March’s Ramblings of a Bee Bumbler, from your PRESIDENT

Spring has sprung. Flowers are blooming and pollen is coming in by the basket load. Queens are laying, colonies are brooding up and drones are pupating. Swarming season is here and the nectar flow can’t be far behind. ARE YOU READY?

Spring is one of the busiest times of year for the beekeeper. If you haven’t completed your treatments for varroa there is still time before the nectar flow starts. Of course, different parts of the state have different nectar flow starts so knowing your area is important. This is where a mentor really comes in handy. A local beekeeper as a mentor, will know flowering sources, swarm season and when the nectar flow begins.

So, what do I need to be watching out for you may ask? A week of rainy weather can cause the rapidly building colony to run out of stores so checking the colony for stores is first on the list. Know the colony varroa count through sampling is next. There are several treatments available to help with this. When applying pesticides or other products, be sure and follow the manufacturer’s recommendations regarding treatment amounts and exposure times. There are IPM methods to deal with the varroa mites such as breaking the brood cycle through queen manipulations, splitting colonies for increases and introducing new queens. Brood build-up, while advantageous for the nectar flow and honey production, can also lead to overcrowding and swarming. Adding additional brood boxes and/or honey supers can help curb the urge to swarm. Depending on where your colonies are located within the state and nectar sources, the addition of honey supers may also be in order. Some beekeepers place supers on the first day of spring, April 1st or when they see white wax being added to the outside of the frames in the top box. Again, if you are a beginner beekeeper, having a mentor has its advantages.

Your Board of Directors are already working on this year’s 2017 Field Day, 2017 Annual LBA Convention and the revisions of the Louisiana Apiary Regulations. The LBA is your organization and the Board is here to serve you. If you have suggestions for us to make the organization better or ways to better serve our members, please feel free to contact us. Also, there are several bee clubs scattered throughout the state. Tables listing the LBA board members and the various bee clubs in the state are posted at the LBA website (www.labeekeepers.org). Join your local club and get involved. Help us help our fellow beekeepers be the best stewards of this valuable resource and produce the best honey in the world.

Randy Fair, randy@beebumble.com, 1-318-588-2899
As far as the weather is concerned, this the best spring in the last three years that those of us in CENLA have seen. A full-blown honey flow is not yet upon us but my bees have broken their winter cores, begun drone production and building populations in anticipation of what hopes to be a great spring. I’ve rotated my deeps and for the last month have begun feeding with pollen patties. All my hives had honey reserves aplenty so I’ve not had a need to supplement their feeding with sugar. I’ve captured two swarms to date.

I didn’t lose a hive this winter and that was primarily due to requeening in the fall following the honey harvest, rotating the brood boxes and treating for varroa (in the fall I treat for varroa with MAQ patties). I also made sure each hive had sufficient honey stores.

In this letter I will be changing the format. The two tables listing the LBA board members and the various bee clubs will be missing, as will the Member-Get-a- Member and the Renew Your Membership sheets. These can be found at the LBA website.

As I do with the CENLA Beekeeping Club, I am going to begin a section that talks to “A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper – My personal view”. This BBB# 2 encompasses January – April. Enjoy.

**Articles of Interest:**

- A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper – My personal view (updated with each new BBB)

**Internet Sites You Might Find Useful**

**Commercial Business Advertisements**

While visiting a CENLA Beekeeper Club member in early February, he made a recommendation that I send out monthly, a notice of what we as beekeepers should/could be doing that month with our hives and what we should be expecting/planning for in the next month. That sounded like a very good idea. Some of this can be found within the chart we’ve passed out at several of
our meetings over the last few years: *A year in the Life of a Beekeeper – An Annual Beekeeping Task and Management Calendar*. { *Capital Area Beekeepers Association; Baton Rouge, LA publication}

What I’m presenting with these monthly exposes is directed at the hobby beekeeper, not the commercial, queen breeder or queen rearer, though they too would carry out much of what I’m stating. In all cases, I document all my visits and what I do with a field book. Never trust your memory and this documentation becomes especially useful over time. With that in mind, here is what I’m doing this February and what I’m expecting for March.

**January**
Check colony strength. Check honey stores. Repair or replace equipment. Visit the apiaries/hives at least once a month.

**February**
By early February I am beginning to prepare for the hive build-up, especially if I’m using Italians or hives that I’ve created from captured swarms – these are prone to early population buildup and need food to do so.

It is this month that I move out of my winter mode of checking the hives once a month, to that of every 2 weeks. Sometimes I get antsy and start looking at them every week. I check for honey stores and if lacking I initiate sugar water feeding (2:1 ratio). Whether I have decent honey reserves or not, I begin feeding pollen concentrates (I use Bee Pro patties from Mann Lake). Check for colony strength. Are the numbers low, moderate or high?

I also do a sampling for Varroa mites, using the powdered sugar shake method but you can do a sampling use sticky boards, visual, drone brood sampling (see my talk from fall of 2016), ether roll alcohol wash. If greater than 2% of the bees are infested, I fumigate with oxalic acid. This spring all of my hives came through the winter with very low mite populations so I didn’t treat them. [I’d recommend that you visit Randy Oliver’s website to become familiar with the treatment options and techniques regarding Varroa mite treatment.

{ http://scientificbeekeeping.com/http://www.scientificbeekeeping.com/  }

Looking at my field book from last year, the earliest swarm capture I made was March 17. With that in mind I believe that swarming season would begin March 1st and that would mean that drones were/are being produced as early as mid-February (it takes about 2 weeks after a drone pupates before it is sexually mature. That would mean that the queens would be pupating out in early March as well. You should be looking for these things to be occurring.

How best to find these things out you might ask? Plan on rotating your brood boxes before the first of March. While doing that you can observe what’s going on inside the hive. It is this time of year that I monitor the presence and development of the drone brood and drones. Through monitoring of them I will know when the queens will be produced.

If you are cognizant of queen rearing, then start preparing to do this. Check for queen productivity.
Continue with your repair or replacement equipment.

March
I’m into that time of year when I visit the yards every week.

Continue to check honey stores and colony strength. The bee populations will/are building and they will need plenty of pollen and honey/sugars to help create those large populations, good drones and queens.

If you are into swarm capture, then get ready now. Call and leave your name with the LSU Ag system, local fire and police departments, etc. Be ready to move quickly. Have a container handy to place the swarm in, a ladder, pruning shears, clean water &/or sugar water spray bottle, mosquito netting, nuc box at home, etc. However, before responding to calls ask a few things: How long has the swarm been there? How high is it? What is its size? Get a contact person’s name and phone number and ask them to call you if the swarm leaves before you get there. If you can’t get to it for several hours, let the caller know that and if you can’t make it, tell them that and recommend someone else, if you know anyone. If you make an appointment to come, do so or call. My first swarm capture this season came on Wednesday, March 1st. I captured about 30,000 bees and they are now in a hive with plenty of honey and a pollen patty.

Continue feeding up until the honey flow is on – I began placing patties in mid-February and by February 25th I’d placed a second patty as the first had been consumed. You will know that the honey flow is on when the bees stop feeding on your sugar water and/or pollen patties and you see them bringing in lots of pollen and filling the hive with honey. At that time stop feeding, remove the patties and store them in the freezer until later in the year or next spring.

Make colony increases and prepare and/or make hive splits, nucs and prepare for queen rearing.

Plan on adding honey supers as needed - when I have 7 out of 10 frames full of honey I add another.

Treat for ants and vegetation in the yards.

April
With April the honey flow in Central Louisiana is probably in full flow.

At this time of year natural hive production, queen replacements, swarming and the like are occurring. If you value your bees it behooves you to create splits, capture queen cells, build nucs, and if you choose, to sell queens, nucs, and hives that you have created.
Many queens that overwintered and spent their best creating large populations of bees for this spring’s honey flow have become overextended and many die and/or need replacing. This is where the nucs and/or queens you’ve been creating come in handy. I usually replace the queens in those hives that look like the brood pattern is suffering with new queens. Sometimes, I just replace the queens anyway, rather than wait for a possible failure – it can happen quickly and one week the hive looks great and the next it’s being overrun with wax moths.

Continue adding honey supers as needed.

Treat for ants and vegetation in the yards.

**May and June – see BBB# 3**


Véto-pharma ([www.veto-pharma.com](http://www.veto-pharma.com)), the French company, which manufactures Apivar and Varroa EasyCheck, has released a new survey to help beekeepers learn more about honey bee health.

**What do you really know about honey bee viruses?**
It’s time to dig a bit more into the subject, to find out about the important role that viruses play in the overall health of your colonies, and how you can manage them.

A complete review of honey bee viruses, along with the results of the survey and a discussion of the answers, will be shared with you during the year. Anne Dalmon, honey bee virus specialist at INRA (French National Institute for Agronomic Research), will contribute her insights as well.

**If you are ready to be an expert in bee viruses – let’s go! You have until March 1st to complete the survey here:**

**SPECIAL GIFT – 3 Beekeepers will be sorted by drawing lots among all the participants to win a beekeeping pack, including: 2 packs of ApiLife Var and 1 bottle of HiveAlive (100ml). To learn more about Véto-pharma: [www.veto-pharma.com](http://www.veto-pharma.com)**

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*Photo copyright: Courtesy The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Crown Copyright*
Common Crop Chemical Leaves Bees Susceptible to Deadly Viruses -
Penn State

This is a healthy bee larva developing seen on day six.
*Credit: Julia Fine, Penn State*

A chemical that is thought to be safe and is, therefore, widely used on crops -- such as almonds, wine grapes and tree fruits -- to boost the performance of pesticides, makes honey bee larvae significantly more susceptible to a deadly virus, according to researchers at Penn State and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"In the lab, we found that the commonly used organosilicone adjuvant, **Sylgard 309**, negatively impacts the health of honey bee larvae by increasing their susceptibility to a common bee pathogen, the **Black Queen Cell Virus**," said Julia Fine, graduate student in entomology, Penn State. "These results mirror the symptoms observed in hives following almond pollination, when bees are exposed to organosilicone adjuvant residues in pollen, and viral pathogen prevalence is known to increase. In recent years, beekeepers have reported missing, dead and dying brood in their hives following almond pollination, and exposure to agrochemicals, like adjuvants, applied during bloom, have been suggested as a cause."

According to Chris Mullin, professor of entomology, Penn State, adjuvants in general greatly improve the efficacy of pesticides by enhancing their toxicities.

"Organosilicone adjuvants are the most potent adjuvants available to growers," he said. "Based on the California Department of Pesticide Regulation data for agrochemical applications to almonds, there has been increasing use of organosilicone adjuvants during crop blooming periods, when two-thirds of the U.S. honey bee colonies are present." Fine noted that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classifies organosilicone adjuvants as biologically inert, meaning they do not cause a reaction in living things.

"As a result," she said, "there are no federally regulated restrictions on their use."
To conduct their study, the researchers reared honey bee larvae under controlled conditions in the laboratory. During the initial stages of larval development, they exposed the larvae to a low
chronic dose of Sylgard 309 in their diets. They also exposed some of the larvae to viral pathogens in their diets on the first day of the experiment.

"We found that bees exposed to the organosilicone adjuvant had higher levels of Black Queen Cell Virus," said Fine. "Not only that, when they were exposed to the virus and the organosilicone adjuvant simultaneously, the effect on their mortality was synergistic rather than additive, meaning that the mortality was higher from the simultaneous application of adjuvant and virus than from exposure to either the organosilicone adjuvant or the viral pathogen alone, even if those two mortalities were added together," said Fine. "This suggests that the adjuvant is enhancing the damaging effects of the virus."

The researchers also found that a particular gene involved in immunity -- called 18-wheeler -- had reduced expression in bees treated with the adjuvant and the virus, compared to bees in the control groups.

"Taken together, these findings suggest that exposure to organosilicone adjuvants negatively influences immunity in honey bee larvae, resulting in enhanced pathogenicity and mortality," said Fine.

The results appeared Jan. 16 in *Scientific Reports*.

Mullin noted that the team's results suggest that recent honey bee declines in the United States may, in part, be due to the increased use of organosilicone adjuvants.

"Billions of pounds of formulation and tank adjuvants, including organosilicone adjuvants, are released into U.S. environments each year, making them an important component of the chemical landscape to which bees are exposed," he said. "We now know that at least Sylgard 309, when combined at a field-relevant concentration with Black Queen Cell Virus, causes synergistic mortality in honey bee larvae."

---

**Internet Sites You Might Find Useful**

- Honeybee Project Designs  
- A great website about beekeeping cities and campuses in the U.S.  
- Elephants and African honeybees being utilized as fences  
- Bee Informed Partnership has posted a new item, 'Alders Valued as Early NorCal Pollen Source'  
• Take some time this month to reflect on the beekeeping lessons learned in 2016, and to dream big for the New Year. To help you with that, check out Kelley’s first newsletter of the year!
   Click Here to View: Kelley-Newsletter-January-2017.pdf
• Good web site to bookmark. Info on honeybees, beekeeping, other bees, gardening for bee.
   http://www.buzzaboutbees.net/
• 5 Things You Didn't Know About Honey
Commercial Business Ads Information

The Louisiana Beekeepers Association would like to thank all of our sponsors for their business advertisements. We encourage our membership and visitors to our web site to consider the fine products and/or services they offer when selecting a vendor to fulfill their business and/or personal needs.

Over the past five years the number of our newsletter advertisers has steadily increased. In appreciation for their support the LBA has offered vendor booths to these advertisers at our annual State Convention free of charge. Vendor displays have also increased, providing our guests with a convenient venue for purchasing the beekeeping products they might need. These vendors in turn contribute door prizes and auction items to the LBA, making the event more enjoyable for our guests. Those who pre-purchase supplies through the vendors can have them delivered and avoid shipping charges.

Advertising is an important marketing tool for beekeepers and your beekeeping business is important to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association. Give us an opportunity to provide a portion of your advertising needs in 2016.

Remember, for only $25.00 annually you can advertise your company products in six issues of the Bayou Bee Bulletin. Your business ad can also be carried on our web site, labeekeepers.org, for $50.00. Please contact Robert Taylor, our webmaster for details rt@honeybeeremoval.com; Phone: 985-969-4647).

Remit your advertising fee to LBA Treasurer, Ms. Beth Derr; Ph. 936-591-2399; Jefferson, TX 75657; beth@labeekeepers.org and forward your company’s camera ready, 4 inch by 3 inch jpeg ad image to Mr. Tim Haley, LBA Newsletter Editor, at: tamh212@suddenlink.net
Commercial Business Ads

BERNARD APIARIES INC.
P. O. Box 615
Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

In Business Since 1918

Supplier:
Pure Honey
Corn Syrup Feed
Five Frame Nucs

Contact: Steve Bernard at (337) 228-7535

MANNLAKE WE KNOW BEES
Woodenware, Feeds, Medications And So Much More!
Hackensack, MN
800-880-7694
Woodland, CA
866-880-7678
Wilkes-Barre, PA
877-829-4077
www.mannlake ltd.com

Honey Bee Removal

Houses, Buildings, Trees, etc.

Robert G. Taylor, Sr.
Licensed Beekeeper

Louisiana Registration # 14-0930

38233 Lee’s Landing road
Ponchatoula, LA 70454
Phone: 985-386-4647

SUNSHINE HONEY BEES
PO BOX 1192
LECOMPTO LA 71346

LAYING QUEENS AVAILABLE
318-794-6961
donna@sunshinehoneybees.com

SHIPPING NOT INCLUDED IN PRICING
Commercial Business Ads Continued

**Madison Belle Honey Co.**

Karl Gaspard
Five Frame Nucs, Minnesota Hygienic Italian Queens, & Honey
Call for information on pickup and shipping:
Ph: 225-936-8333
karl@madisonbelllehoney.com
www.madisonbelllehoney.com
1251 Schexnyder Road, Mansura, LA 71350

**Dadant**

Manufacturers of Beekeeping Supplies Since 1863

Ideal Products for the Smaller Producer!

Branch Sales Office
P. O. Box 146
1109 Bonham Street
Paris, TX 75460

Phone: 1 877 632-3268 (toll free)
Phone: 903 784-6145
Fax: 903 784-2161

Apiary Beekeeping Supplies, Inc.

James & Susan Crihfield

See Us On Facebook!
207 Fairview Road
Crossett, AR 71635
Phone: 870 305-1125    Fax: 870 305-1126

http://www.hillybillybees.com

WILLIAM S. HUMMER
287 Sigo Road
Bossier City, LA 71112

Phone: 318/742-3541    Fax: 318/752-9090
www.hummerandsonhoney.com/
WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS
Commercial Accounts Welcome
Authorized Mann Lake Dealer
Commercial Business Ads Continued

For All Your Sign Requirements...

HLA ENTERPRISES
SIGNS & GRAPHICS
Design • Fabrication • Installation • Maintenance
LED Signs • Banners
Digital Signs • Electric Signs
Interior Signs • Vinyl Lettering
Channel Letters • Campaign Signs
Monument Signs • Sports Field Signs
Neon Illuminated Signs • Architectural Letters
318-295-2035

—

DR. STEVE PAYNE
STRATEGIC BEEKEEPING SERVICES
Strategy and Business Planning Assistance
for Sideline and Commercial Beekeepers
www.strategicbeeservices.com
(78) 421-8647
133 Sanzo Dr.
Lafayette, LA 70507
[Free initial session to determine your possible interest in services provided]