

# The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

# Local Buzz



January 2011

## President's Message

Hello all: I hope everyone had a great holiday season. It's time to paint new equipment, order your bees, queen cells, or mated queens. Spring will be here before we know it.

Please join us at the January meeting—I would like to put a motion to the group to take long time volunteers and Board members to dinner as a thank you for doing their jobs for the past years.

Another fun year of beekeeping lies ahead!

Thanks from your recently re-elected President,

Rob Slay

## January Meeting

At the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting we will show excerpts from the movie "Colony." Here's part of a review: "We admire some documentaries for their artistry and others for their urgency. Rarely do we see a film that combines both of these qualities as impressively as this debut by directors Carter Gunn and Ross McDonnell. Their unlikely topic is the world of beekeepers during the recent (and ongoing) crisis known as colony collapse disorder. Beautifully photographed by McDonnell and skillfully edited by Gunn, Colony follows several American beekeepers during 2008 and 2009 as the country's economy spiraled downward."

This film will give hobby beekeepers an idea of what sorts of problems commercial beekeepers face.

## Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

I write these words on the first day of the new solar year. The days begin to get longer, and spring is around the corner.

Beekeepers must be bored this time of year, because so many are forwarding me clippings from the internet. The issue of the neonicotinoid insecticides has made the news again. What didn't make the news is the latest blue-ribbon report from France, the largest user of insecticides in Europe, and the country with the most vocal blame of neonic seed treatments for causing all their bee problems.

To the protesters' chagrin, the report spells out clearly that the losses that beekeepers are complaining of are due to "biological factors," meaning varroa and bee diseases.

The study notes that "These findings highlight an increase in single crop farming (maize, sunflower, cereals, rape) to the detriment of grassland. The disappearance of mixed farms lies at the heart of the transformation of the French farming countryside."

The study concludes that "The investigations and field work conducted to date do not lead to any conclusion that pesticides are a major cause of die-off of bee colonies in France."

Nearly every bee researcher is pointing the finger at varroa as still being our major problem. Here's an excerpt of an article that I just sent off to the American Bee Journal:

“Varroa has settled in to roost, and beekeeping is clearly no longer the same as it was a mere twenty years ago! The mite has completely changed the bee/virus dynamic, leading to unacceptable yearly colony losses. What the most successful commercial beekeepers have found is that they can minimize losses by keeping tabs on varroa levels, and never allowing them to rise above a few per percent (mites per hundred bees) *at any time of the year.*

“Any reader of my articles is aware that I take a future view, and strongly promote the use of mite resistant bee stocks (such as the VSH and Russian stocks developed by the ARS), and of biotechnical methods. I personally walk the walk, and gave up synthetic miticides over ten years ago. However, to keep mite levels in check, I find that I still require the periodic use of some sort of treatment. I personally choose to use an assortment of “natural” treatments, but there is no reason to exclude the judicious use of synthetic miticides.

“There is a strong trend among recreational and sideline beekeepers away from synthetic miticides, motivated largely by the desire to engage in “chemical free” beekeeping. *However, you cannot truly call yourself a “beekeeper” if your bees keep dying on you!* There is a big difference between “natural” beekeeping and simple colony neglect. I suggest that all beekeepers familiarize themselves with the pros and cons of the available miticides, should the need arise to save a colony from an ugly death.”

To that end, I reviewed the currently, and soon to be available miticides. The NCBA was fortunate to have a surprise visit from David VanderDussen a couple of months ago. David is the inventor of the MiteAway Quick Strips—a user-friendly formic acid product. I recently completed two

trials of the Strips here in Nevada County. The strips smell no stronger than a handful of carpenter ants:



You lay the strips across the top bars in the middle of the brood nest:



Most of the mite kill takes place in the first three days. A graph of the results is to the left:

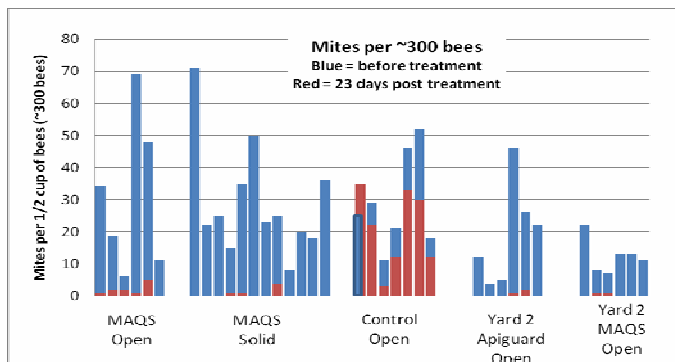


Figure 9. Actual mite counts from ~300 bees from the broodnest, alcohol wash, at start and end of the trial (divide the numbers by 3 to obtain percent infestation; the highest initial infestation was 24%). The blue bars indicate initial mite infestation; the red bars final infestation, which was lower in all colonies except one of the controls, in which the mite level went up. In several of the treated colonies, there were no mites in the 300-bee samples; final infestation exceeded 1% in only two treated hives. “Open” or “Solid” refer to screened or solid bottom boards.

The strips will cost in the \$4-5 range for a treatment, but can be used even when honey supers are on, and don’t leave any residues!

Stephanie and I took a "beekeepers vacation" and went to San Luis Obispo to the State Beekeepers Conference. The most important take home messages:

1. Varroa is still our number one problem.
2. There were no miracle miticides coming down the pipe.
3. Good husbandry is necessary for maintaining strong, productive colonies.

Data from Dr. Frank Eischen confirm that any varroa take a toll on a colony. The more mites, the worse the toll. At natural mite drops of over 50 mites per day in October, unless you immediately get mite levels down, those colonies won't make it through the winter.

Re new miticides, I've tested the HopGuard strips that will soon be available. They are cardboard strips soaked in hops oil extract. They are considered to be "food grade" and safe to use in the hive during the honey flow. They drop phoretic (hitchhiking) mites like crazy, but only for about three days. They have an effect similar to a good sugar dusting, or somewhat better.

I've also just completed the California trail for the new MiteAway Quick Strips (MAQS). These are formic acid gel strips that are laid across the tops of the frames between the brood boxes. They are very safe and easy to use, and can also be used during a honey flow. As opposed to the hops strips, MAQS also kill some mites in the brood cells, and are designed to target the delicate male mites. The theory is that if you kill the males before they can mate, then any surviving females would be sterile.

The results were impressive: mite counts dropped from an average of about 30 to about 1 per 300 bees. The trial was run from Nov 1-24, spanning an entire brood cycle; high temps during the outgassing period ranged from 65-85F. However, the bees were curtailing broodrearing during this period, so I can't really say how well the MAQS would work during heavy broodrearing. The inventor/manufacturer, David Vanderdussen, who

kindly spoke at our last meeting, says that the strips work fine during broodrearing.

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## From Our Librarian...

A new book:

**Bee Propolis: Natural Healing from the Hive**  
James Fearnley, 171 pages with 23 pages of references and 6 pages of propolis specification  
Published in England and re- printed in 2005.

If you are interested in the medicinal uses and properties of propolis, this small book has it all: up to date information on research and standards for purity and appropriate test methodology, and practical information on how to make and use tinctures, sprays, creams, toothpastes, shampoos, animal care products, etc...all from propolis.

Mr. Fearnley, the co-founder of a bee products company in the UK. received government support for several important peer reviewed studies on the bactericidal, antibiotic and anti- inflammatory properties of propolis at the University of Oxford (Department of Biology) and Manchester University (Dental School) the Oxford School of Medicine.

There is also a specific and frank discussion on how the "hunt for patents" has side tracked the official use of natural, synergistic medicines. This is a must have for beekeepers who want to use, trade or sell value added products from the hive. (I've got my own copy on order.)

Books on Health that are in the library...

Royal Jelly...Irene Stein

Bee Pollen...Lynghheim & Scagnetti

Bee Pollen...Murat

Wonderful World of Bee Pollen...Parkhill

Honey: The Gourmet Medicine...Traynor

Health and the Honeybee...Mraz

Health From the Hive...Wade

The Bible of Bee Venom Therapy...Beck

Miracle of Garlic & Vinegar...

Honey and Health...Croft

Honey and Your Health...Beck & Smedley

The Hibernation Diet...McInnes

Ginseng...Fulder

Best wishes for a happy and healthy new year.

Your Librarian, Tynowyn Slattery

## **Beginning Beekeeping Class January 15<sup>th</sup>**

A beginning beekeeping class by Serge Lebesque of Sebastopol will be held Saturday January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 8:30AM to 4:30PM at the Holiday Inn Express in Grass Valley. Class is limited to 40 so sign up soon! Call April or Dan at A to Z Supply at 530-273-6608. Cost is \$40. Serge is well known for his innovative approaches to beekeeping, and this is a unique opportunity to learn from him in our own back yard. Thanks to Dan Wheat for arranging this class.

Also, don't forget that the Beginning Beekeeping class by Randy Oliver will be begin on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **For Sale: Country Rubes Combo Screened Bottom Boards**

Special NCBA Club Price!

Call Janet for details. 530-913-2724 or email at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com).

## **TIME TO PAY YOUR 2011 DUES! ARE YOU ONLINE?**

Help our club reduce paper and mailing costs, get your newsletter electronically and we will reduce your family membership fees to from \$20.00 to \$15.00. I am going to be out of town for 1/3/11 meeting. Deborah Morawski will be collecting dues. If you are paying in cash, please try to bring the exact change. If you are a new member, we will ask you to fill our a short form at the meeting. If you would like to pay your dues through the mail, please send your check made out to NCBA or Nevada County Beekeepers Association, for either \$20.00 (to receive newsletter through mail) or \$15 for NET OFFER to me at:

NCBA

C/o Janet Brisson

20693 Dog Bar Road

Grass Valley, CA 95949

New members please provide all family member names, full mailing address, indicate whether you want to be a library member (add \$5.00 to amount please) and state whether or not you want your name listed in the member directory.

Any questions, please feel free to call me at 530-913-2724 or email me at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com)

Thanks, Janet Brisson, Treasurer

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## Nevada County Beekeepers FORUM

We have an NCBA Beekeepers Forum on the internet, but if you're not used to using the Yahoo Groups function, it may seem difficult to find or access. I've made it easy for myself by bookmarking it so I always go right to that page. But getting to that page may be fun. Here are some ways to get in:

1 When you get a notification that there's new information in the forum, use the link at the bottom.

2 You can go directly to [groups.yahoo.com](http://groups.yahoo.com) or put YAHOO GROUPS into the search engine. Once there, put in Nevada County Beekeepers in the FIND A YAHOO GROUP box.

3 To use the forum you must first join Yahoo with a name and password.

**THEN BOOKMARK THE PAGE** once you've found it. If you are not already a member of our group, request it from Janet Brisson and I will let you join. We are asking that you be a member of our club in good standing to use the forum.

Please email me at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com) if you have any problems or wish to join.

Thanks,  
Janet Brisson, Treasurer



Bobbie donated that fabulous bee jewelry to our September raffle. For wonderful holiday gift ideas, please contact her.

## Good Video

There is a great video series on the behavior of bees during the swarming process, featuring Dr. Tom Seeley, author of the recent book "Honeybee Democracy"

<http://www.sciencefriday.com/program/archives/201012245>

## December Minutes

Our December meeting was the annual potluck and pirate gift exchange, so no meeting minutes were taken.

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](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com). The deadline for the February 2011 edition is January 26<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com)

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**Vice President:** Jeremiah Farrell..... 743-2842  
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[lesliegault@yahoo.com](mailto:lesliegault@yahoo.com)  
**Honey Extractor:** Karla Hanson..... 265-3756

**Nevada County Beekeepers Association**



c/o Steve Reynolds  
 PO Box 548  
 Chicago Park, CA 95712  
 First Class Mail  
 January 2011

**January 3<sup>rd</sup> Program**

The January 3<sup>rd</sup> program will be a showing of excerpts from the movie "Colony", 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Hall. See inside for more details.