

The Local Buzz

August 2017



President's Message, Jerry Van Heeringen



August is here and that means the Nevada County Fair. As usual in place of our regular meeting we will meet at the NCBA booth for clean up and BBQ on **Sunday**, August 6. The cleanup starts at 5pm and BBQ at 6pm. The club will supply hot dogs and hamburgers. If you are going to attend please bring a side dish to share.

Looking at my President's message from August of last year I saw that I had intended to enter honey but I'm embarrassed to say I didn't get it done. This year is different, I entered at the Fair website before the deadline and I have my honey in the queenline jars ready to go, now it's just a matter of getting them to the Fairgrounds Thursday August 3 between 11 am and 7 pm. Judging by the NCBA Face Book page several other members have done the same, it looks like we'll make a good showing this year.

August Meeting Sunday – Annual Clean and BBQ August 6th

There is no regular meeting this month. In place of the August meeting, our annual Clean Up and Bar B Que will be **Sunday** August 6th ! Clean up of the bee booth will start at 5:00PM followed at 6:00PM with the annual Potluck Bar B Que. Bring your favorite dish to share. The club will supply the hamburgers, gourmet hot dogs, Veggie burgers, paper plates and plastic ware and ALL the fixings! The free fair tickets will be handed out at the Bar B Que. The Bar b Que is ALWAYS delicious so come one come ALL! It's a great way to really get to know your fellow bee keepers!

Bee Bits

Randy Oliver, Contributor

Welcome to a slightly warmer climate. Sacramento's currently setting the record for the longest unbroken stretch of days over 90°F. These high temperatures are not only stressful to us humans, but also to plants and bees.

Even for subtropical plants, temperatures above 90°F are stressful—reducing their growth rate, causing water stress, pollen sterility, and poorer fruit and seed set. Not only that, but the high ozone levels that we suffer through in Nevada County become elevated at higher temperatures. And I don't even need to talk about the impact of high temps and low humidity on our tinderbox grasslands and forests. When we humans mess with the climate, we're really playing with fire!

And then there's our poor bees. Broodnest temperature is held at 95°F 24/7. It's relatively easy for bees to do this when the weather's cool, since they can simply contract their cluster and allow their metabolic heat to keep the brood warm. But as the air temp (and sun exposure on the hive) rises, the heat generated by their basal metabolism must then be exhausted from the hive. Thus we observe some of the workers "bearding" at the entrance, and can hear the vigorous roaring of ventilating bees. And if you look at the top bars under the hive cover, you'll see that the bees have covered them with water droplets for evaporative cooling. The necessary water foraging and fanning to keep cool comes at a large metabolic cost to the bees.

Thank goodness that the leadership of the State of California is serious about reducing the human contribution to the previously slow natural process of climate change (which has long been in progress as we come out of the

current ice age). From all indications, the biosphere of the world that we will be leaving our children and grandchildren will be very different than that which we grew up in (grandpa, what did a glacier look like?). Our shorter, warmer winters also play havoc with varroa management, since we don't get a brood break. That said, if you don't get varroa levels down in your hives by mid August, most colonies won't survive the winter. In our own operation, we're all about mite management during the month of July (being proactive rather than reactive). I've just completed performing alcohol washes on over 1000 hives, which has opened my eyes to the actual state of varroa infestation across our operation. I'm doing this to select the most mite-resistant colonies to supply breeder queens for my selective breeding program.

I'm also using this time for experimentation with improved treatments for varroa control. We recently completed a formal trial of 64 hives (in conjunction with USDA ARS), testing oxalic acid/glycerin applied on shop towels. The initial results are very promising. We've started a second follow-up trial testing an extended treatment, a late-season treatment, as well as a different method of application (on heavy cardboard).

I've also started a test of alternative methods for application of thymol—testing 16 different ratios of thymol and vegetable oil on cellulose blocks.

And what's got me really excited is that I may have solved a problem that I've been working hard at for nearly two years—to come up with a better method of applying formic acid. I had a brainstorm a week ago, built a prototype, and have been testing it for the past four days. I'm keeping my fingers crossed, but it looks as though it could be a game changer!

Yellow Star Thistle is having a good season (it thrives following heavy winter rains), and is providing pollen and nectar for our hungry bees. FWIW, our bees are roaring in our silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) at 5:00 in the morning, and again until dark, thus providing a nice source of pollen and nectar when not much else is in bloom.

Fair Booth Coordinator – Position Filled

From Jerry Van Heeringen, President

So many thanks to Rob Slay, he has volunteered to fill the position of Fair Booth Coordinator! Rob is a long time member and past president of the NCBA. Please contact Rob at (530) 263-5618 for all questions and concerns related to the NCBA booth at the Nevada County Fairgrounds. If you are volunteering to staff the booth during the Fair please keep Rob's phone number with you. On behalf of me, the board and the membership thank you Rob for taking on this responsibility.

Minutes from Last Meeting

From Jack Meeks, Secretary

President Jerry Van Heeringen opened with Q&A. Janet Brisson will be a presenter at the Eastern Apicultural Society meeting, University of Delaware, speaking on Chemical Free Beekeeping using powdered sugar, Drone Bee Mite Management and Small Hive Beetles.

Robbing is widespread with during nectar shortage. If a hive entrance is surrounded by a cloud of circulating bees, restricting the entrance with a reducer or screen may save a weak colony.

Finance Janet Brisson: JuneStartBal: \$5388.55; Inc \$175.50; Exp \$132.39; JuneEndBal \$5429.02

PROGRAM: V.P. Amy Hustead demonstrated exhibit boxes for showing single honey frames at the Fair.

Transparent plastic and wood designs make both sides visible.

Janet Brisson explained how to exhibit liquid honey in jars for the Fair honey judging, keeping the jar tops clean and the jars upright. Former exhibitors described making of novelty gift boxes, with hints on winning variations.

In The Yard

Submitted by Brion Dunbar

It looks like my bees are making some honey and I will start extracting soon. I have finished up my midsummer mite treatments, two successive rounds of a single MAQS formic acid strip. I swore two years ago I would never do the recommended two strips because of some heavy queen and worker losses. I sample each yard doing alcohol washes on two or three colonies before and after treatment. The mite counts before treatment were all over the map- many at less than 2%, but enough at 7-8% to cause insomnia. I even saw one poor colony at 18%! Treating with the formic in most cases knocks the percentage in half or better. My thoughts are that this is just buying time until the all important August treatment, which will be Apiguard thymol gel.

Speaking of mites I ran across a wonderful video showing the life cycle of the mites. Don't watch it before bed or you might have mite nightmares!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2vg59Snt6c&t=547s>

Messing With Powdered Sugar - Mid-Summer Dusting Results

Submitted by Janet Brisson

The blackberry flowers in our area all seemed to turn to berries on the same day, June 26. June 25th, it seemed we had lots of flowers, June 26, the flow was over.

And suddenly my husband noticed "my" bees swarming "his" hummingbird feeders. Doesn't matter we have a commercial apiary less than a mile away. But I thought, if it was my bees, I should feed. We were still a few weeks away from the star thistle blooming.

It was the right time to do a powdered sugar dusting, right after the blackberry flow and as luck would have it, I was able to find the queen in the first hive and did a powdered sugar shake. 8 mites. 2 mites higher than the recommended threshold. I dusted that hive with powdered sugar, waited 20 minutes and dumped the results into a pail of water. 91 mites. That's on the high side. I like to see less than 60 mites in the water. The next two hives were in the 40's.

Hive #4 lost a queen. I put in a queen cell from another hive on June 6th. This would be a typical Brood Break to reduce Mite Loads. No queen since at least June 1st and the new queen would have hatched and been mated by the 20th. All mites in the hive would have been phoretic (outside of the bee cells). That dusting dropped 423 mites in 20 minutes. Pretty impressive. Since I remove the observation board after the initial 20 minutes, additional mites drop below the screen onto the ground to be taken away by ants. You can expect a severe mite drop for the next couple of hours after the initial dusting.

Randy Oliver has a great chart (at bottom titled "Mite Population" that shows if you do no treatments for the year, by the beginning of July you could have 2000 mites and if you continue not to treat, by the end of August you could have 8000 mites. If you dust monthly, by July 5, you would have under 1000 mites. My dusting schedule is different from his chart. I dusted 3 weeks in March and then once time in May, just to see. My counts were low on both sessions.

With Hive #4 loaded with phoretic mites, I might have taken around half of the mites down in the first 20 minutes. In any case, I'm keeping that mite load low.

I fed the 4 hives with heavy syrup and took down all the hummingbird feeders. We put them back up in the late afternoon and then took them back down in the morning. The hummers are on it at dusk and dawn. We did that for a week or so till we saw no more bee activity.

A few hours later I went down to the bees only to find extreme robbing going on in my weakest hive #3. I put on entrance reducers. When things quieted down, I opened #3 and was happy to see no damage (robbing will show jagged uncapping to get at the honey). The mite count shot up to 181 mites which shows how robbing can distribute mites to other hives.

My neighbor called and said she was seeing extreme robbing on her hives. I called Randy who confirmed robbing going on in all his yards. He said the smell of spilled syrup will cause these frenzies. And Powdered Sugar doesn't have a smell, so that's why I was able to dust without a problem.

I sent Randy my article (Thanks Randy) to check it out and he said,

“There is one thing that you should make clear – that dusting is truly efficacious only under three scenarios:

1. It's performed at least once or twice a month *over the entire course of the year*, or
2. It's performed during a natural or induced brood break, when there is no sealed brood in the hive, or
3. If the colony contains brood, that it's repeated at 4-day intervals at least 4 times in a row.”

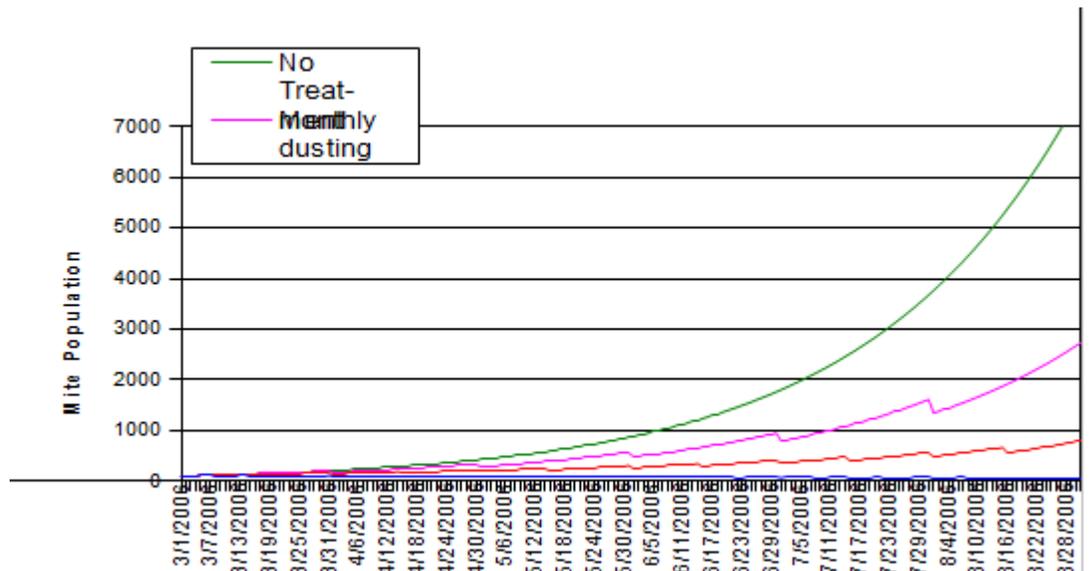
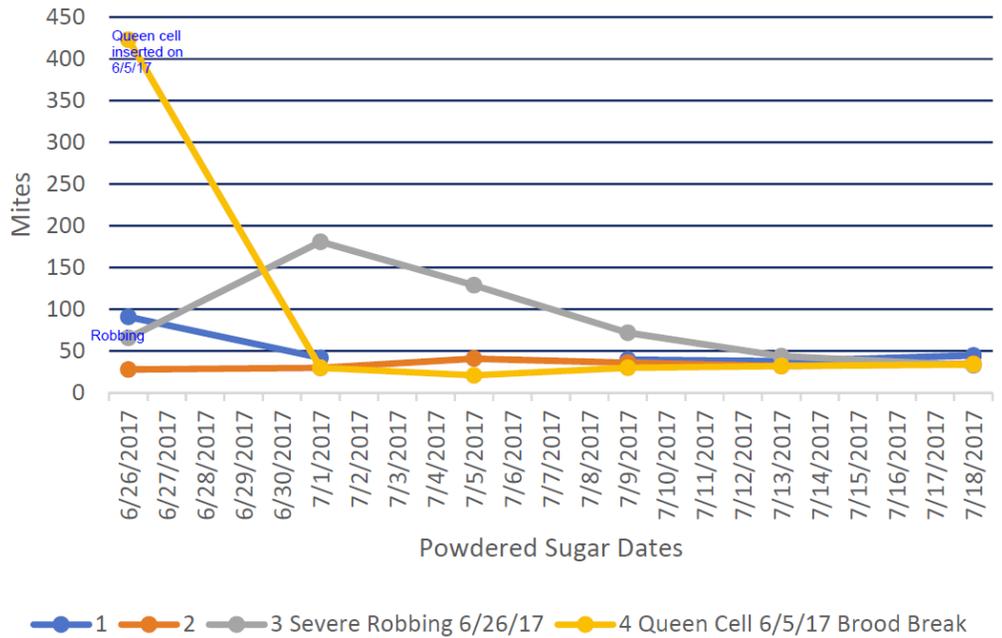
Randy is the expert on this. I do want to share my experiences since 2005.

On point #1, we keep our mite loads low dusting for 3 weeks, twice a week if counts are high (over 60 in the water) at the end of March, end of June and second week in September. We developed that schedule around the honey flows as I was worried about contaminating honey we were selling to the Briarpatch.

We also dust once a month after October to February when we have lower amounts of brood. If I see a spike, I will dust again in 3 or 4 days and keep watching till it drops. Point#2, YES, the brood break works, see Hive #4 info! You knock down a bunch of mites. And point #3, Yes, if you dust every 4 days for 3 weeks, you knock down that many more mites. Especially important if your count is high. If I see under 60 mites, I will dust every 7 days for 3 weeks. If I see under 20 mites in all of our hives, I might just stop dusting. If one hive has high counts, I'll dust all of them.

I want to show off my latest chart. It's cool, you can see the high count of phoretic mites in hive #4 drop dramatically as I continued to dust during my 3-week period. You can see the mite count go up on the hive that was being robbed and then drop down again with repeated dustings. Notice that I dusted 3 times in a little over 3 weeks.

June/July 2017 Powdered Sugar Dusting



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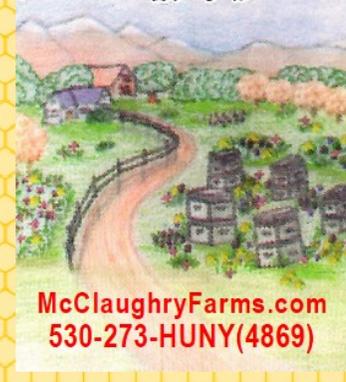
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The Nevada County Beekeepers Association is dedicated to apiculture education and promotion of the art and science of beekeeping among beekeepers, agriculturists, and the general public. This is a “not for profit” organization. Donations are welcomed.

Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran’s Memorial Building at 255 South Auburn Street in Grass Valley. All visitors are welcome. Use the back entrance.

The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Contributions should be received by the 20th of the Month to be included into the next issue. Submit to garyg@newpress.com

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



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First Class Mail

August Meeting

Annual Clean and BBQ August 6th