May’s Ramblings of a Bee Bumbler, from your President

May 2018

Spring rains have brought the spring flowers and the flow is on. Summer is fast approaching, and the Tallow flow is next in line. Swarms have been hived. Colonies have been split. Queens have been raised and introduced to their new families. Honey supers are on and some harvesting has begun. There was a good privet and clover bloom but cool nights hurt the daytime nectar flows. The rains have slowed down, temperatures are rising and the work in the apiary goes on. Here’s to a safe and plentiful harvest for all. And if it does not happen, well there is always next year.

The LBA conducted their first spring field day at the Cades Farm just south of Lafayette and was a huge success. Thanks to all those that helped and to ULL for allowing the use of their facility. Thank you, Mark, for your help and support in making it possible. The day was a little stormy, but we continued on as scheduled. We even put on a make-up field day a couple weeks later for those that did not make the first one. Thanks to Jennifer Brown for spearheading this and seeing that everything went as planned. The doughnuts were a hit as well.

The Bee Lab Field Day committee has met and started planning this year’s fall meet. Tentative date is October 27. We are looking for suggestions on topics of interest to our members and ask that you send them to myself or Jennifer Brown. You can email them to me at randy@beebumbler.com or coloran1@yahoo.com, or Jennifer Brown at ashland6400@me.com. We look forward to the suggestions as this day is for you to learn more about bees and beekeeping.

The annual LBA convention committee is also hard at work putting together this year’s convention to be held in December. Look for future updates on this and other activities on your web site and Facebook page. Nola Ducote is doing a great job keeping us informed about the latest bee news on our Facebook page. Check us out.

The LBA, in conjunction with the American Honey Producers, state bee keeping organizations, government offices are working on the “Flea Beetle” issue. For those that are not familiar with this insect, it will be imported from China, turned loose in Louisiana, in an effort to stop the spread of the Chinese Tallow Tree. As you all do know, the tallow tree is one of the major honey producers in the south and the removal will affect not only commercial beekeeping operations but small-scale producers as well. We will keep you informed as more news is available. In the meantime, it would not hurt if you let your local, state and federal representatives know how you feel about this issue.

On a final note, remember to register your colonies according to state regulations. Also inform your mosquito control officer about those locations. We need to do everything we can to keep our bees in good health. Chemical spraying too close to your hives can be, will be, devastating. In closing, may your supers be heavy, honey prices rising and your bee’s health. Watch out for the hot summer time, drink plenty of fluids and take breaks when needed. Have a safe summer.

Randy Fair, LBA President
As of May 20, 2018 I’m not too impressed with the nectar harvesting being carried out by my bees. It looked to be a good year back in March but with April I had my doubts. Lots of swarm captures and cut-outs and the splits and nucs I’d made did well. I’ve three hives at the home yard that I use to make splits and nucs and they are also doing well. But the hives in the two yards in the field just aren’t laying down the additional supers I’d hoped for. The disparity between new queens and old queens from last fall’s replacements don’t seem to show much difference in nectar returns. I’m about to retire four of them where the new queens just didn’t take hold or the old queens are failing. I often pull the old darker brood frames in such hives replace them with new foundation/frames. I carry out this procedure in the spring and fall months rather than limp through the summer or winter with weaker hives. It is easier to replace them with younger stronger hives. This is where I utilize the nucs I’d made earlier in the spring. One or two other beekeepers in the CENLA Beekeeping Club seem to be experiencing the loss of honey returns in their hives as well. I hope most of you out there are doing better. I’d hate to see the dearth of honey returns experienced last fall throughout Louisiana carry over into this spring.

Though the CENLA Beekeeping club created hundreds of oxalic acid towels this last March 14th [see the last newsletter] I chose not to make any for myself and am still using the fumigation method in the spring and summer months. I’m into the second week of fumigation and will finish up this next week, two weeks before I harvest what little honey I can from the hives in June.

With this letter, I don’t have much to present. I do have a short follow-up message from the CENLA Beekeeping Club’s March oxalic acid field day and May meeting. I’d like to recommend that you to return to last year’s BBB’s archival section and review my “A Year in the Life of a Beekeeper, an annual synopsis by the month of what I do throughout the year in my apiaries.” The section on Internet Sites You Might Find Useful is material that I receive from Keith Hawkins, Nola Decote and/or the Lake Area Beekeeper’s Club’s membership – they are real go-getters and seem to fill the internet waves with lots of great information. [I usually never make the time to go search out this stuff on my own. What with fixing lawnmowers, rebuilding hot tubs, building a bee house, and dying of heat stroke I don’t get around much anymore.]

Enjoy.

**Articles of Interest**

Questions from the Oxalic Acid Field Day and the CENLA Beekeeping Club

I missed the last club meeting this May but I did hear from some of the members the following:

**Question #1**: “How long should we keep the oxalic acid-treated towels in the hive.”

**Answer #1**: From my notes of the talk I gave November 2017 at the club and from the information I presented at the March field day, the answer is: “Within three to four weeks after placement, the bees should have removed most of the towels. After four weeks, any remaining towels can be removed.

**Question #2**: “Where should we place the towels?”
**Answer #2:** One towel per nuc/brood box. If there are two brood boxes, then place one towel on top of each brood box.

**Questions #3 and #4** that should have been asked are, have you sampled for mites prior to and following treatment? If you haven’t then you really can’t know what the consequences of your treatments are accomplishing!

I’d ask the readers to reference Randy Oliver’s website, [www.scientificbeekeeping.com](http://www.scientificbeekeeping.com) for additional information.

**Internet Sites You Might Find Useful**

- 1996 SARE/USDA mite elimination study for 1 year in Vermont confirms temperature will work with no harm to our bees read and enjoy.
  https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/lne96-066/

- An article about preserving bees [Bees infest a Monroe daycare] – **Of note, the two beekeepers who removed the hive/bees referred to them as males. I’m sure that was a “slip of the tongue”, at least I hope it was.**

- Ten friendly ways to be friendly:  [https://vimeo.com/183935616](https://vimeo.com/183935616)

- **Cool site. Different types of hive plans.** Located at: Natural Beekeeping/Horizontal Hives/Do-It-Yourself Plans site:

- Ever wonder what plants match the pollen color in a hive? Now you can find out. This site, from England (Shropshire Bee Club) gives you Pollen Colour Identification Charts, by the season or all-in-one. **I like this site!**

- The ultimate guide to overwintering success – Honey Bee Suite.

There were lots more sent me but I think this is enough to keep each of you occupied and out of the summer heat. I’m going to get a glass of water now and try and repair the lawnmower.
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