The Buzz

Newsletter of the Iowa Honey Producers Association

January 2014

January 26th: IHPA Board Meeting at 3pm; DMACC Ankeny

Beekeeping courses will be starting in January. Check the November issue of the Buzz Newsletter or the IHPA website for a complete list of locations and times.

For Sale: 2 or 3 pound packages of Italian bees with queen. Picked up in Cedar Rapids or Aurora, Iowa in mid-April. Bees from Hill-Ward Apiary in California. All orders muyst be received by February 28.

Contact Douglas Child
319-634-3682

FOR SALE: 2#, 3# and 4# packages. The 4# can come with one or two queens. Your choice of Italian or Carniolan queens. We are getting two loads in April. Prices available in late January. We can take orders prior to that if you put down a deposit.

Contact Phil ehoney37@netins.net
641-527-2639 or

Alex alex.ebert@eberthoney.com
641-821-9648

Wanted: William Lambright is looking to buy medium honey supers and a radial hand crank extractor.

Contact by mail:
1053 Fair bank Amish Blvd.
Fair bank IA 50629.

For Sale: Package bees in Western Iowa. We will have 2 pound packages available early, mid or late April. 3 pound packages will be available until mid to late April.

All packages will be picked up in Griswold. Order early, any orders received after March 1st will be charged an additional $15 processing fee.

Prices will be available in January. Contact Mike Brahms, 3 Bee Farms, for deposit information and questions at (712) 778-4256 or mbrahms@netins.net

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! Call or e-mail me if you have cappings to sell or want to buy wax!

Royce Blackledge
Black Cat Acres
66435 270th Lane
Nevada, IA 50201
(515) 979-6585
royce.blackledge50@gmail.com

FOR SALE: Approx. 10 cases of new 9oz hex jars with lids—Make an offer.

Contact Phil Ebert at 641-527-2639 or e-mail ehoney37@netins.net

FOR SALE:
3 lb. Packages with marked Italian Queens for **Pick-up only in West Chester, IA (no deliveries)**
Pick-up will be the week of May 12, 2014 (actual date will be determined based on weather in GA)
$95/pkg. ($90/pkg. for orders of 10+); extra marked queens = $26/ each

Email number of packages and contact info. to:
kalonahoneycompany@gmail.com

or visit our website www.kalonahoney.com and click on the "package bees" tab

or contact Tim Wilbanks
cell: 319-321-2494

FOR SALE: Honey Styx
I sent 2 barrels of honey to Oregon to have put into styx, so these are Iowa honey. Good flavored light honey.

$0.09 each in boxes of 2000 - $180.00
0.12 each 500 - 1999
0.15 for 1 - 499

Curt Bronnenberg
14405 Hull Ave.
Perry, IA 50220
(515) 465-5939
CBronny823@aol.com

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.

President's Message
January 2014

January is a down time for me. The bees are all in California and we will 'bee' heading out there around Mid-January to feed, give them a pollen patty and in general see how they are doing. It's how we know what to expect when they come back to Iowa the last week of March. As of now, they still think there will 'bee' a shortage of bee's to fill the all the California Almond pollination contracts and by February, they will be calling for any extra's you could send out California way. But if the almond growers can't get water for their trees, they won't need bees for pollination. It's a crazy cycle. Spring Valley has nine semi-loads of bees going out and we will have plenty of work ready and waiting for us when we get there. Hopefully we will get it done in five days, but time will tell. Until then I'll spend more time with my wife, do a little hunting and try to get some "Honey-do" jobs caught up on.

I also take some time out to teach and help with beginning beekeeping classes. There are a lot of classes throughout our great state and I try to attend some, it might be just bringing a snack made with honey or helping teach, or to promote the Iowa Honey Producers. Would you take some time and think about this and see where you can possibly help. There are a lot of youth that need a mentor and your help with this would be greatly appreciated!! The youth are our future beekeepers, so let's get involved and help shape our future.

The first week of December, I tried to order some queens. One queen producer could get the queens to me by mid-May. This producer told me they started taking orders in the first of September for the 2014 year. The second queen producers could get the queens to me by the first week of June. They started taking orders in the first of November for the 2014 year. If you have not yet made arrangements for queens in the spring, I'd do so as soon as possible. Don't wait till spring when you're splitting your hives to order your queens.

I hope everyone had a very merry Christmas and was able to spend time with family and friends making memories that will last forever.

Spring is just around the corner and that means the Central Iowa Beekeepers Annual Auction is coming up in April. We are always looking for things to put on the auction, so if you have thing to sell, give me a call or send me an e-mail. We will get your bee stuff listed and put in the "Buzz".

Till next month, 'Bee' happy, 'bee' joyful, 'bee' faithful and 'bee' yourself
Pat

January trivia:

If a worker honey bee weighs about a tenth of a gram, how many bees are in a pound?

Answer on Page 13.

Central Iowa Beekeepers

January 18 the Central Iowa Beekeepers will host an afternoon seminar with speaker Dr. Mary Harris. Dr. Harris will speak about the research she is doing concerning corn planter dust. We will also discuss setting up a Queen Breeding program sponsored by the CIBA. Lunch will begin at 12:30 and program to follow.

Merchandise Price List

	BUZZ (includes shipping)	NEW BUZZ PRICE (includes shipping)
UTENSIL CROCK	$36.00	**$33.50**
100th ANNIVERSARY HIVE TOOL	$20.00	**$20.00**
COFFEE CUP WITH SPOON	$17.00	**$12.50**
MAGNET	$2.00	**$2.00**
COOK BOOK		
1-9 BOOKS	$6.50	**$6.50**
10 OR MORE	$5.50	**$5.50**
IHPA BALL CAP	$8.15	**$6.65**
IHPA VISOR	$15.00	**$13.50**
T-SHIRT		
YOUTH S,M,L	$15.00	**$11.00**
ADULT S,M,L,XL	$15.00	**$13.00**
ADULT 2X, 3X	$17.00	**$15.00**
POLO SHIRT		
ADULT S,M,L,XL	$35.00	**$29.00**
ADULT 2X, 3X	$37.00	**$29.00**

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

So, what's to be done this time of year (January) in the Apiary?

For most of us, external hive checks are all we dare perform because of the weather. But here are a few things we can do in January:

1. Remove any snow that has blocked doorways and ventilation holes. Honeybees need fresh air, and the ability to exit for when weather permits. Your hives should all have an upper entrance as well.

2. Clear any dead bees from the entry way and ventilation holes.

3. Look about: Beekeeper Cleo Hogan shared that the "first thing I look for in the apiary in January and February is for what has been in the apiary. The best clues come from the tracks in the snow. Birds, rabbits, perhaps a mouse or two. Certainly no clear-thinking human." Look for tracks. Not only is it interesting, but if you find tracks go into hives but not away from them, you may want to investigate further. One beekeeper told us when he saw lots of human tracks in the snow in his out-apiary; he kept a closer eye on it. Turns out some hunters were perhaps overly curious about bees. In years past he'd experienced hives being knocked over in the winter and the honey stolen. He suspects letting the hunters know they were seen (and making a show of writing down their license plate number) may have prevented another loss.

4. Review the area and remove any branches that may fall onto hives under heavy snow or ice.

5. Look for dead bees. Some dead bees is not a bad thing—it tells you the colony has recently had some live bees who were out doing their business or perhaps choosing to die outside the hive when it was their time. We can't quantify how many dead bees would be appropriate versus how many would be alarming. That depends upon how big the colony is and your weather conditions. If helpful to you, determine if the colony is still alive. If you don't see any dead bees, or see what you think are way too many, perhaps you've lost the hive. Some beekeepers will put an ear to the hive body likely containing the cluster, and rap sharply, hoping to hear a reactive buzz. Should you do that? On one hand, it's comforting if you hear it so you know they're still alive. On the other hand, what are you going to do if you don't hear it? This time of year, things inside the hive generally are what they are. There's likely not much a beekeeper can do about whatever is going on in there unless conditions allow you to investigate further. If you need to order more bees, now is the time to do so.

6. Feed. Feed against starvation IF they can get to it. (If it is quite cold, they may not break cluster to get to their own honey or anything else.)

Weather permitting, you could add a liquid feeder as well, or a candy board, but bees generally don't take it well unless the temperature is sustainably 45 degrees or warmer.

7. Rejoice! Celebrate if you have an unusually warm day and see bees out flying. On an unusually warm winter day, you may want to provide nutrients, like honey, or sugar syrup.

Outside of the apiary: there's plenty to do, including:

1. Repair equipment. It is much easier to remove wax when it is brittle from the cold! Spread a good coat of paint over those external hive surfaces if that's how you protect them from the weather.

2. Inventory and plan: As Texan beekeeper Dennis Brown stated: "January is the month I take inventory of all my hives, all my extra hive parts and make a plan for what I want to accomplish with my bees during the coming season. Then, I am able to look at what I have on hand and decide if I need to order anything before the season begins. If I do need something for the coming season, I usually place that order in January. It is never good when you get into the busy season and discover that you don't have something and you need to order it. Planning ahead is key in order to be successful in beekeeping. If you don't make a plan, you will always be one step behind."

3. Beekeeper Cleo Hogan seconded spending some time planning in January: "Start seriously considering your goals for the coming year. How many hives, where they will be located, medicate or not, comb or extracted honey, need more equipment or supplies, etc".

4. Build new equipment.

5. Read. Start with some great books and other resources to help you be a better beekeeper

6. Write. We'd love to hear about your beekeeping practices—what works and doesn't, why you keep bees, what you wished you'd known from the beginning, any helpful hints and the unique challenges of your apiary.

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TheBuzz@ABuzzAboutBees.com
-

7. Organize those cool apiary photos—and send them to us!

8. Volunteer. We suspect your local bee club would appreciate your talents. And if there isn't a local bee club, perhaps this is the time to get it going? Check with your community's senior center—we suspect they'd love a bee presentation, along with the local daycare and elementary school.

9. BEE optimistic, for this is the year for a gentle winter that allows the bees to get out when they need to do so, for the cluster to remain large and with golden, nutritious honey, and for the queen to have restorative rest to lay thousands of eggs when the season comes.

Beekeeping Really is a Year 'Round Activity …

The one thing I wish I understood before I started beekeeping was the way the year progresses with bees. For example,

beekeeping really starts in February, not April. The honey season is really over in the middle of the summer, not the end, although there is plenty of work to do in the late summer. I know there could be a late honey flow but it's not always going to happen. The bees start to get ready for winter long before we even think about the winter months…. Mary Lou, Indiana

Source and re-print permission - Kelley Bees News: Modern Beekeeping, newsletter | Issue 31, January 2013| 800.233.2899 | www.kelleybees.com

State Apiarist

Hi all. Well, it's officially winter. Here's hoping you and your bees are as prepared as possible! I believe I handled the last of the apiary inspections of 2013 on December 3rd. It was close to 50 degrees that afternoon. The temperature dropped off a cliff the very next day.

A whole lot of Iowa's bees are in California now. A few more Iowa beekeepers are moving their bees out to the almonds each year. The numbers will probably continue to increase – at least in the short term – due to the attractive prices being paid. Most, not all, of our migratory beekeepers are gracious and cooperative in lining up the required "exit certificate" inspections and paperwork. I definitely appreciate that! It's interesting to get to see the bees as they are more or less on their way onto the semis, ready to head down the road. Most years, for any of us, there's a good deal of work in getting our bees ready for an Iowa winter. It's an entirely different fall-time process to prepare the bees for the trip to the almonds, but many of the details are shared for all of us – mites and diseases better be well under control, the colony needs to be strong and full of good young "healthy" bees, appropriate food supplies need to be stored, etc.

Every year the amount of pollen patties being fed throughout the fall by watchful beekeepers increases. Many of the colonies headed out of state for the winter are receiving 4 lbs or more apiece. Like it or not, the effects on the bees of this supplemental protein feeding are obvious … colonies appear stronger, a larger brood area is maintained later into the season, the brood appears healthier / less "stressed". Another interesting observation: when a colony refuses to eat a pollen patty, expect trouble – they are likely to dwindle in size by your next visit and they're not likely to make it through winter.

Whether your bees are here or out west, my fingers are crossed that they're in great shape.

On a completely different note, I've just (as in yesterday) created a small web forum using Google Groups for Iowa beekeepers. It's called ...

BetterBeesIowa

As of now, I'm the lone member… the only way for the forum to hold any value is for people to join in and use it. For those of you who are more "computer connected", the forum is found here: https://groups.google.com/d/forum/betterbeesiowa .

Again, the focus is specifically for Iowa beekeepers, based in the notion, "all beekeeping is local". The forum provides a platform for sharing our individual beekeeping experiences and getting timely answers & perspectives to beekeeping questions. The website may be openly viewed by the public, but you must be "signed in" as a member to post and contribute. More on this as it continues…

Take care. Merry Christmas! Happy Holidays!
Andy

Treasurer

I would like to say Thank You for the support I have received from the Membership during the past year and the continued support for the coming year. I have enjoyed being your Treasurer. I learned a lot and will do my best to provide you with accurate and concise numbers in the coming year.
Rhonda Heston
r.heston@yahoo.com

2nd Annual Buzz Quilt

Are you interested in making a quilt block or two for the 2nd Annual Buzz Quilt? If so, please send Rhonda Heston an e-mail to let her know of your interest. The 2nd Annual Buzz Quilt will be in varying shades of blue. Not your typical bee colors, but I bet we can come up with some interesting blocks. The fabric will be purchased shortly after the first of the year and will be sent out at that time to interested quilters. The block size will be determined by the amount of interest received. Rhonda can be reached at r.heston@yahoo.com or 515-724-2124.

Membership Renewal:

As the snow begins to fly, it is time to renew your membership dues for 2014.

The current membership year is from January 1 to December 31 each year.

Please complete the form on the following page or download from the website and return the form with your check to my attention. Please be sure to include your town and zip code. The address to send your membership renewal to is:

Iowa Honey Producers
c/o Rhonda Heston, Treasurer
52735 187th Ave
Chariton IA 50049

r.heston@yahoo.com
515-724-2124

Iowa Honey Producers Association Membership Form

First Membership ($20)

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____-_____ County: _____ Phone: ( ) _____

Email: _____

Number of Colonies: ____ Number of Years Beekeeping: ____ Company Name: _____

Second Family Member (Same address, $5)

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

First Membership Dues Includes a one year subscription to The Buzz Newsletter.	$20.00	$_____
Second Family Member Dues Only one copy of The Buzz Newsletter is sent per address.	$ 5.00	$_____

IHPA T-Shirts (The t-shirts are a bright yellow shirt with brown lettering. Prices includes shipping.)

Youth Sizes:	(S) (M) (L) circle a size	Qty. ____	X	$11.00 =	$_____
Adult Sizes:	(S) (M) (L) (XL) circle a size	Qty. ____	X	$13.00 =	$_____
Adult Sizes:	(XL) (XXL) circle a size	Qty. ____	X	$15.00 =	$_____

IHPA Cook Book (Price includes shipping.)

1-9	IHPA Cook Books	Qty. ____	X	$ 6.50 =	$_____
10+	IHPA Cook Books	Qty. ____	X	$ 5.50 =	$_____

To see when your IHPA membership expires, check the mailing label on The Buzz Newsletter. Following your name will be the month and year your membership is set to expire.

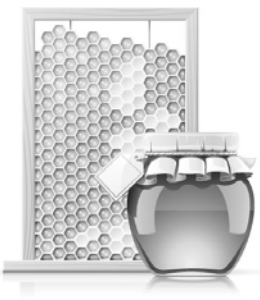
Example:

John Smith **Dec. 03**
1234 Green Grass Rd.
Wonderful, IA 54321

Make checks payable to: **Iowa Honey Producers Association**
Send form and check to : c/o Rhonda Heston, Treasurer
52735 187th Avenue
Chariton, IA 50049

Total $_____

IHPA
Iowa Honey Producers Association



Iowa Honey Queen

Greetings Iowa Beekeepers!

I hope you are all reading this in good health and happiness.

I believe I am starting to figure out exactly what it means to be Iowa Honey Queen. So far, I love the job! This past month, the following four newspapers wrote stories about my life with bees: The Elgin Echo, The Union, The Waterloo Courier, and Agri News. I have not had the chance to give any presentations since being crowned, but I have two booked for February. I'm excited to rally enthusiasm for the bees. I have been spending my time trying new honey recipes, making crafts with wax, and researching/writing about honeybees. My most recent paper compared European to Africanized honeybees. I found that although Africanized honeybees are much more aggressive, they are surprisingly similar to European honeybees. I never run out of bee-related activities to keep me busy!

Tonight, I spent my evening coating fresh cut flowers in beeswax. My goal is to preserve the flowers so their blooms last much longer than they otherwise would. For those of you interested in trying out the fun process, I will provide an easy set of step-by-step of instructions.

1. Heat wax in a double boiler until it is completely melted
2. Trim the stem of the flower to an inch or two in length
3. Dip the head of the flower in the wax and immediately remove it
4. Let the flower dry slightly, then dip again
5. Lay the flower on waxed paper until dry
6. Dip the stem of the flower in wax
7. Lay the flower on waxed paper once again to dry

In the end, my flowers looked like this:

Through experimentation, I was able to compile a list of helpful hints to make your process easier:

1. Use a spoon to drip wax into the center of the flower
2. For easy cleanup, cover your workspace with newspapers before beginning
3. Flowers that are fully bloomed are harder to work with because their petals are not as stiff
4. Yellow flowers work best, as they will not show the dried wax on their petals

5. If you don't own a double boiler, you can use a large cooking pot and a smaller metal bowl (see picture)

I hope a few brave souls will try waxing flowers and let me know how their creations turn out! The project would be a great way to bond with kids/grandkids on a cold day.

As always, don't hesitate to contact Connie about any beekeeping events you would like me to attend! Stay warm and cozy!

Gabrielle Hemesath
2014 Iowa Honey Queen

CATCH THE BUZZ

Neonicotinoids let virus thrive in bees – Another nail in the Neonic Coffin?
From Chemistry World

Scientists in Italy believe they have found a molecular trigger by which neonicotinoid pesticides may harm colonies of honey bees. The team's experiments suggest that exposure to neonicotinoids results in increased levels of a particular protein in bees that inhibits a key molecule involved in the immune response, making the insects more susceptible to attack by harmful viruses.

Francesco Pennacchio, of the University of Naples Federico II, and colleagues identified a gene in insects that codes for a protein family similar to that found in other animals that is known to regulate the immune response. This leucine-rich repeat protein family, or LRR, has been shown to suppress the activity of a key protein involved in immune signaling, called NF-κB. When the researchers exposed bees to sub-lethal doses of the neonicotinoid clothianidin they saw a significant increase in the expression of the gene encoding the LRR protein, and a concomitant suppression of the NF-κB signalling pathway. These effects were not seen when bees were exposed to the organophosphate insecticide chlorpyriphos.

When the team infected bees with a common pathogen – deformed wing virus – and exposed them to clothianidin and another neonicotinoid, imidacloprid, at concentrations similar to those that would be found in the field, there was significantly increased replication of the virus, which was not seen either in untreated bees, or those exposed to chlorpyriphos. The virus is common in bees and usually remains inactive – kept in check by the bees' immune system. The results suggest that insecticide-induced suppression of bees' immune systems lets the virus replicate unchecked.

'The reported effect on immunity exerted by neonicotinoids will allow additional toxicological tests to be defined to assess if chronic exposure of bees to sub-lethal doses of agrochemicals can adversely affect their immune system and health conditions,' says team member Francesco Nazzi of the University of Udine. 'Moreover, our data indicate the possible occurrence in insects, as in vertebrates, of a neural modulation of the immune response. This sets the stage for future studies in this research area, and poses the question on how neurotoxic substances may affect the immune response.'

Susan Kegley runs the Pesticide Research Institute, an independent consultancy in the US. She tells *Chemistry World*: 'The EU has already implemented a minimum two-year suspension of the use of the most toxic neonicotinoid insecticides – clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam – on bee-attractive crops, to take effect December 1, 2013. The US EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] remains unconvinced that neonicotinoids could be a primary factor in recent pollinator population declines. This new study, in conjunction with other observational studies showing enhanced susceptibility to pathogens caused by exposure to neonicotinoids, should prompt US EPA to re-evaluate the science.'

Featured Beekeeper of the Month

Eric Heick is our featured beekeeper of the month. He is one of our youth mentor participants living in West Branch, Iowa with his parents Russell and Diane and younger brother, Carl.

Eric is in 9th grade at West Branch High School. He plays in the band. Hunting and trapping are his hobbies. He says this is his sixth year in 4-H and first year in FFA. At this time he is considering college or farming after graduation.

Eric learned about the mentor beekeeping program while at the Iowa Honey Producers booth at the state fair. He took the beekeeping classes at Indian Creek Nature Center. He thought it would be interesting and wanted to see if it would increase production of their fruit trees and garden. His mentor is Floyd Otdoerfer. Eric says now that he learned what the first year of beekeeping entails he plans to get another hive for 2014 and if that goes well a third hive in 2015.

Good luck with our beekeeping project Eric, and let us know about your production increases.

Submitted by Ron Wehr

AMERICAN BEEKEEPING & THE EPA

Glen L. Stanley .
Iowa State Apiarist (emeritus)
908 N. Highway 60
Huxley, Iowa 50124

I have once again made contact with the Environmental Protection Agency at the District Office in Kansas City as well as the head Office in Washington D C.

The latest comment from that agency was " they plan to wait another five years before they take action to put a stop to all the Insecticides that will kill bees. All of Europe has banned ALL Insecticides that effect bees.

The EPA can without doubt put off action for five years BUT the bees can't wait. If the killing of bees continues at the present rate the honeybee will be extinct in a few years.

Honeybee colonies are needed now more than ever before to pollenate plants that without them many plants would produce little is anything. Even though we have reminded the average American of the facts, little attention is paid in helping the bees to survive.

The misuse of Insecticides, Pesticides and Fertilizers has produced an environment that has contaminated the air, water and the plants from which the bees gather nectar and pollen all leading to killing the bees.

The bees aren't alone; this pollution is affecting people as well. Americans are rapidly losing their healthy status and visiting their Dr. often and regular to receive relief from the effects.

EPA's system of tracking pesticides harmful to honeybees, critics say

By Kendall Helblig,
Published: December 22
www.washingtonpost.com

The honeybees that pollinate one-third of Americans' daily diet are dying, and in the eyes of some environmentalists, one culprit may be a decades-old Environmental Protection Agency system.
The system, called "conditional registration," is essentially a way to get pesticides on the market quickly. But to environmentalists and some experts, it has become too loose, letting potentially dangerous pesticides on the market, and letting some stay there too long.

Insecticides conditionally registered in the early 2000s have been blamed for impairing honeybees' immune systems; in the past five years, the honeybee population has declined 20 to 30 percent each year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"To continue to risk the collapse of our honeybee population and other insects that support our ecosystems is a tragedy," said Jonathan Evans of the Center for Biological Diversity, a national environmental advocacy group.

The criticism of the EPA's conditional registration system is nothing new. A Government Accountability Office report from August, for example, said the agency has a confusing record-keeping system for tracking pesticides — a problem the GAO first flagged in 1986. The recent report helped revive claims that conditional registration is unsafe.

"I think it's really concerning that they have acknowledged that they have all these problems and missing data, but they are still trying to go full steam ahead," said Mae Wu, an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, another advocacy group.

For its part, the EPA said its 2012 review showed that record-keeping troubles have not affected the safety of products it has approved.

The EPA also said it was taking steps to improve the tracking of pesticides, seeking to "promote consistency and enhance transparency" of its system.

The conditional registration system began in 1978 with an amendment to the law that governs insecticide use. It allows some pesticides to be sold before all necessary studies are completed, as long as the company follows up with required data by a designated date, the pesticide will not cause "any unreasonable risk to the environment" and "the use of the pesticide is in the public interest," according to the EPA's Web site.

About 16,000 pesticides are registered with the EPA, and each manager in the agency's Office of Pesticide Programs is responsible for keeping track of about 800.

But without a centralized system, managers monitor their products in different ways — with spreadsheets, handwritten notes, or just by memory, said Alfredo Gomez, director of the GAO's natural resources and environment division.

As a result, the GAO found that the EPA is unable to provide accurate information on the number of conditionally registered products. (The NRDC and the EPA have said that about two-thirds of pesticides are conditionally registered, although the flawed record keeping makes it difficult to confirm that number.)
In response to the most recent GAO report, the EPA has again promised to better track conditional registrations. But experts at top environmental watchdog groups say they are worried about the EPA's ability to follow through on those promises, and they also believe that the EPA has overused conditional registration altogether in approving pesticides.

When questioned about conditional registration, the EPA said that its internal 2012 analysis "did not show the agency's past use of conditional registrations was inappropriate," only that its "tracking system was inefficient and confusing."

Environmental advocates aren't convinced, especially in light of the honeybee crisis, termed colony collapse disorder.

In 2003, Bayer CropScience received conditional registration for clothianidin, a type of neonicotinoid. Neonicotinoids are insecticides that target the central nervous system in insects; they were introduced as an alternative to other pesticides that are more toxic to humans and wildlife, according to the EPA.
Bayer followed up with more data in 2007 about how clothianidin affects pollinators — three years late, according to the NRDC. EPA reviewers determined that Bayer's study had structural flaws but classified it as "supplemental," meaning they thought it provided some scientifically sound information but did not follow testing protocol, according to a 2011 letter posted on the EPA's Web site from the director of the Office of Pesticide Programs, which responds to concerns about clothianidin.
Still, clothianidin was switched to full registration in 2010.

"The EPA is not aware of any data demonstrating that bee colonies are subject to elevated losses due to long-term exposure to this compound," the agency says on its Web site. The USDA said that the science on colony collapse disorder is unclear and could be because of several factors, and that neonicotinoids are only one possibility. It said that the students who "reported a negative impact on honeybees by neonicotinoids relied on large, unrealistic doses and gave bees no other choice for pollen, and therefore did not reflect risk to honeybees under real-world conditions. "
In a statement, Bayer said: "There has been no demonstrated effect on bee colony health associated with the proper and labeled use of neonicotinoids."

Even so, the European Commission voted recently to severely limit or ban three major neonicotinoids across most of Europe for two years while it studies the issue. In addition, beekeepers and environmental and consumer groups joined forces in a lawsuit against the EPA, for its failure to follow the lead of European officials.

Although the GAO cited the history of clothianidin and nanosilver, the purpose of its report wasn't to evaluate the pesticides — only to assess the EPA's record keeping. But the GAO did make three recommendations to the EPA to improve its record-keeping system and Web site, which the GAO said contains inaccurate information about conditional registration.

The EPA said it has recently updated its Web site with clearer content.

— McClatchy-Tribune

Sweetest News for Honey Bees in 2013

Dayna J. Sondervan, Esq.
Friday, December 13th, 2013

http://growingalabama.com

In some ways 2013 could be said to be the year of the honey bees. While Time magazine ran a cover story called "A World Without Bees," lawmakers, scientists and even pesticide companies – whose products are often accused of causing bees' troubles – took action to ensure that the world saves its bees. Five big stories for bees came out of the legal realm:

1. Lawmakers introduced the Saving America's Pollinator's Act of 2013 into Congress.
The Pollinator's Act calls for the EPA to stop further distribution and sale of nicotine-like insecticides known as neonicotinoids for use on plants and trees attractive to honey bees, so further studies can be done on their safety. The act notes that scientists have linked neonicotinoids to the rapid decline of honey bees, causing weakened immunity, disorientation, delayed larval development and death.

The act was introduced in the House in July by 44 cosponsors, and it echoes efforts currently underway in Europe, where the European Food Safety Authority has placed a two-year moratorium effective in December on some of the most commonly used neonicotinoids to see if the bee populations start increasing again. Individual countries such as France, Germany and Italy had previously suspended use of neonicotinoids as a precautionary measure.

Some grim figures are noted in the act: Honey bees pollinate one-third of U.S. crops valued at up to $30 billion, including about 75 varieties of fruits, and from 2012 to 2013 alone U.S. beekeepers lost on average 45 percent of their colonies. "According to scientists of the Department of Agriculture, current estimates of the survivorship of honey bee colonies show they are too low to be able to meet the pollination demands of United States agricultural crops," according to the act.

Despite the good intentions, the legislation has little chance of becoming law and making a difference. It has been assigned to a committee for further review, and per Congressional statistics, has an 11 percent chance of coming out of the committee for further consideration and zero chance of becoming law.
2. Beekeepers appealed the EPA's decision to allow a new neonicotenoid pesticide.

Several beekeepers associations filed an appeal last spring against the EPA for registering sulfoxaflor, a new neonicotenoid. In a brief filed Dec. 6, the beekeepers note that although the EPA classifies the product as "very highly toxic" to honey bees, the agency still approved it for use on crops that require pollination.

"The use of sulfoxaflor on millions of acres of farms and orchards nationwide will exacerbate a growing crisis in which about one-third of America's honey bee colonies have collapsed each year since neonicotinoids first became prevalent in the mid-2000s," the brief says. The beekeepers, with the assistance of Earthjustice, are asking the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Ninth Circuit to set aside the EPA's decision to register sulfoxaflor.

3. The EPA issued new pesticide labels to protect pollinators.
The EPA announced new labels for certain neonicotinoids in August, making the connection that pesticide exposure is one of the causes of pollinator illness. The new labels contain an image of a bee along with a warning in red letters, "This product can kill bees and other insect pollinators."
The new labels instruct users to minimize exposure of the product to bees and other pollinators, and also to minimize drift "to beehives or to off-site pollinator attractive habitat. Drift of this product onto beehives can result in bee kills." If a bee kill does occur, the incident should be immediately reported.

4. The USDA issued a report on the National Stakeholders Conference on Honey Bee Health.
The findings of a conference on bee health were issued in 2013. The conference was held in late 2012 and included representatives of the USDA, EPA, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Office of Pest Management Policy and the National Agricultural Statistics Service, among others, but the report notes that its views "do not necessarily represent the policies or positions" of the government.

While the report outlines many possible contributors to bee colony collapse disorder (CCD), it says that "acute and sublethal effects of pesticides on honey bees have been increasingly documented, and are a primary concern ..." It calls for more research on actual exposure of bees to pesticides, and the effects of exposure to multiple pesticides. Other concerns were that weed-control efforts destroy flowering plants bees rely on, and that the availability of forage areas has "declined drastically" in recent years due to the increase of row crops such as corn.

The report calls for agriculture services to develop outreach programs to inform farmers that they need to limit bees' exposure to pesticides, for local governments to tweak land use plans to encourage flowering plants for foraging and for bee researchers to breed varieties that are resistant to mites since mites are especially a problem for bees weakened by pesticides or malnourished from lack of forage.

Growers that don't require pollination may be unaware of the impact of their pest-control measures on honey bees, per the report, and existing pollination contracts typically do not allow for a beekeeper to remove his bees temporarily while a neighboring farmer sprays pesticides.

The report suggests that the EPA do more studies on safety before approving new pesticides and says, "Credibility issues were identified with industry-funded research supporting pesticide registration."

5. Pesticide makers started initiatives to study bees' challenges and find solu-

tions.
Monsanto held a Bee Health Summit, formed a Honey Bee Advisory Council, and started a Clinton Global Initiative Commitment to Action on Honey Bee Health. Monsanto is also conducting research on developing bees that are more resistant to mites, which is one of the recommendations of the USDA report. Meanwhile, Bayer has developed a new way to apply pesticides to seeds, to drastically reduce the amount of pesticide-laden dust created during sowing.

While 2013 brought major efforts to protect honey bees, many people also were working at state and local levels. For example, the state of Washington started a honey bee working group to come up with solutions and extended tax relief for apiarists; the city of Baltimore removed the fee required for a beekeeper permit to encourage more people to become beekeepers; and Kaua'i County in Hawaii passed a law that will require growers to disclose pesticides they are spraying on crops and create buffer zones in sensitive areas to avoid unwanted drift.

It is clear that all segments of the industry – from farmers, to governments, to pesticide developers – were focused on protecting pollinators in 2013.

TEXAS HONEY BROKER SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IN PRISON FOR AVOIDING $37.9 MILLION IN TARIFFS ON CHINESE-ORIGIN HONEY

CHICAGO — A Texas honey broker was sentenced today to three years in federal prison for illegally brokering the sale of hundreds of container loads of Chinese-origin honey, which was misrepresented as originating from India or Malaysia, to avoid anti-dumping duties when it entered the United States. The defendant, JUN YANG, pleaded guilty in March to facilitating illegal honey imports by falsely declaring that the honey originated in countries other than China to avoid $37.9 million in anti-dumping duties.

Yang, 40, of Houston, operated National Honey, Inc., which did business as National Commodities Company in Houston, and brokered the sale of honey between overseas honey suppliers and domestic customers. He was ordered to begin serving his sentence on Jan. 15, 2014, by U.S. District Judge Charles Kocoras, who cited the "inescapable harm" to the U.S. honey industry in imposing the sentence.

Yang has already paid financial penalties totaling $2.89 million to the government, including a maximum fine of $250,000, mandatory restitution of $97,625, and agreed restitution of $2,542,659.
"This is a significant sentence against a perpetrator of one of the largest food fraud schemes uncovered in U.S. history," said Gary Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of HSI Chicago.

"Unbeknownst to Yang, he was dealing with an undercover HSI agent who was one step ahead of his illegal activities. Together with our partners at Customs and Border Protection, we will continue to protect American industries from deceptive import practices, while facilitating the lawful flow of goods across our borders that is so critical to the U.S. economy."
According to court documents, Yang caused transportation companies to deliver to U.S. honey processors and distributors 778 container loads of honey, which were falsely declared at the time of importation as being from Malaysia or India, knowing that all or some of the honey had actually originated in China. As a result, the honey, which had an aggregate declared value of nearly $23 million when it entered the country, avoided anti-dumping duties and honey assessments totaling more than $37.9 million.

In addition, Yang admitted that he sold purported Vietnamese honey that tested positive for the presence of Chloramphenicol, an antibiotic not allowed in honey or other food products. After learning of the unfavorable test results, Yang obtained new test results that purported to show that the honey was not adulterated, and he instructed the undercover agent to destroy the unfavorable test results. This adulterated honey was seized by the government.

The sentence was announced by Mr. Hartwig and Zachary T. Fardon, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

Yang was among a group of individuals and companies who were charged in February of this year in the second phase of an investigation led by agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). See:http://www.justice.gov/usao/iln/pr/chicago/2013/pr0220_02.html
In December 2001, the Commerce Department determined that Chinese-origin honey was being sold in the United States at less than fair market value, and imposed anti-dumping duties. The duties were as high as 221 percent of the declared value, and later were assessed against the entered net weight, currently at $2.63 per net kilogram, in addition to a "honey assessment fee" of one cent per pound of all honey. In October 2002, the Food and Drug Administration issued an import alert for honey containing the antibiotic Chloramphenicol, a broad spectrum antibiotic that is used to treat serious infections in humans, but which is not approved for use in honey. Honey containing certain antibiotics is deemed "adulterated" within the meaning of federal food and drug safety laws.

In 2008, federal authorities began investigating allegations involving circumventing anti- dumping duties through illegal imports, including transshipment and mislabeling, on the "supply side" of the honey industry. The second phase of the investigation involved the illegal buying, processing, and trading of honey that illegally entered the U.S. on the "demand side" of the industry.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew S. Boutros.

Washington, D.C. – November 14, 2013 – A new search function on www.TrueSourceHoney.com allows U.S. shoppers to be sure that they're not mistakenly buying honey that has been illegally shipped from China. In one easy step they can help ensure the safety and quality of their honey, while also supporting U.S. honey producers and beekeepers. In addition, retailers and manufacturers are able to trace their product back to the hive.

By going to www.TrueSourceHoney.com and clicking on the starburst at the top of the page, consumers can enter the UPC code on the back of their packaged honey to see if it is True Source Certified™.

Millions of pounds of illegally sourced honey may continue to enter the United States, despite continuing federal crack-down efforts. True Source CertificationTM helps ensure honey's safety and quality because it traces the source of that honey from hive to table. The program has been applauded by honey industry leaders, including the American Honey Producers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation.

"The True Source Certified logo tells you that the honey you're buying was ethically and legally sourced," says True Source Honey Executive Director Gordon Marks. "If you don't see the logo, ask your retailer or honey company to join the program. And make sure that your favorite foods with honey – from breakfast cereals to snacks – are made by a manufacturer that purchases honey from a True Source Certified honey company."

Earlier this year, two of the nation's largest honey suppliers admitted to buying illegally imported Chinese honey, including some that was adulterated with unauthorized antibiotics.

About one-third of honey sold in North America today is now True Source Certified. Many large grocery retailers and club stores only use certified honey for store brands, including Costco (Kirkland Signature) and Target (Market Pantry and Simply Balanced).

The U.S. imports more than 60% of the honey it needs from other countries. Most is from high-quality, legal sources. But some honey brokers and importers illegally circumvent tariffs and quality controls, selling honey to U.S. companies that is of questionable origin. This threatens the U.S. honey industry by undercutting fair market prices and damaging honey's reputation for quality and safety.

True Source Honey, LLC is an effort by a number of honey companies and importers to protect consumers and customers from illegally sourced honey; and to highlight and support legal, transparent and ethical sourcing. The initiative seeks to help maintain the reputation of honey as a high-quality, highly valued food and further sustain the U.S. honey sector. Visit www.TrueSourceHoney.com. Follow us on Facebook.

Honeybee Robots?

December 11, 2013 12:04 am • Duane Jeffery
Correspondent
www.heraldextra.com

I don't claim to have the most abundant flower garden at our home, but I think I saw fewer than about 50 honeybees all this year. And the bad news, as the media have reported now for months, is that this crash is going on worldwide.

Some of the news is vastly over-hyped. I've read accounts of how the loss of honeybees will cause massive human starvation since honeybees pollinate some 75 percent of our food crops. But fortunately this does not include wheat, maize (corn), and rice and other cereal crops, which are all wind-pollinated. And other insects also pollinate crops so our food supply is not totally dependent on honeybees. But some of those species are also in decline.

The most puzzling honeybee culprit has been colony-collapse disorder, or CCD. Apparently healthy colonies just disappear and/or die virtually overnight and the cause is still unknown. The good news is that this bee crisis has spurred major research efforts. We have documented that bee health and reproduction can be negatively impacted by such things as climate change, loss of native floral plants and floral diversity, viruses, fungi, parasitic mites and flies, and pesticides. This has led the European Union to ban three of the most critical pesticides, but political pressures in America have forestalled such. The French may be the world's busiest researchers, and they have even perfected putting microchips on individual bees to track their behavior. The marked bees must pass under five different scanners as they leave and re-enter the hive, and the scanners permit an attached computer to record precisely how long each bee was gone from the hive. This has permitted definite data that even very small doses of pesticides can disrupt normal flight patterns.

But the newest -- and perhaps strangest -- work aimed at amelioration of the problems is the development of tiny robots to mimic bee pollination actions. The Nov. 16 issue of the journal New Scientist reviews this work -- I confess it strikes me as a most unlikely cure. Even if we make robots that do the job of pollinating individual flowers, could we possibly make them in sufficient numbers to really make a difference? What's the cost?

A pollinating robot must mimic, of course, what a bee does. That means they must locate the flowers of select crops, find their way to and from them with a high degree of precision, enter the flower (at various depths, depending on the plant species), collect pollen, and then convey it to adjacent flowers of the same species, again entering the flower to dump the pollen. And given the size of bees, this is a tough act to follow. But scientists are trying, and with interesting results.

So far, robots the size of a dragonfly, and even some the size of a bumblebee, have been developed. They don't have their own brains -- that has to be supplied by an electronic wire to a computer, which also supplies the power source.

Some robots are not intended to do pollinating. Rather they are designed to be monitors of the health of the hive, mingling among the bees to measure and report on their health, telling beekeepers when there's a problem that needs attention. And in any given hive, when the population becomes too crowded, a large proportion of the bees will exit to find a new home. Beekeepers don't want that to happen until they have a new hive available. The monitors can alert them when such swarming seems imminent.

So maybe robots can help, and I certainly wish the designers the best of success. Because even if robots can pollinate or monitor, they can't make honey!

• **Duane Jeffery** is an emeritus professor of biology at Brigham Young University.

Sex determiner gene of honey bee more complicated that previously assumed

Cologne biologist recognizes huge significance of finding for bee keeping

Bee colonies consist of a queen bee, lots of female worker bees and some male drones. The gene that determines the sex of the bees is much more complex than has been assumed up until now and has developed over the course of evolution at a very high rate. This is the finding of an international team of scientists under the direction of Dr. Martin Hasselmann of the Institute for Genetics of the University of Cologne. The study has been published in the renowned Oxford journal *Molecular Biology and Evolution*.

Male honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) hatch from unfertilized eggs and females from fertilized ones. In these fertilized eggs, the condition of the complementary sex determiner (csd) gene is of crucial significance for the creation of female workers. The queen bee, who, in the course of her mating flights, mate with many different drones, and later passes on to fertilized eggs a random combinations of two csd copies, so-called alleles. If these alleles are different enough, they develop into a female. If the csd gene, in contrast, is present in the fertilized eggs in two identical versions, diploid drones develop. These are, however, eaten by worker bees after they hatch.

Up until now, it was assumed that there were up to 20 csd alleles. In the dataset, which the research team under the direction of Hasselmann collected from all over the world and examined, there were, however, 53 csd alleles found in localities (in Kenya), and worldwide at least csd 87 alleles. Using an evolutionary model, the scientists extrapolated 116 – 145 csd alleles. New csd alleles were created in a relatively quick period for evolution: ca. every 400,000 years. A region inside the csd gene in particular represents a hot-spot with a high evolutionary rate that, together with certain amino acid mutations, decisively contributes to the formation of new csd alleles in the flanking regions.

The vitality of a bee population depends on, amongst other things, the genetic diversity of sex determining alleles. These new findings are therefore very important for apiculture for minimizing the danger of inbreeding and thereby the production of diploid drones.

PD Dr. Martin Hasselmann has been the director of the research group "Population Genetics of Social Insects" at the University of Cologne as a DFG Heisenberg stipendiary since May 2012. His research foci include the social insects honey bees, bumble bees and stingless bees, the unique biology of which can be used as models to decipher the genetic fundaments of environmental interaction and evolutionary innovation.

Catch The Buzz from Kim Flottum/ Bee Culture
www.beeculture.com

Trivia Answer: There are on average about 3500 bees in a pound.

The Buzz Newsletter

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