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 hatching. 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. Be sure and follow manufacturers recommendations on 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 addition 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, having a mentor, if you are a beginner beekeeper, has its advantages.

Your Board of Directors are busy finalizing plans for this year’s First Annual 2018 Spring Field Day. This event will be by pre-registration only with a limit of 100 students. The event will be held at the Cade’s Farm south of Lafayette. There will be no registrations available at the door. Check out the LBA website for further information. 2018 Annual LBA Convention will be in the Lake Charles area this year the first weekend in December. The LBA, in conjunction with the USDA bee Lab in Baton Rouge, is still in the planning stages with dates to be announced at a later date. 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. 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@beebumbler.com, 1-318-588-2899
At this writing, it is Tuesday, March 20, 2018, the first day of spring in the U.S.A. This March is more like the March’s we used to have: windy days interspersed with scattered thunderstorms and more and more sunny days. Nights are cool and the days often make it into the 60’s and 70’s. One of the best times of the year! Floral sources are popping up everywhere. The bees have been actively bringing in pollen since mid-February and now they are starting to bring in nectar. I can’t say that the honey flow is on just yet but if we start getting warmer nights I imagine the flow will kick in. There are an awful lot of floral sources coming on line.

In my hives the drones have been popping up since early March. The last three weeks I’ve had queen cell development in a few of my hives so I’ve initiated spits and nuc development. One of my hives gave me four new queens! Then I reared an additional 5 from that hive once more! I need to create several more as I’ve a half dozen orders for nucs and I need to plan on replacing many of my queens sometime in June. At least two hives will need new queens within the next month as their queens are showing signs of failing.

Last Saturday, March 14, the CENLA Bee Club held a field day where we came together to create about 600+ oxalic acid/glycerin treated blue shop towels. Please see the article below for my comments regarding what needed improvement and what worked well for us, the recipe used and photos.

With this letter,
- The CENLA Bee Club’s Oxalic Acid Field Day
- A letter to the editor – Comments regarding Neonicotinoids
- Ideas for Beekeeping Meetings – by Keith Hawkins
- Internet Sites You Might Find Useful
- Commercial Business Advertisements

Enjoy.

**Articles of Interest**

**The CENLA Bee Club’s Oxalic Acid Field Day – Held Saturday, March 14**

I’d given a talk back in November to the club membership on the various methods used to treat hives with oxalic and formic acids. From that we programmed a day in March when the membership would get together and make oxalic acid (o.a.) treatment pads using glycerin, o.a. and blue shop towels (one of the methods I’d spoken about). We began taking orders from the membership and whoever wanted the treated towels at the February meeting and by early March we had orders for something like 600+ towels!

Utilizing videos from You Tube, articles from the internet and Randy Oliver’s website, Scientific Beekeeping.com, I came up with a menu for creating 80 treated towels at a time. I’m going to present that menu below but it is important to state a few things we discovered during the carrying out of the program. Understand that this was a Beta Testing Program in which we knew there would be some rough edges that needed adjustment. Overall, we came out learning a lot and everyone involved worked well together and had a swell time doing it.
Lessons Learned
1) It was known that the use of a microwave to heat the glycerin and then again heat the glycerin + o. a. mixture would be the funnel that everything had to go through to make a towel. What we discovered was that it took “way too long” to heat the mixtures where the o.a. mixture would be completely dissolved and become clear (not milky). For one batch mixture it took nearly 20 minutes in a 1250 watt microwave! Next time we will use a burner to heat things up more quickly!
2) Decide up front whether you’d like to make full-sized towels or ½ sized towels (towellettes – these are towels cut in half).
3) Have an Action and Safety Plan in place and a good location where to hold the event. Ours was in an open bay of a warehouse with lots of room to work, fresh water and electricity available.
4) Order all your supplies and lay out what will be needed days/if not weeks in advance.
5) When taking orders, decide how much to charge/per towel and decide how you will package and distribute the treated towels.
6) Should everyone who orders be obligated to attend the field day? This last point was a no-brainer in that many who ordered couldn’t/didn’t show. However, the adage “5-10 % of the people of an organization will do 90-100% of the work”, did not apply at our event! We have 32 paid members in our club and we had 26 people show up to help out. Of those, 21 were members and five were visiting from other clubs or were friends/spouses. Everyone helped and actively participated. We had a blast!
7) We’d originally planned the event would last two hours but it actually took about 3 hours (see number 1 above).
8) NOTE: it was discovered that our recipe for 80 towels actually made 100! (*See Below)

Here then is the Action Plan and Menu we used:

Action Plan
The layout in the bay
- Paul will be responsible for setting up some sort of signs directing people to the workshop area.
- I [Tim] will be bring “everything” but the tables and microwave. These items include a weighing scale, volumetric measurement devices, jars, trays, cleaning rags, blue shop towels, glycerin, oxalic acid, stirring rods, 9 ml. Vinyl gloves (box of 50), 5-gallon buckets, tape, plastic to cover the tables, rolls of shop towels cut in half
- Those responsible for setting up and laying out the tables and materials should show up an hour early. In other words, by 9 a.m. [These people are the CENLA Board and Tim].
- Any additional monies to be collected need to be done before the program starts. [Stacy]
- We should probably start the Oxalic Acid part of the program exactly at 10 a.m. as planned. Late-comers can be filled in whenever during the two hours planned for the program. The M-C welcoming everyone to the site will/should be Paul. He will be the one to get the ball rolling, not only for the tours but the o.a. portion of the program.
- There will be an easel describing the recipe to make the treated towels. The procedure for making the towels will be gone over with the attendees prior to their beginning work. The layout setup will be shown everyone at this time. [Tim]
- A SAFETY TALK will be necessary before beginning. [Paul and Tim].
Each attendee should have been instructed via a group emailing/Facebook announcement that they should/could bring their own safety glasses and work bib – [Stacey to take care of this.]

- There will be two rows of tables; each row will be comprised of one 8 foot table. These will be covered with plastic (the plastic will be taped below the tables).
- At an end of each table will be a 2 gallon plastic bucket, several green trays (~4), a paint stirring stick, rags for wiping up (located in a plastic 5-gallon bucket marked “clean rags” a 5-gallon bucket marked “dirty rags” both of which will be on the floor), plastic bags for packaging the completed towellettes and at one table a box of black 9 ml. gloves – to be shared as needed between the tables.
- Following the program, all the gloves, mixing ware, trays, table top coverings, stirring rods, rags, buckets, weight scale, measuring devices, etc. are to be gathered up (DON”T THROW ANYTHING AWAY – it can all be used again!).

I’m sure there is a lot more we need to do/talk about but this is a beginning. Your input here before the weeks is out and we are at the hatchery will be welcome. Take note of your duties and what might need to be done. Each of us must not take over doing all the “hands on”. Leave that to the members. I for one will be more than happy to watch. Thanks, Tim.

**Recipe**

This method of application can be used to apply oxalic acid (o.a.) via absorbent materials repetitively as needed throughout the year.

**For making one treated towel ( a towellette is a full-sized towel cut in half)**

Materials needed: blue shop towels, food grade glycerin, o.a., and scale, protective gloves, zip lock plastic bags and containers for mixing and measuring.

Steps (for creating one application of one towellette):

1. Measure 25 ml (~31 grams) of glycerin
2. Microwave the glycerin for 10-15 seconds (keep under 160 degrees Fahrenheit)
3. Measure 25 grams o.a.
4. Mix o.a. into glycerin and stir for 2 minutes or until well-mixed.
5. Reheat mixture for 10 additional seconds (keep under 160 °F). Stir until dissolved.
6. Place one towel in tray with mixture and stir until saturated.
7. Squeeze excess solution from towel then weighing, make sure it weighs 31 grams.
8. Store in zip lock bag in refrigerator until applied in hive on top bars of single brood box or between brood boxes if two are present.
   a. Bees will take 4-6 weeks to remove it – more than enough time to overlap the varroa mite’s life cycle and bring their population titer levels to < 5%.
   Reapplications can be carried out as needed throughout the seasons.

**Recipe for making 583 treated shop towels\(\times 1,166\) towellettes**

**Givens:**

- A roll of blue shop towels has 55 full-sized towels. Three rolls have \((3 \times 55 = 165)\) towels. Cutting a package of 3 rolls in half will produce 330 towellettes. Two packages of three rolls each of towels will provide 330 towels or 660 towellettes.
• We have an order in for 600 towels so 11 rolls will be needed: \((600/55 = 10.9\) rolls). A hive can be treated using one towel placed on the top bars of the second brood box or by placing one towellette on the top bars of each of the two brood boxes. I have cut 6 rolls in half and left another 8 rolls intact. These can be cut in half on site if desired. We can discuss with the membership at the get-together.

• **Glycerin**
  - 25 ml. per towel = 0.0066 gal. = 0.1 cup
  - One gallon = 4 quarts = 8 pints = 16 cups = 4,000 milliliters
  - \(\frac{1}{4}\) gallon = 1 quart = 2 pints = 4 cups = 1,000 milliliters
  - \((1,000\text{ml} / 25\text{ml}) = 40\)
  - Therefore, 1/4 gallon will treat 40 towels (80 towellettes)

• **Oxalic acid**
  - 25 grams per towel = 0.06 lb. or 0.9 oz. by weight
  - \((40\text{ towels} \times 0.06\text{lb.}) = 2.4\text{ lbs. of o.a.}\)

• Mixing 1/2 gallon of glycerin with 4.8 lbs. o.a. will treat 80 towels* [See Above Note – Item #8] (160 towellettes).

• **The CENLA Beekeeping Club has an order in for 600 towels (treatments)**
  - We have 35 lbs. of o.a. and 5 gallons of glycerin.
  - Thirty-five lbs. o.a. will provide for 583 treated towels\(^\ddagger\ddagger\). Five gallons glycerin will provide for 640 treated towels.

**Procedure**
- Because we will be using a microwave with limited space within it to heat the glycerin, we will only heat 2 gallon (8 cups or 2,000 ml of glycerin) at a time. This will allow for the treatment of 80 towels.

**Photos of the Event** [All photos provided by Stacy Blomquist]
A Letter to the editor — I’ve been asked to post the following item:
“After being questioned by a beekeeper who apparently likes to keep a colorful pristine yard, The BBB needs to mention briefly about not purchasing neonics treated plants as precautionary and why. I know a wholesale nursery that voluntarily switched over because of the detrimental effects on pollinators. There is some research to back if necessary.”

Neonics refers to neonicotinoids which are a type of pesticide used to treat various plants to protect them from insects that might feed on them. For more detailed information on these pesticides I refer the reader to Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neonicotinoid). In a nutshell, Wikipedia states:

“Neonicotinoids (sometimes shortened to neonics /ˈniːoʊnɪks/) are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine. In the 1980s Shell and in the 1990s Bayer started work on their development.[1] The neonicotinoid family includes acetamiprid, clothianidin, imidacloprid, nitenpyram, nithiazine, thiacloprid and thiamethoxam. Imidacloprid is the most widely used insecticide in the world.[2] Compared to organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, neonicotinoids cause less toxicity in birds and mammals than insects. Some breakdown products are also toxic to insects.[3]

In the late 1990s neonicotinoids came under increasing scrutiny over their environmental impact.[4] Neonicotinoid use was linked in a range of studies to adverse ecological effects, including honey-bee colony collapse disorder (CCD) and loss of birds due to a reduction in
insect populations; however, the findings have been controversial.\textsuperscript{[5]} In 2013, the European Union and a few non EU countries restricted the use of certain neonicotinoids.\textsuperscript{[6][7][8]}

**Ideas for Beekeeping Meetings – by Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter Extension Agent**

One of the challenges of preparing for the monthly meetings of the SW Louisiana Beekeepers is presenting fresh, timely, relevant topics. SWLA Beeks has an advisory group to help with ideas for these meeting. This group has a mix of experienced and beginning beekeepers. After seven years of bee meetings, SWLA Beeks has covered these topics and wants to share these ideas with fellow beeks in Louisiana:

- A Primer on Beekeeping and the Law, Mr. Erik Fain, Attorney & Beekeeper
- A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper, Tim Haley, Cenla Beekeepers
- Africanized Bees, Dr. Dennis Ring, LSU AgCenter
- Apitherapy and Medicinal Benefits of Honey, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Australian Flow hive, Mr. Harvey Kieffer, Lake Area Beekeepers
- Basic Beehive Set-up, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beekeepers
- Bee Biology, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks & Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Bee Botany, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Bee Box Set-up: Langstroth & Top Bar Hive
- Beehive Maintenance, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Beekeeping 101, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Beekeeping as a Sideline Business, Dr. Steve Payne, LBA
- Beekeeping Basics, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Beekeeping Equipment, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Bee yard Field Trip, Hebert Honey Farm
- Brood Box Management, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Building a Swarm Trap, David & Kenny McReynolds, SW LA Beekeepers
- Club wide Equipment Order
- Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)
- Common Mistakes of a Beginning Beekeeper & How to Avoid Them, Mr. James Laughlin, East Texas Beekeepers
- Communications between Farmers & Beekeepers, LSU AgCenter slideshow
- Construction of Top bar Hives
- Fall Maintenance, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Feeding the Bees, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Gardening for Pollinators, Dr. Allen Owens LSU AgCenter
- Getting Started in Beekeeping, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks & Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Handy Resources and References for Beeks, Keith Hawkins LSU AgCenter
- Hive & Accessories for Beginners, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks & Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
- Hive Inspection, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
- Hive Pests, Dr. Dennis Ring, LSU AgCenter
- Hive Products and Packaging, Paula Hebert, Hebert Honey Farm
- Honey & Biscuits, Annual Honey Extraction at Hebert Honey Farm
- Honey Bee Squares Game, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter

Page 8 of 13
Honey Grading & Nutrition, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
Horizontal Langstroth Hive, David & Kenny McReynolds, SW LA Beekeepers
How to Have a Safe Bee yard Visit, Dr. Dora Hatch, LSU AgCenter
How to Order Package Bees, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Income Taxes, Mr. Leonard Wilfert, CPA & Beekeeper
Inspection & Preparation for the Nectar Flow, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Louisiana Beekeeping Association, Mr. Jimmy Dunkley, LBA
Louisiana Honey Plants, LSU AgCenter Slideshow
Louisiana Pollinator Cooperative Conservation Program, Mr. Randy Fair, LBA
Louisiana State Rules & Regulations, Mr. Allen Fabre, State Apiarist, LDAF
Master Beekeeper Program, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
Planning for Honey Bee Nuisance Calls & Emergencies, LSU AgCenter Slideshow
Processing Honey & Wax, Richard Paula Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Queen Night: Raising Queens & Requeening, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Raising Queen Bees, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Removing Bees from Walls and Structures
Splits and Swarming, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Splitting Hives, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Supering, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
Swarming and Capture, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks
The New Flow hive: Fad or For Real? Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
Why Bees Abscond & How to Prevent Absconding, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks & Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
Why Pollinators Matter, Keith Hawkins, LSU AgCenter
Winterizing, Richard Hebert, SW LA Beeks

If this article helped with your bee meetings, please contact Keith Hawkins, County Agent, 337-463-7006 or khawkins@agcenter.lsu.edu. Also, feel free to share your ideas with Keith.

Internet Sites You Might Find Useful


7 Plants to Help Honey Production – Blains Farm and Fleet Website Article: [https://www.farmandfleet.com/blog/7-plants-help-honey-production/](https://www.farmandfleet.com/blog/7-plants-help-honey-production/)
The seven plants are: Sunflowers, Goldenrod, Cosmos, Coriander, Mint, Lavender and Coneflowers. For more information regarding honeybees at their site, follow these links:

For more beekeeping tips, you can visit the [beekeeping section](#) of our blog.

Posted in: Beekeeping, Gardening Tagged: Beekeeping, Bees, Flower Gardening, Gardening, Honey, Planting Flowers, Plants and Flowers
A new publication on How the Urban Heat Island Effect and Flowers Affect Wild Bee Communities provided by Steven Frank" (sdfrank@ncsu.edu); Associate Professor, North Carolina State University, Department of Entomology (http://ecoipm.org/)

http://ecoipm.org/2018/02/16/it-takes-more-than-flowers-to-build-bee-habitat/

Beeinformed.org has some great articles such at the one below. In addition, check out additional article located on the right side of the page.

**Honey Bee Viral Prevalence Map**

From the Lake Area Beekeepers, here are links to various articles/publications:

1. For those that find it too hard to handle heavy brood or honey supers. Something to consider. [https://honeybeesuite.com/the-valhalla-hive-long-low-and-sleek/](https://honeybeesuite.com/the-valhalla-hive-long-low-and-sleek/)

   **The Valhalla hive: long, low, and sleek - Honey Bee Suite**

2. Check out this short video about helping all bees. [https://vimeo.com/183935616](https://vimeo.com/183935616)

   **Bee Friendly: 10 Ways to Bee Friendly**

3. A good article on “overwintering success”:

   **The ultimate guide to overwintering success - Honey Bee Suite**

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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

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