PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I have heard about good honey crops for 2013. It would be nice to have a decent goldenrod flow next. Beekeepers should be preparing for a fall crop and making sure their colonies are healthy for the upcoming winter. I hope everyone does well.

The Louisiana Beekeepers Association (LBA) needs a new Bayou Bee Bulletin newsletter editor/publisher. Jimmy Dunkley has served notice that he will not continue on the LBA Board or as newsletter editor next year. He has been keeping Louisiana beekeepers current on beekeeping news and events for the past 15 years and would like to give someone else a chance to contribute. Jimmy has also actively participated in LBA activities from 1984 to 2007. Finding a replacement will be a challenge for our industry. Please contact me by e-mail at: joe@labeekeepers.org if you are interested in this important job.

We are getting close to some very important beekeeping educational events. The USDA/ARS Honey Bee Breeding Laboratory and the LBA will be hosting the Seventeenth Annual Field Day on Saturday, October 19, 2013. An agenda has been posted on our website and in this newsletter. There has been a considerable amount of growth in attendance and the educational programs offered at the field day, so please take advantage of this opportunity. Be sure to pre-register for a discounted price. This event has always been a lot of fun as well as educational but we are constantly trying to improve our program. Your input is always welcomed and appreciated, so please complete any surveys that may be available.

Our annual State Convention is also coming up on Friday, December 6, and Saturday, December 7, 2013. The Tangi-Tamington Beekeepers Association is our host club and they have selected the Clarion Inn and Suites Conference Center, 501 North Highway 190, Covington, LA for our gathering. A tentative agenda is provided. Pre-registering by the cut-off date of November 13th will expedite your registration and save you $8.00 over paying after that date or at the convention.

Dr. Edward Knipling, who has been Administrator of the USDA/ARS since 2004 and Acting Administrator from 1997 to 2004, retired on August 30, 2013. He has provided his services and expertise to the USDA/ARS for 46 years, guiding over 2,000 scientists, working on over 800 ongoing research programs during his tenure. Associate Administrators, Dr. Caird Rexroad, Jr. and Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, will alternate monthly over research activities until a permanent replacement is appointed. This is not an ideal arrangement and we hope it is resolved soon.

Don’t forget our “Member Get a Member Campaign.” If you know anyone interested in becoming a member of the LBA refer them to: labeekeepers.org for a membership application.

Joe Sanroma, President
Louisiana Beekeepers Association

Honey Bees and Beekeeping, a Legacy of Service to Louisiana Agriculture.
17th Annual Beekeepers Field Day Pre-Registration Form

The USDA Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics and Physiology Laboratory and the Louisiana Beekeepers Association will hold the 17th Annual Field Day on Saturday, October 19, 2013. The event will be held at the laboratory at 1157 Ben Hur Rd, located near the intersection of Nicholson Drive (Hwy 30) and Brightside Dr. about two miles south of the LSU football stadium.

Gates will open at 9:30 a.m.; activities are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. A nonrefundable pre-registration fee of $25.00, due by October 1st, is required for attendees 12 years of age and above. After Oct. 1st the fee will be $30.00 per person. The fee covers the expenses for coffee, soft drinks, pastries and a very good catered lunch (*see menu at the bottom of the page)!

The Field day consists of three different levels of beekeeping to choose from:

1. A beginner’s course, including live hive inspections.
2. An intermediate course for beekeepers with moderate amounts of experience ready to take it to the next level.
3. Workshops geared to the more experienced beekeeper, i.e. queen rearing, instrumental insemination.

* Please check the course of your choice when filling out this form.

Please fill out the pre-registration form and mail it with your payment to:

David Ferguson
P.O. Box 716
Brusly, La 70719

(make your check payable to Louisiana Beekeepers Association)

(If you would prefer to register online, go to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association’s website: www.labeekeepers.org).

Name: ______________________________________  Parish: _____________________________

Street Address: ______________________________________________________________________

City: ________________________________________________________________________________ State: ______________ Zip: ______________

Phone: ___________________________ E-mail address: _______________________________________

[ ] Beginner’s Course  [ ] Intermediate Course  [ ] Workshops

(Please use the back of this form if you are pre-registering more than 4 people).

Name: ________________________________  [ ] Beginner’s Course  [ ] Intermediate Course  [ ] Workshops

Name: ________________________________  [ ] Beginner’s Course  [ ] Intermediate Course  [ ] Workshops

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Name: ________________________________  [ ] Beginner’s Course  [ ] Intermediate Course  [ ] Workshops

Total amount enclosed $______________

*Menu: Bar B Q Chicken Leg Quarters, Smoked Sausage, Jambalaya (Chicken, Pork, & Sausage), Red Beans and Ham over White Rice, Garden Salad with choice of 4 Dressings, Fresh Baked Honey Wheat Rolls, Mixed Emotions Pudding and Coke Products.

For more information contact Beth Holloway (225-767-9288) or Sandra Hineman (225-767-9280)
17th Annual Beekeeper’s Field Day Agenda
Saturday, October 19, 2013
Louisiana Beekeepers Association
USDA, ARS, Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics & Physiology Lab
1157 Ben Hur Road
Baton Rouge, LA 70820

9:30 Gates open
9:30 – 10:00 Registration, coffee and snacks
10:00 – 10:10 Welcome and introduction Joe Sanroma and Tom Rinderer
10:10 – 10:30 Research at the Honey Bee Lab Tom Rinderer
10:45 – 11:45 **Participants divide into groups**
A) Beginning Beekeeping Bob Danka and HBB Staff, and LBA
B) Intermediate Beekeeping LBA and Jose Villa
C) Workshops (Session 1) HBB Staff
12:00 – 1:15 Lunch
1:30 – 3:30 Participants return to groups
A) Beginning Beekeeping Bob Danka and HBB Staff, and LBA
B) Intermediate Beekeeping LBA and Jose Villa
C) Workshops - Sessions 2 & 3 HBB Staff

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2013 LOUISIANA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION

The 52nd Louisiana Beekeepers Association’s (LBA) Convention will be held Friday, December 6th and Saturday, December 7th at the Clarion Inn & Suites Conference Center, 501 N. Hwy 190, Covington, LA 70433. Take Interstate 12 Exit 63B for US 190W toward Covington. All individuals interested in learning more about honey bees and beekeeping are invited to join us for the latest on beekeeping basics, honey bee research, pest management, etc. There will be something for the beginner to the lifetime beekeeper, plus several beekeeping supply companies will display and offer for sale a large selection of their products.

A $12.00 registration fee per person applies for all who pre-register by the cut-off date of November 13, 2013; $20.00 per person for those registering after the cut-off date or on-site. A convention pre-registration form will be provided in our September issue of our newsletter and will be posted on our website. Online payments may be made through PayPal using your credit card.

Mention that you are attending the Louisiana Beekeepers Association Convention for a room rate of $85.00 per night (Thursday and Friday nights), plus applicable taxes. Make your hotel reservations by calling the Clarion Inn & Suites Conference Center, Covington, LA at 985-893-3580.

Hotel Amenities: WOW Restaurant located in hotel; complimentary hot plated breakfast each morning of stay for registered hotel guests; Wi-Fi Internet access, microwave, and refrigerator in room; handicapped-accessible and non-smoking rooms are available; two full size beds in room or king size beds available; fitness center; indoor pool.

Covington Area Restaurants Include: Copeland’s, Outback, Applebee’s, I-Hop, etc.

Additional information will follow as arrangements are finalized. Please check for any LBA Convention updates at labeekeepers.org and in future Bayou Bee Bulletins.

LBA Honey Baked Contest: Don’t forget to enter our annual Honey Baked Contest. Honey baked delicacies are enjoyed at our Conventions thanks to LBA members. Contest winners receive 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons. Your participation in this annual contest is encouraged.

LBA Honey Contest: We will have another LBA Honey Contest for member participation at the 2013 convention. Details for the contest will be listed in the September issue of the Bayou Bee Bulletin and will be posted on our LBA website (labeekeepers.org). Save your best honey and enter the contest. Only one sample per class per family will be allowed. Ribbons will be awarded!

LBA Convention Auctions: Our annual after dinner auction has become a major fund raiser at our Annual Convention. LBA members have been very generous and creative with their auction donations in the past and are encouraged to donate something for the event. Many hand crafted items have been great auction items and have brought large bids. Past donations have included barbeque pits/grills, mead/honey wine, beekeeping woodenware, bread boards, quilts, etc.

In addition, there will be a separate silent auction again this year for some of the smaller donated items. The LBA is grateful for all donations and hopes this will not discourage member donations. We simply want to help expedite the auction process.

Host Club: The Tangi-Tamington Beekeepers Association has been around since the late 1980’s and they have agreed to be our host club in 2013. They have gone to a lot of effort to provide a nice place for our members and guests to stay while in Covington. They will continue to provide assistance once our Convention begins. Please take the time to thank them by making every effort to attend this year’s Louisiana Beekeepers Association Convention. The Officers and Board of Directors of the Louisiana Beekeepers Association certainly appreciates their assistance.
## Tentative Convention Agenda

**Friday, December 6th - 7:30 am, Registration Begins**
- 8:30 am Call to Order and Welcome – Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, & Committee Appointments, etc.
- 8:40 am Welcome – Dr. Mike Strain, Commissioner Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry
- 8:50 am President’s Address – Joe Sanroma, President Louisiana Beekeepers Association
- 9:00 am Current Research at the Baton Rouge Bee Lab – USDA-ARS Bee Breeding Staff
- 10:00 am Break & Yak Time
- 10:30 am Breeding & Comb Chemistry – Dr. Jeff Harris, Mississippi State University
- 11:15 am Mosquito Spray Program Report – Wes Card, Evergreen Honey Company
- 11:30 am La. State Apiary Report – Allen Fabre, Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry
- 11:45 am NASS Report – Nathan Crisp, National Agriculture Statistics Service
- 12:00 Noon Lunch (on your own)
- 1:30 pm Small Hive Beetle Trapping & Control – Dr. Peter Teal, USDA-ARS Chemistry Unit
- 2:30 pm USDA & Industry Report – Joe Sanroma, LBA
- 3:00 pm Break & Yak Time
- 3:30 pm Am. Honey Producers Report – Randy Verhoek, American Honey Producers Association
- 4:00 pm A Year in the Life of a Commercial Beekeeper - Blake Shook, Desert Creek Honey Company
- 4:45 pm Hobby to Sideline Honey House - Blake Shook, Desert Creek Honey Company
- 7:00 pm LBA Banquet and Program:
  - 4-H Essay Contest Winners – Dr. Dale Pollet
  - Live Auction – Gary Price

**Saturday, December 7th - 7:30 am, Registration Continues**
- 8:00 am My Story – Blake Shook, Desert Creek Honey Company
- 8:45 am Hobby to Sideline Beekeeping - Blake Shook, Desert Creek Honey Company
- 9:30 am Honey Bee Feeding & Nutrition – Stuart Volby, Mann Lake LTD.
- 10:00 am Break & Yak Time
- 10:30 am Splitting Hives in the Apiary – David Ferguson, Louisiana Beekeepers Association
- 11:00 am Varroa IPM for Beginners – Dr. Jeff Harris, Mississippi State University
- 11:45 am Beekeeping Trip to South America – Amy Weeks, Louisiana Beekeepers Association
- 12:30 Noon Lunch (on your own)
- 1:30 pm State Association Business Meeting
  - (1) Secretary’s Report
  - (2) Treasurer’s Report
  - (3) Committee Reports
  - (4) Election of Officers
- 2:30 pm Adjourn

Join us in Covington!

* Presentations, speakers, and times may change slightly from this tentative meeting agenda. A final agenda will be provided at the registration desk on the meeting dates.

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**LBA Convention Information:** If anyone needs assistance, please contact any of the following LBA members for additional information: Joe Sanroma (Bunkie) at 318-308-5000, Sharon Hebert (Erath) at 337-937-6722, Jimmy Dunkley (Baton Rouge) at 225-610-2628, or Margaret Prell (Covington) at 985-863-3641.

**Vendor Convention Information:** Potential vendors will be sent their own vendor registration information. The registration fee for vendors and their associates are a flat $12.00 per person; all other fees are listed on the registration form. Vendors will be allowed one or two tables for their display. Submit your vendor registration information and fees as soon as possible. Convention vendors should contact Jimmy Dunkley at 225-610-2628 if additional information is needed.
LOUISIANA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION INC.
52nd CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

CLARION INN & SUITES CONFERENCE CENTER
501 NORTH HIGHWAY 190, COVINGTON, LOUISIANA 70433
DECEMBER 6th & DECEMBER 7th, 2013

Please print
NAME: 1. ______________________________________ 2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________ 4. ______________________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________________________________________________________________

CITY: __________________________ STATE: ______________ ZIP: ______________

PARISH: __________________________ TELEPHONE #: __________________________

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _________________________________________________________________

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<td>Raffle Tickets (per ticket)</td>
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* Children under 12 years old pay no registration fee.

TOTAL COST: ___________________

METHOD OF PAYMENT: □ CHECK # ________ □ MONEY ORDER

LBA MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE EACH YEAR ON THE LAST DAY OF DECEMBER!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES: □ NEW MEMBER □ RENEWAL

CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION & BANQUET FEES ARE NOT REFUNDABLE AFTER NOVEMBER 13, 2013

Make your check or money order (no cash) payable to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association, Inc.
Please mail to: Mr. David Ferguson, P.O. Box 716, Brusly, La. 70719 – Ph. 225-726-1664

LBA HONEY CONTEST (only one entry per family in each class): □ YES □ NO

Referred by: ________________________________________________________________
Honey Contest at the 52nd Annual Louisiana Beekeepers Association Convention

Please consider entering the 3rd Annual Louisiana Beekeepers Association Honey Contest at our State Convention. Show off one or more entries of your bees’ 2013 honey crop and your hard work by preparing the sample/s for entry in the contest.

Yes, bring your entries to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association Convention by noon on Friday, December 6th, at the Clarion Inn & Suites Conference Center, 501 N. Hwy. 190, Covington, LA 70433. Just follow the instructions below, present your honey entries for judging, and you may be on your way to winning a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place ribbon.

Requirements:

Enter one-pound, glass, queen line jars of your nicest, cleanest, liquid honey.
One (3 jar) sample per color class, per family is allowed.
You may enter one color class (3 jars), two color classes (6 jars), or all three color classes (9 jars).
Color classes are divided into light, amber, and dark.
There may be no labels or discernible markings on the jars.
You must be a current or new, paid-up member of LBA to enter.
You may bring honey for someone else as long as they are a paid member.
Honey must have been harvested in 2013.
Deadline to bring your honey to the receiving table is noon on Friday, December 6, 2013.
Winning entries will be announced at the banquet on Friday night.

Standards of Judging:

Entries will be placed into color categories.
Surface of the jar will be inspected for cleanliness.
Honey will be inspected for overall clarity, cleanliness, and level consistency.
Aroma of the honey will be taken into account.
Inside of jar lid and inside surface of honey will be inspected for cleanliness.
Honey viscosity, moisture content, and overall taste will be judged.
1st through 3rd place will be awarded for each color class.

Tips:

Choice jar is Dadant queen line jar #M001962 (for case of 12) with plastic lid.
Your jars will be received by a committee member at the convention and marked with a number personal to you so all entries are kept anonymous to the judge.
Fingerprints, dust or particles in the honey, and jar imperfections will adversely affect your scoring.
An ACT to amend and reenact R.S. 40:4.9, relative to certain food products prepared in home for public consumption and the application of the state Sanitary Code; to provide for preparation of cakes and cookies in home for public consumption; to provide for exceptions; to provide for penalties; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana: Section 1. R.S. 40:4.9 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows: §4.9. Jellies, preserves, jams, honey, honeycomb products, cakes, and cookies; preparation in home for public consumption

A.(1)(a) No provision of the state Sanitary Code or any provision of any other law or regulation that requires any equipment, design, construction, utensils, supplies, preparation, or services shall apply to the preparation of jellies, preserves, jams, honey, honeycomb products, cakes, and cookies in the home for sale. This Section shall not be construed to allow the sale or distribution of any unwholesome food.

(b) The provisions of Subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph shall not apply to any preparer of cakes and cookies who employs any individual to assist in the preparation of such cakes and cookies.

(2) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the following provisions of the state Sanitary Code shall apply to the preparation of cakes and cookies in the home for sale:

(a) All outside openings shall be protected against flies and other vermin.

(b) The building shall be constructed so as to exclude rats, mice, roaches or other vermin. Domestic pets shall be excluded in any part of the establishment where the preparation and baking of such cakes and cookies take place.

(c) All equipment used or connected in any way with the manufacture, baking, cooking or other processing, handling, packing or storing of any bakery or confectionery product shall comply with the following:

(i) Be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner, be free from cracks and wherever possible, be composed of non-corroding, metal or other smooth, impervious material giving an easily cleanable surface. Stationary or not readily movable equipment shall be so installed as to provide for easy cleaning.
(ii) Refrigeration shall be provided so that all perishable food products used in the manufacturer processing of any kind connected with the production, distribution or sale of bakery or confectionery products shall be maintained at a temperature not to exceed forty-five degrees Fahrenheit.

(iii) Equipment too large to permit washing in the sinks shall be cleaned in a manner approved by the state health officer.

(iv) All barrels, boxes, tubs, pails, kneading troughs, machines, racks, pans or other receptacles used for holding materials from which bakery or confectionery products are manufactured shall be kept clean and sanitary and shall be so constructed as to be easily cleanable.

(v) All food contact surfaces shall be cleaned and sanitized after each day’s production.

(d) Only pasteurized milk or milk products shall be used in the preparation of custard and cream-filled bakery products.

(e) All custard or cream-filled mixtures shall be cooked, the temperature and time of heating of the mix, to be at a minimum, the equivalent of a temperature of one hundred forty-five degrees Fahrenheit for a period of not less than thirty minutes.

(f) Upon completion of the cooking of the mix, it shall be immediately transferred into previously sanitized containers, properly covered and chilled as rapidly as possible to forty-five degrees Fahrenheit or below and maintained at such a temperature until used.

(g) The apparatus and food contact surfaces used in adding any custard or cream filling to a bakery product shall be of impervious material and shall be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized after each use, in a manner approved by the state health officer. No cloth filled bags shall be used.

(h) Preparers engaged in the preparation of custard or cream-filled bakery products shall not touch the custard or cream filling with their hands after it has been cooked.

B. This Section shall not apply to any preparers of jellies, preserves, jams, honey, honeycomb products, cakes, and cookies which are made at a home for sale, whose gross annual sales equal twenty thousand dollars or more.

C. Any individual selling cookies and cakes from the home for sale to the public pursuant to this Section shall not sell such cakes and cookies to any retail business or individual for resale.

Signed into Law: June 18, 2013

Went into Effect: August 1, 2013
NATIONAL HONEY MONTH HISTORY

National Honey Month is a celebratory and promotional event held annually during the month of September. Its purpose is to promote US beekeeping, the beekeeping industry, and honey as a natural and beneficial sweetener. This honey awareness month was initiated by The National Honey Board (originally a US government established, USDA-overseen, organization) in 1989. September is significant for honey producers as it is the month that marks the end of the honey collection season for many beekeepers in the United States.

So, take this opportunity to promote the use of honey and to educate the public about the healthy aspects of honey and/or honey products. Check out the National Honey Board website for recipes that can be shared with honey consumers.

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL HONEY MONTH!

September is National Honey Month, and what better time to celebrate one of nature’s simplest pleasures – honey!

More than ever, people are looking for natural ingredients and it’s hard to imagine anything more pure and natural than one-ingredient honey. Honey is a back-to-basic ingredient that people can feel good about using in both culinary applications, as well as finding new and innovative ways to use it.

“People are quickly realizing the uniqueness and versatility of this one-ingredient wonder,” said Bruce Boynton, CEO of the National Honey Board. “Honey is no longer confined to the kitchen and culinary applications, as its versatility now spans to the medicine cabinet, beauty regimen and even the gym.”

Honey’s versatility is not the only thing that makes it unique. There are more than 300 varietals of honey in the United States alone, each with a distinct flavor profile and color based on the floral source where the bees collect the nectar. As a general rule, light-colored honey is milder in taste and dark-colored honey is stronger.

To find a specific varietal near you, visit www.honeylocator.com.

LEARN ABOUT HONEY

Honey is honey, it’s just that simple. A bottle of pure honey contains the natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from the nectar of plants or secretions of living parts of plants. Nothing else!

When scientists begin to look for all of the elements found in this wonderful product of nature, they find a complex of naturally flavored sugars as well as trace enzymes, minerals, vitamins, and amino acids.

Honey is made by bees in one of the world’s most efficient facilities, the beehive. The 60,000 or so bees in a beehive may collectively travel as much as 55,000 miles and visit more than two million flowers to gather enough nectar to make just a pound of honey!

The color and flavor of honey differ depending on the bees’ nectar source (the blossoms). In fact, there are more than 300 unique kinds of honey in the United States, originating from such diverse floral sources as Clover, Eucalyptus and Orange Blossoms. In general, lighter colored honeys are mild in flavor, while darker honeys are usually more robust in flavor.

Complete information concerning honey’s chemical makeup and nutritional content is available in our downloadable PDF brochure, “Honey, a Reference Guide to Nature’s Sweetener”. 
WHAT IS IT ABOUT BEES AND HEXAGONS?  

So, what is it about bees and hexagons? This is a bee-buzzing, honey-licking, 2,000 year old mystery that begins here, with this beehive. Look at the honeycomb in the photo and ask yourself: Why is every cell in this honeycomb a hexagon? I know you’ve been wondering this all your life, but have been too shy to ask out loud.

Bees, after all, could build honeycombs from rectangles or squares or triangles........ But for some reason, bees choose hexagons. Always hexagons! And they don’t choose just your basic six-sided hexagon. They like “perfect” hexagons, meaning all six sides are of equal length. They go for the jewelers’ version; precise, just so. Why?

Well, this is a very old question. More than 2,000 years ago, in 36 B.C., a Roman soldier/scholar/writer, Marcus Terentius Varro, proposed an answer, which ever since has been called “The Honeybee Conjecture.” Varro thought there might be a deep reason for this bee behavior. Maybe a honeycomb built of hexagons can hold more honey. Maybe hexagons require less building wax. Maybe there’s a hidden logic here.

I like the idea that below the flux, the chaos of everyday life, there might be elegant reasons for what we see. “The Honeybee Conjecture” is an example of mathematics unlocking a mystery of nature, so here, with help from physicist/writer Alan Lightman, (who recently wrote about this in Orion Magazine) is Varro’s hunch.

The Essential Honeycomb

Honeycombs, we all know, store honey. Honey is obviously valuable to bees. It feeds their young. It sustains the hive. It makes the wax that holds the honeycomb together. It takes thousands and thousands of bee hours, tens of thousands of flights across the meadow, to gather nectar from flower after flower after flower, so it’s reasonable to suppose that back at the hive, bees want a tight, secure storage structure that is as simple to build as possible.

So, how to build it? Well, suppose you start your honeycomb with a cell like this (←) a totally random shape, no equal sides, just a squiggle.

What about your next cell? You don’t want big gaps between cells. You want the structure tight. So the next cell will have to cling to the first, like this (→).

And the third cell, once again, will have to be designed to fit the first two. Each cell would be a little different, and that means, says Alan Lightman ....... this method of constructing a honeycomb would require that the worker bees work sequentially, one at a time, first making once cell, then fitting the next cell to that, and so on.

But that’s not the bee way. Look at any “YouTube” version of bees building a honeycomb, says Alan, and you won’t see a lot of bees lounging about, waiting for their turn to build a cell. Instead, everybody’s working. They do this collectively, simultaneously and constantly.

So a “squiggle cell plan” creates idle bees. It wastes time. For bees to assemble a honeycomb the way bees actually do it, it’s simpler for each cell to be exactly the same. If the sides are all equal, perfectly hexagonal, every cell fits tight with every other cell. Everybody can pitch in. That way, a honeycomb is basically an easy jigsaw puzzle. All the parts fit.
OK, that explains why honeycomb cells are same-sized. But back to our first question: Why the preference for hexagons? Is there something special about a six-sided shape?

Some shapes you know right away aren’t good. A honeycomb built from spheres would have little spaces between each unit …… creating gaps that would need extra wax for patching. So you can see why a honeycomb built from spheres wouldn’t be ideal. Pentagons, octagons also produce gaps. What’s better?

“It is a mathematical truth,” Lightman writes, “that there are only three geometrical figures with equal sides that can fit together on a flat surface without leaving gaps: equilateral triangles, squares and hexagons.”

So which to choose? The triangle? The square? Or the hexagon? Which one is best? Here’s where our Roman, Marcus Terentius Varro made his great contribution. His “conjecture” and that’s what it was, a mathematical guess, proposed that a structure built from hexagons is probably a wee bit more compact than a structure built from squares or triangles. A hexagonal honeycomb, he thought, would have “the smallest total perimeter.” He couldn’t prove it mathematically, but that’s what he thought.

Compactness matters. The more compact your structure, the less wax you need to construct the honeycomb. Wax is expensive. A bee must consume about eight ounces of honey to produce a single ounce of wax. So if you are watching your wax bill, you want the most compact building plan you can find.

Two thousand thirty-five years after Marcus Terentius Varro proposed his conjecture, a mathematician at the University of Michigan, Thomas Hales, solved the riddle. It turns out, Varro was right. A hexagonal structure is indeed more compact. In 1999, Hales produced a mathematical proof confirming so.

As the ancient Greeks suspected, as Varro claimed, as bee lovers have always thought, as Charles Darwin himself once wrote, the honeycomb is a masterpiece of engineering. It is “absolutely perfect in economizing labor and wax.” The bees, presumably, shrugged. As Alan Lightman says, “They knew it was true all along.”

* The article above was submitted by Timothy J. Haley, LBA Board Member. It was modified slightly by the newsletter editor to adjust picture sizes provided by the author and to fit the format of this newsletter. Content was not changed!

**WHAT ABOUT BEESWAX**

Beeswax is a natural wax produced in the bee hive of honey bees of the genus Apis. It is mainly esters of fatty acids and various long chain alcohols.

The wax is formed by worker bees, which secrete it from eight wax-producing mirror glands on the inner sides of the sternites (the ventral shield or plate of each segment of the body) on abdominal segments 4 to 7. The sizes of these wax glands depend on the age of the worker and after daily flights these glands begin to gradually atrophy. The new wax scales are initially glass-clear and colorless, becoming opaque after mastication by the worker bee. The wax of honeycomb is nearly white, but becomes progressively more yellow or brown by incorporation of pollen oils and propolis. The wax scales are about 3 millimeters (0.12 in) across and 0.1 millimeters (0.0039 in) thick, and about 1,100 are required to make a gram of wax.

Honey bees use the beeswax to build honeycomb cells in which their young are raised with honey and pollen cells being capped for storage. For the wax-making bees to secrete wax, the ambient temperature in the hive has to be 91 to 97 °F. To produce their wax, bees must consume about eight times as much honey by mass. Typically, for a honey beekeeper, 10 pounds of honey yields 1 pound of wax. It is estimated that bees collectively fly 150,000 miles, roughly six times around the earth, to yield one pound of beeswax.
Most southern beekeepers extract their honey crop during July, or August for those living a little further north. Generally, the amount of incoming nectar from blooming plants declines rapidly after mid-July. In response to the reduced rate of incoming food, queen honey bees lay fewer eggs, and the area occupied by a brood nest decreases. Colony size decreases over the summer because older workers that die will be replaced by a lower rate of newly emerging bees. This is a critical time for protecting bees from themselves: a beekeeper’s biggest threat is honey bees stealing honey from each other.

The theft of honey by marauding bees is termed “robbing.” This is a confusing term because many beekeepers also use this term to refer to the harvesting of the surplus crop by the beekeeper. Robbing must be prevented at all costs this time of year. Once started, robbing can spread like a fever throughout an apiary as colonies are stimulated to steal from pools of spilled honey or the weaker colonies in the apiary. The resulting frenzy will result in many stings to the beekeeper trying to work in the bee yard, but much worse, robbing bees can literally kill one another. Usually the weakest colonies are attacked by several stronger colonies. However, once the frenzy begins, strong colonies begin to pick on one another. The result can be that the beekeeper has a few strong colonies full of stolen honey and many dead colonies killed by the continuous onslaught from the strongest colonies.

Beekeepers can protect their colonies in several ways. First, evaluate and remove the weakest colonies from an apiary. Perhaps a couple of weak colonies can be combined to form one strong colony (ways of doing this will be discussed in a future article). Second, all entrances can be reduced using special wooden blocks aptly named “entrance reducers.” These strips block about 85% of the entrance, which gives the guard bees in a colony a much smaller opening to defend. The only problem with entrance reducers in the summer is that they dramatically reduce the ability of a colony to cool the nest. So, only use entrance reducers if you are also using a screened bottom board. The screen on the floor of the hive will help the colony keep cool when the entrance reducers are in place. If you use solid bottom boards, you can staple number 8 hardware cloth across most of the entrance and leave a couple of inches open to serve as a reduced entrance.

The most important way to protect your bees is not to open the colonies after taking the honey off until later in the summer. Simply opening a hive will allow odors of honey to waft through an apiary, and this is enough to stimulate worker bees to snoop around the opened hive. When you take the honey supers off of your hives be very careful and try not to spill or drip honey in the bee yard. This will stimulate robbing.

The other important creature to keep in mind this time of year is the Small Hive Beetle (SHB). This hive pest usually increases in numbers in our area during July-August. Strong colonies can handle the beetle and prevent them from laying eggs in the combs. It is the larvae of this beetle that damages combs. However, the other situation that benefits the beetle is a stack of unprotected supers full of honey on the floor of your honey house. The eggs from these beetles can hatch in less than 24 hours during the summer, so any stack of honey supers can fall victim to larvae of the SHB tunneling through the combs – which will spill the honey crop onto your floor. The most important rule is to extract your honey as soon as it is removed from the bees.

Once extracted, the supers of wet combs can be returned to colonies to be licked dry. Be careful! Just carrying the wet combs back to the apiary can stimulate robbing. Give the bees 24 hours to dry the extracted combs, and then remove the combs from the hives. This is very important. Some of the strong colonies may be allowed to keep a super of combs because they can protect the combs from invasion by SHB. However, almost all colonies will actually decrease in population over the summer months, and placing empty combs on top of the nest is actually a stressor. The additional combs will greatly increase the volume of hive that the bees must patrol to protect from the SHB. Remember there is no food coming into the hive (unless you are feeding the bees), so the extra combs really are not needed until the autumn honey flow begins.

It is best simply to remove the dried and empty combs from all hives that cannot protect the combs without risk of attack by the beetles. The best procedure is then to freeze all of the supers of combs for a few days, thaw them, and then stack them in a cool dark place with a moth repellent.
**OBSERVATIONS OF A DISEASED HIVE**

**Late Summer 2009:** I recently sent off samples of diseased brood from the demonstration hive located in the Pollinator Garden behind Clay Lyle Entomology. The samples were collected using sterile techniques and transferred to Eppendorf tubes containing RNAlater. The samples were cold-shipped to Beltsville for RNA virus analysis. I expected a positive test for European Foulbrood, but the symptoms were not a perfect match.

The disease was first detected in my hive in early August, when I noticed a foul smell coming from the direction of the hive. Upon investigating the brood comb, I saw that about 50% of the brood was infected with some sort of disease manifesting similar symptoms to those ascribed to “parasitic mite syndrome” (PMS). PMS is a term coined by the Beltsville lab to describe a degenerate condition believed to be caused by varroa and tracheal mite infestation, there is no actual causative agent which accurately describes the appearance of dead larvae. The only thing inconsistent with the description for PMS is the presence of an odor in my hive. This is not characteristics of PMS.

I have recently noticed a behavior in the adult bees of the infected colony that suggests whatever is causing this “snotbrood” disease may be diminishing the health of adults. In general, affected bees that are performing hive duties are bumbling around in an uncoordinated ‘drunken’ stagger, and when they fall to the ground, the do not fly immediately back to the hive, but sort of roll around on the ground, limbs waving slowly and totally out of synch, before they eventually take off and spiral up to the hive. These may also be the effects of pesticide poisoning that I am occasionally observing, but one of the symptoms described for PMS is “crawling adult bees”, which is perhaps the strangest behavior I have noticed in my bees. Flying seems to be very difficult for the affected adults. Their movement is sluggish in every way. I have not noticed whether all bees displaying this odd behavior are of similar age or hive task, or whether any of them are foragers at all. I need to do some lengthy observation to determine whether the behavior is caused by pesticide poisoning or if it is related to the mysterious brood disease.

**UPDATE - August 2013:** I never heard back from the Beltsville lab on my diseased brood, but I encountered the same disease in that colony the following summer and the summer after that. In every case the brood eventually stopped showing disease symptoms as soon as the temperature started to drop. Last summer I had a break in the disease pattern, perhaps due to requeening. I haven’t seen the disease in any of my hives this year.

**SCIENCE BRIEF – IDIOPATHIC BROOD DISEASE SYNDROME**

Audrey’s previous observations are fairly typical for a condition that is now called idiopathic brood disease syndrome (IBDS). Idiopathic means that the cause of the condition remains unknown, or at least a specific cause is difficult to determine because several confounding factors cannot be separated. She did not mention it in her article, but she had not used chemicals in her hives for control of any pest or pathogen, so the brood disease was not likely caused by residues of a miticide.

She also did not mention sampling for Varroa mites, so we cannot totally discount the PMS angle from her scenario. I’ve seen colonies with advanced PMS, and they smelled terrible, like rotting brood in other diseases.

I recently talked with a friend of mine who told me an interesting story about how stubborn some folks are to accept mites as a possible cause of death. The beekeeper claimed to have a varroa-resistant stock of bees that did not need treatment; however, he complained that somebody needed to investigate IBDS because it was occurring in many of his colonies. The man never sampled his own bees for mites, but he sold a nuc to a woman who had my friend sample them for mites. My friend also noted the brood disease in her nuc, and he found > 45 mites from a 300 bee sample. That level of mites is well above the economic threshold for mites for late summer when the sampling had occurred. So, in this case, the man’s bees are probably suffering from PMS related to high varroa populations.

I am not suggesting that IBDS does not occur; I am only suggesting that when you first see signs of this kind of disease, sample for mites to eliminate that possibility. It is the most likely candidate for a brood problem that appears to be PMS-like.

* The complete article is presented in the July - August 2013 Mississippi Beekeepers Association Newsletter.
WINNING THE WAR?  

Dr. Jeff Harris, Mississippi Beekeepers Association Newsletter, July - August 2013

Dr. José Villa of the USDA Honey Bee Breeding Lab in Baton Rouge, LA told me of some relatively good news recently. It had to do with people more than bees, but it left me feeling pretty good about how persistence can lead to changes in behavior. He had attended a meeting of the Capitol Area Beekeepers Association (CABA) after a lengthy period of being absent from their meetings. During the course of the meeting, José was impressed by the lecture from the current President, who was championing the concepts of integrated pest management (IPM) in dealing with varroa mites. The President asked all new beekeepers to sample their colonies in order to make treatment decisions, and he gave all of the good reasons for doing so (chemical residues in combs, development of mites that are resistant to chemicals, and the possible ill health effects of chemicals on bees).

This lecture impressed José because he and I and several other scientists from the Lab often enjoyed interacting with the members of CABA. Soon after varroa mites came to that area, we felt it our duty to continually impress upon beekeepers the need for sampling for these mites in order to make treatment decisions (e.g. knowing when to use a chemical miticide). It seemed like we talked for years, but at any one time only 1 or 2 folks ever tried the techniques that we asked of them. It was quite refreshing to hear beekeepers preaching to other beekeepers about the need for IPM in dealing with varroa. This represents a small victory in the war to change beekeeper behavior from the regimented and indiscriminate use of miticides.

Since I have been in Mississippi, I have seen many colonies of bees dying from obvious varroa mite infestations. Many folks do not know how to sample for the mites or how to make a decision of using a chemical miticide based on their sampling. Others simply do not to treat and do not sample. Many of these people resist the idea of using chemicals in their hives. I understand this sentiment, but I will caution that folks who do not treat will likely lose many colonies over several years.

Some folks feel like they are breeding a better bee by only keeping survivors. Theoretically, this is possible, but most people are not in situations in which they can control mating among their bees. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the average small scale beekeeper can “breed” mite-resistant stock that will reliably produce varroa resistance without using instrumental insemination to control mating.

I am trying to be very clear here: it is unlikely that anyone can produce disease resistant stock without first controlling the mating in their bees. Even if a colony is truly resistant to the mites, if you cannot make sure that daughter queens mate to drones carrying similar genes that control resistance, the genetic effects of the queen mother will be diluted in the next and subsequent generations.

So, the use of chemical miticides is sometimes essential to save colonies that reach a threshold level. If you elect not to treat with a chemical and allow a colony die, you might be needlessly losing honey production or pollination service. Several people have told me that they allow colonies to die, and their stock is getting genetically superior over time. Perhaps they are able to control mating better than most people? I will remain skeptical (based on my experience as a breeder) because it is unlikely that anyone with just 10 colonies can truly breed resistant bees.

I have also helped several people evaluate the mite loads in colonies that were sick or dying during the last year. Some of these people were sold varroa-resistant stock and told not to worry about varroa IPM or sampling. This is clearly the wrong message. I helped developed one of the best varroa resistant lines of bees (VSH trait), and I would never advise anyone to forgo sampling or monitoring of the pest population in these resistant bees. There simply is no totally varroa resistant line or stock of honey bees – so implementing a varroa IPM plan that incorporates sampling to make treatment decisions will always be the best approach to this problem.

Footnote: Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM programs use current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. Beekeepers should incorporate IPM into their pest and disease prevention program. Jerry Rogers, Captial Area Beekeepers
PLEASE RENEW YOUR LBA MEMBERSHIP!

LBA memberships have almost doubled over the last two years. The LBA is excited about this growth and sincerely appreciates your membership support. If you have not completed and submitted your membership renewal for 2013, please use the membership application at the end of this newsletter and send your renewal to our treasurer as soon as possible. The January issue of our newsletter was your last issue if you allowed your membership to expire. Please don’t delay any longer and renew your LBA membership today.

Please feel free to make additional copies of this Bulletin and provide them to others interested in beekeeping and our organization. Reading the information provided below by our membership chairman will help you join us in our recruiting efforts by participating in our “Member Get A Member Campaign.” Prizes are awarded to the top three recruiters annually! The current campaign begins November 1st, 2012 and ends October 31st, 2013.

There are many challenges facing beekeepers. Our organization provides a voice to Louisiana beekeepers and lets state government know that we are an important part of Louisiana’s agricultural industry. There is strength in numbers, so help us help you through your membership support!

“MEMBER GET A MEMBER CAMPAIGN”

Membership in the Louisiana Beekeepers Association (LBA) is a privilege, but more importantly, an obligation. Louisiana beekeepers can only help themselves and their industry by participating in the dialogue that sets our state’s beekeeping policies. Anchored in a rich tradition of service, the LBA has always promoted a healthy, productive beekeeping industry. This can only be accomplished through a strong state beekeeping organization. To accomplish this we need the help of more beekeepers. Our current membership is growing but still consists of less than 50% of the state’s beekeepers. We have to continue to mobilize if we are to remain an effective voice for all Louisiana beekeepers.

You can help us and help yourself by joining the LBA today. Equally importantly you can recruit other beekeepers to join the LBA! To help increase our membership we are continuing our “MEMBER GET A MEMBER CAMPAIGN.” Simply talk to fellow beekeepers about their participation in their state beekeeping association through membership. In addition, ask their assistance and support in recruiting other LBA members. There is strength in numbers and if the LBA is to be the beekeepers voice we need a large membership.

Our membership application contains a referral blank to be used to list the member that recruited the new member to join the LBA. An award awaits three individuals (1st, 2nd, and 3rd place) that enlist the most new members in 2013. The award will be presented at our annual convention, which will be held in the St. Tammany Parish area the first weekend in December 2013. Please feel free to contact any officer or board member if you need more information on promoting membership in the LBA.

Thank you for your support,

David Ferguson
LBA Membership Chairman

Rules for the "Member Get A Member Campaign"

1. Each year the contest start date is November 1st, continuing through the next calendar year to the contest end date of October 31st.
2. 1st place: Plaque and $50.00 check. 2nd place: Ribbon and $25.00 check. 3rd place: Ribbon and $10.00 check. The local club in which the first place winner is a member will win a one year associate membership valued at $25.00.
3. The winners will be contacted before the convention by the "Member Get A Member Campaign" chairman in order to see if they will be attending the convention. If they will not be attending, for whatever reason, their award will be sent home with a person of their choice. It is up to the winners to make these arrangements.
4. LBA officers and board members can participate in the contest, but cannot win the contest.
Commercial Business Ads

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

For all others who would like to advertise in the Bayou Bee Bulletin please submit an annual fee of $25.00 by check payable to the Louisiana Beekeepers Association. Upon receipt your business ad will be included in six issues of our newsletter annually and on our website. Post your fee to LBA Treasurer, Mr. David Ferguson, P.O. Box 716, Brusly, LA 70719.

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Thank you for your support,

David Ferguson
LBA Membership Chairman

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