a Zantac antacid tablet since there are two histamines in bee venom, and each is controlled by a different product. Rhonda says, "Work steady in the hive, no jerking and slamming around frames. Remember, they are girls and we like slow, gentle hands."

Thanks for sharing your story and sense of humor Rhonda!

Submitted by Ron Wehr



Shifts Available at the IHPA Booth During the Iowa State Fair



Dear Iowa beekeepers

I am contacting you again, as the Iowa State Fair is **just over a week away** and we are **still needing 147 volunteers** to come forward to help at the honey booth. This is our main fund raising event, which is needed to help support our various educational programs, eg like our youth program and monies awarded to various research entities at the annual meeting.

If you haven't already volunteered to work at shift at the honey booth, I would like to hear from you. The shift are short and range from 3-4½ hours, which pass very quickly. Everyone is welcome; IHPA members, bee clubs, beekeepers, youth scholars past and present, friends and family and **each volunteer will be provided with a pass to get into the fair free of charge** and free honey lemonade when you get thirsty while working at the booth.

We have 3 shifts daily; 9am-1.30pm, 1.30pm-6pm and 6pm-9pm (11-14 people needed per shift), without your generous support the booth will not run as smoothly. It is fun to do and a good place to meet fellow beekeepers, plus you get to enjoy the great entertainment at the fair before/after your shift at the booth.

If you are able to volunteer for one or more shifts during August 7-17, please let me know which day and shift you can work either by phone 641-512-4728 or email fieldstonefarms@netins.net.

I have created a table showing the days and times where we need your help. Please consider working one of these shifts.

Updated shift availability is posted at
www.abuzzaboutbees.com

For those members new to the Iowa Honey Producers Association (IHPA), we have a booth at the State Fair annually in the John Deere Ag building; selling honey products, honey lemonade, lotions, soaps, beeswax items, promotional merchandise etc. We ask our members to help make this event a success, by volunteering their time assisting with cash register sales, bagging product, pricing, mixing and serving honey lemonade, offering honey samples etc

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Look forward to hearing from you!

Eli Kalke
Vice President
Iowa Honey Producers Association
Cell: 641-512-4728



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Change Management – Save Bees

Glen Stanley
Iowa State Apiarist, Emeritus
908 N. Highway 69
Huxley, Iowa 50124

The exact number of people who have bees in Iowa, and other states, is unknown but maybe Iowa's State Apiarist, Andy Joseph may have an estimated figure.

Within that number is a few that are qualified Beekeepers. They have earned that distinction by managing honey bee colonies to survive Iowa's rigorous winters with a minimum of loss. It is being proved even with the increasing difficulties in beekeeping.

The initial start of getting colonies organized, which requires the feeding of sugar syrup, they managed colonies to produce their own food and eliminated the feeding of syrup. Most colonies are provided two brood chambers for producing bees and storing honey for the months of dearth when no source of nectar or pollen is available.

Even though queen excluders are used above the two brood chambers 99 percent of colonies will need additional full combs of honey for winter. Those surplus combs of honey can be produced by allowing some colonies to fill the full depth hive body with honey that can be reserved for the purpose of bringing all colonies up to winter weight.

There will be some less amounts of honey to process and sold but it will eliminate the need to make arrangements, work, and expense of feeding sugar syrup.

Fair colonies can be produced by feeding sugar syrup but not the healthiest of bees. Honey is a perfect diet for bees, produces healthy bees which can better stand the environment of today's challenges.

Now about finding the proper balance of stores for the colonies to be wintered. Just a quick view of the combs from the top it ap-



pears they are full of honey. Upon closer examination it is found that some of the combs are only partly full. Counting each comb would help but would be a lot of work and time consuming. The hefting of each hive is quite inadequate. A completely filled upper chamber with honey would assure that there was enough honey, but three combs of open cells need to be placed in the upper chamber in September. That is where the bees prefer to cluster, on the open cell combs.

The only way to make sure there is the right amount of honey stores is the use of a scale. This doesn't mean placing every hive on a platform scale needlessly. The scale pictured is the only sure way that there is the correct amount of stores, not too much or too little.

All hives should be placed on 2" x 4" pieces 42 inches long. Either the flat way or made into H frames. This allows the scale hook to fit firmly under the side of the bottom board.

Lift each side of each hive and add the total. That gives you the near exact weight of the hive. If the total weight is 100 pounds then three combs may be needed to bring the hive up to the needed weight. In central Iowa it was found we needed each one to weigh 115 to 120 pounds. After a couple of year you will have determined the weight needed to

last until some source of nectar and pollen are available in late April.

Colonies having the proper amount of stores and given all other provisions for winter, including Styrofoam fit in the inner cover and wrapped in black asphalt paper will be in a good condition going into winter. Good spring colonies emerging from winter can have their brood equalized to provide extra combs of brood and bees for making up a few winter losses or increasing total colony count. We found that during the daylight hours it was 30 degrees warmer under the paper than the outside temperature.





Enough of this done throughout the Midwest would eliminate the need to import the thousands of packaged bees that are now being used for replacements. Maybe the day will return when queens would again be available from California or the South in early April, the desirable time to make up additional colonies. There should be enough honey left for all single brood chamber colonies after equalizing the brood.

Now for the scale: All that is needed is two pieces of 1" x 8" board for a base. Cross the grains to prevent splitting. Two pieces of 2" x 2": One 24" the other 32". Fasten the 24" upright to the base with 4 pieces of metal strap 12" long. Bend down 2" to bolt on to the base using all 1/4 inch bolts. Four 1/4 inch bolts hold the strap to the upright piece. Cut the top of the upright piece at a 45

degree angle. Fasten the lever to the upright about 8 inches from the end with a 5 inch strap hinge. At the end of the lever place an eye bolt which will hold the swivel snap attached to the scale. The scale is the expensive part but well worth it. It takes only about 30 seconds to weigh each hive which tells you a lot. One that weighs 160 pounds has too much honey and upon checking you will find too little brood in September and will be short of bees that will be needed to survive the winter.

When considering the management mentioned, keep in mind it takes two pounds of sugar to equal one pound of honey. The sugar in honey is an invert sugar, so to utilize the sugar it has to be converted to invert sugar. A lot of work for the adult bees which will result in their dying before the winter ends. It is

utterly impossible to get enough sugar (converted) to last the bees until well into April. It can be done with honey.

Beekeepers fashion all kinds of reasons, or excuses, for extreme losses of colonies, especially during the winter. The latest being the extremely cold winter. Cold has little or no effect on bees as long as they have plenty of honey. The major problem is neglect and mismanagement. A little special attention paid to each colony takes very little time but pays big dividends. You may experience about a five percent loss rather than the fifty to seventy percent using these precautions.

Glen Stanley



Ron and Carol Wehr entered this float in the Ridiculous Day Parade in Washington, Iowa this past June. The celebration was for Washington's 175th birthday. The Wehr's celebrated a first place finish with this great float!



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The Buzz Newsletter

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