

Local Buzz



May 2007

President's Message

Well, I really thought that I would be able to attend the last meeting, but again my "real job" sent me out of town. It looks as if I will be available to attend the May 7th meeting. Thank you to Rob Slay and Randy Oliver for taking over for me in my absence. I would like to divide my president's salary between the two of you. Other than this last weekend, the weather has been very conducive to beekeeping. We just brought our bees back from prunes and they all looked good. The hives were heavy and had lots of bees in them. We checked for varroa and found that some of them had unacceptable mite counts. We split about half of the colonies and made up a few nucs.

This weekend we will place queen cells in the splits and treat for mites. If you have any number of colonies at all, I don't need to tell you that this time of year is very hectic for beekeepers. But hopefully it's all worth it in the end.

I truly hope to see all of you at the next meeting, I miss the meetings and all of you. I hope you, your families, and bees are well. See you at the next meeting May 7th.

Your President, Shane Mathias

May 7th Program

Our May 7 program will be about moving colonies. Moving honeybees can be a recipe for disaster if you don't know the tricks! Randy Oliver will detail methods for safely and painlessly moving colonies from one yard to another.

PLEASE LOOK AT YOUR MAILING LABEL!

Are you seeing STARS ***??! It's telling you that your dues are due for 2007 and this is your last issue! Please pay your dues or contact Janet Brisson so you don't get bumped from receiving your monthly 'Local Buzz'. Our newsletter keeps you up to date with what your hives should look like, what you should be doing at that month and important information concerning your bees. Your dues not only support local beekeepers by buying books and videos for our library, but also support bee in agriculture, vital to our food supply. Without our bees, we would be in a sorry state. Bring your dues to the May 7th meeting or mail them by May 25th to:

NCBA c/o Janet Brisson, Treasurer
20693 Dog Bar Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949
rubes@countryrubes.com

Dues are \$10.50 to receive your newsletter on-line or \$12.50 via US post office. Make checks out to Nevada County Beekeepers Association. (call 530-913-2724 or email Janet if you've got stars on the label but already PAID)

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

This spring has been a totally different animal than the last two! Our foothill springs can really be a roller coaster. I had a group scheduled to come up from Alameda last weekend. They asked well in advance what the weather should be like, and what they should wear. I told them that it could be 80° or could be snowing, and that I couldn't predict two weeks in advance (it snowed

lightly). This uncertainty makes it really difficult to raise early queens for a specific "ready" date. Queens are grafted 12 days before they are due to emerge, and they take their mating flights about a week later. That means that you must predict good flight weather 19 days in advance! Obviously, we can't do that up here. So you do the best you can, make up nucs rain or shine, and cross your fingers. If the weather's cool or rainy when the queens are ready to mate, they'll just sit tight for up to two weeks. After that, it's generally too late. The biggest problem is if there are just narrow windows of good weather that allow queens to mate with just a drone or two. If the weather's good the next day, she'll fly out and mate again with enough drones (15-20) to store adequate sperm in her spermatheca. If not, she'll start laying in a few days, and won't fly out again. In this case, you wind up with an inadequately-mated queen, who will fail fairly soon. This is a common problem with early queens.

Two weeks ago I had 160 nucs with queens all of the same age, all waiting to fly. The weather didn't cooperate. Finally, we had a beautiful warm day, and there was an orgy of bee sex overhead. I went out in the late afternoon to check a few nucs. The first two each had a happy queen walking around with the "mating sign" (the torn-off phallus of the last drone) still protruding from her abdomen. Since the workers remove the mating sign in a few minutes, these queens had apparently just returned from their mating flights. It's very unusual for me to see mating sign twice in a row, so my guess was that the orgy had just ended minutes before.

The end of the story is that we got a great mate out, and the queens are laying well.

My website is finally up, and those of you who don't subscribe to ABJ can read all my articles in full. Go to randyoliver.com. The site is still under construction, and will have a great deal added to it.

This last rain was much needed, and the honeyflow is on! Colonies are building well, and there may be enough water in the ground for a good blackberry honey crop. Don't expect anything after blackberry, though, since it's still relatively dry.

April Minutes

Vice Pres Rob Slay opened the meeting with Q&A on varroa mite control by recycling drone cells. The mite life cycle is 14 days and the drone cycle is 28 days. Mites prefer drone cells and enter them on days 8 and 9, two days before they're capped. If drone cells are concentrated on one or two open frames on which bees prefer to build hanging drone

frame, these drone frames can be scraped out and returned every 28 days, so the drone cells and most of the mites are destroyed before hatching. The drone frames can be left in place all year. Oxalic acid is most effective when brood is least--August and December, but powdered sugar can be applied at the same time as the drone frames are recycled monthly—more often if many mites fall on the sticky board inserted at that time. A cup of powdered sugar is spread over the top frames with a bee brush, until some sugar filters to the bottom. American Foulbrood bacteria kill larvae, leaving concave cell caps with pinholes in a spotty pattern on the frame, and the pupae are caramel colored and slimy. Tylosin and terramycin can control the disease but bacterial spores remain. The cells are usually destroyed by burning but the bees can be saved by shaking them onto foundation in a new hive. The bacterial spores will be buried permanently in the drawn-out wax. Coumaphos CO-RAL cattle dusting powder poisons bees and should be kept away, as with almost all other organophosphates.

PROGRAM: Video "Living With Killer Bees." Their sting is the same as European bees, and they can only sting once, but they're very defensive of the nest and hundreds attack at once. The only escape is distance--a quarter mile dash. Any dog or livestock chained or corralled may be killed. Soap and water spray and firemen's foam will exterminate them. Don't disturb a strange swarm unless protected. A few curious humans have been killed.

Jack Meeks, sec

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Color Year Markings on Queens

If you purchase a 'marked' queen, she will have a colored dot on her thorax to help you find her inside the hive. It also helps determine whether the purchased queen has been superseded, and the year produced:

<u>Dot Color</u>	<u>Year Produced</u>
<u>white</u>	1 or 6 (e.g. 2001 or 2006)
<u>yellow</u>	2 or 7
<u>red</u>	3 or 8
<u>green</u>	4 or 9
<u>blue</u>	5 or 0

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Bee Tips from On The Road

By Janet Brisson

Great tip from Toni Goldenberg, former NCBA member who moved to Eugene: Reluctant to use Queen Excluders during your honey flow??? Well, someone in the Eugene Beekeepers Association discovered if you turn the queen excluders sideways, it keeps the queen below, but opens up enough space on the sides of the hive for worker bees to freely move from the bottom to the top honey supers. I tried it, and wondered about the gap it left between the two supers. My solution, I'm going to take out one stringer on each end of the queen excluder. The queen doesn't travel to the outside frames and shouldn't climb into the honey supers.

Tip #2 Serge LeBesque from the Sonoma Beekeepers Association wrote an article on using Follower Boards, basically a piece of ¾" plywood cut to the size of a frame. You can put a top bar on it, or simply two nails on each side to replace the shoulders. You can use these Follower Boards in a variety of ways, but what caught

my attention was Serge used two of these boards during the winter, replacing his outside #1 & #10 frames to reduce condensation in the hive. It gives the cluster more insulation and forces moisture down the sides of the hive on the outside of the Follower Boards, rather than onto the bees and keeps them drier and warmer. He also uses these boards the rest of the year, on the hot side of his hive and when making divides or hiving swarms into full supers where he can replace with comb as the bees increase.

Tip #3 Katia from Beekind Supplies in Sebastopol gave me some Propolis Lozenges with "Active Manuka Honey and Propolis" when I came into her shop with a violent cough and horrible cold that was threatening my sinus. She said that it produces amazing results, and she was right. By the end of the day, my cough diminished to almost nothing, my sinus cleared and my cold almost disappeared. That happened the next day. When I called Katia to thank her, she simply replied, "Told you so!"

Book Review: 'Bees In America'

By Leslie Gault

Among the many recent additions to the NCBA's wonderful library (thanks Tynowyn) is 'Bees in America, How the Honey Bee Shaped a Nation' by Tammy Horn. This impressive effort would more rightfully be entitled 'The History of Honey Bees in America', because it follows the honey bee from the first known colonies in (what is now) the U.S. to present day. Tammy Horn is apparently an historian, for her perspective is strongly factual with references to numerous people, dates, and events including references to local people. The book is a detailed and enjoyable chronology of the extensive interaction of man and the honeybee. The author speaks of many things, such as how the migration of bees into an area signaled the impending arrival of white men to the Indians, how the reputation and notoriety of bee hunters transformed through time, the extensive symbolism of honey bees and hives, and the culture and custom of 'telling the bees' when a colony's beekeeper dies.

If there is any criticism of the book, besides the surprisingly frequent typographical errors and occasional ramblings off topic, it would be that you come away with an almost too-strong sense of the author's viewpoints. However these issues are minor and a small price to pay in light of the rich development of information and strong sense of the American history of beekeeping imparted to the reader.

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association is dedicated to apiculture education and promotion of the art and science of beekeeping among beekeepers, agriculturists, and the general public. This is a "not for profit" organization.

Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Memorial Building at 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley. All visitors are welcome. The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Submission by email is encouraged. Please submit to Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. The deadline for the June 2007 edition is May 24th. A limited amount of advertising space (business card size 3" by 2") is accepted and need not be bee-related. Rates are \$1 per issue or \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. All revenue from advertising goes to the Association treasury and helps offset the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter. To receive the *Local Buzz* via email: please email your request to lesliegault@yahoo.com

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



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May 7th Meeting Program

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