

The Local Buzz

April 2019



President's Message, Jerry Van Heeringen



Spring is in the air! OK it's not really in the air but it is on the calendar. Today Wednesday March 20 at 2:58 as I write this is the official start of spring here in Nevada County. You certainly wouldn't know it by looking out the window. It's 45 degrees with a steady rain falling. Looking at the forecast I see many more rainy days than dry days, it seems this year March came in like a lion and is going out much the same way. While all this cold rainy weather is starting to wear on me it does hold the promise of a good honey flow this year, but for now we need to keep monitoring the weight of our colonies and feed if needed.

My work as a general contractor has taken me to Auburn this week and trees are in full bloom all over town there. We can expect to follow them shortly and once the weather warms a bit swarm season will be in full force and we'll have to be alert for signs of swarming. For now all we can do is wait for those infrequent dry mild days to take a peek inside our colonies and see how they're doing.

April 1st Meeting –7:00 PM

Wendy Mather is heading up the California Master Beekeeper program and will be speaking with us at this meeting. Wendy will speak about the various roles California Master Beekeeper Program members are playing in counties across our state. Wendy will also cover the history of the CAMBP, and provide an overview of the current and future plans for the program.

Bee Bits

Submitted by Randy Oliver

I'm typing these words on the first day of spring. Manzanita bloom is running at least a full month behind what I've observed over the past decade. My plums and nectarines nearly that far behind. So as far as bee management is concerned, forget calendar dates.

We finally got a few days of flight weather last week, and the bees exuberantly took advantage of them. Unfortunately, for many hives, it was too late. They had initiated broodrearing in early January, stimulated by the alder bloom, but then weather kept them in their hives until last week. Such circumstances are really tough on a colony.

Unless the beekeeper provided their hives with pollen sub, they likely dwindled. Nosema can become a problem, especially if the bees also suffered from dysentery due to the long, wet confinement. Under these conditions, nosema can cause a colony to quickly dwindle to nothing—leaving only a trace of chilled sealed brood, and perhaps some eggs in the cells. A couple of feedings of protein can avert this fate.

We're getting all kinds of calls for nucs and queen cells, but we need to ask why? It's still too cold for queens to mate, and unless you're next to hives that returned from almonds, there are few drones to mate with. And why purchase a nuc, only to take it home to sit in cold, rainy weather?

Right now, if your colonies are still healthy, they've put on nectar and pollen from the manzanita bloom. But they are now facing at least 10 days likely without flight weather. That's gonna be tough for them. I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but that's just the way it is—some years are really tough for bees.

The good news is that once it finally warms up, all this moisture in the ground should be great for a sustained nectar flow—especially for yellow star thistle in July and August. So don't give up!

Another piece of good news is that our selective breeding program for varroa-resistant bees is giving us reason for optimism. We started with 1500 hives with new queens last spring, and performed mite washes on them in June, August, September, and November—eliminating from consideration any in which varroa counts were climbing. At the end of the November assessment, we had only 80 potential breeders left to overwinter. We took most of them to almond pollination and are giving them a final mite wash upon their return—so far, we've taken counts from 56. Note that these colonies have not been treated for mites since last April. Of those 56, 48 still have mite infestation rates of 3% or less, and 10 of them had mite counts of zero! These are far better results than last season, so I'm pretty excited.

We'll use the queens of these apparently mite-proof colonies as breeders this season. And since all our stock came from last season's selected breeders, we've got a much better chance at capturing genetic combinations for mite resistance this year. That depends, of course, upon whether whatever mechanisms they possess are heritable--wish us luck! And for any of you who obtain queen cells, queens, or nucs from us this season, if you identify any that exhibit strong mite resistance, I may wish to breed off them next spring.

Club Dues R Due

Submitted by Janet Brisson

Please continue to be a valuable member of the Nevada County Beekeeper's Association.

2019 Dues are \$20/yr. (printed mailed newsletter) or \$15/yr. (email newsletter).

Are you paid up? Look at your email Subject Tab or your mailing label. If you see the words "Dues R Due!" you are not current. Please update your membership or join today.

You can pay dues at the upcoming meeting or mail dues to (make check out to NCBA) NCBA C/o Janet Brisson 20693 Dog Bar Road Grass Valley, CA 95949 Or go our website at <http://nevadacountybeekeepers.org> and look under the Join NCBA. You can pay through PayPal.

Any questions, please feel free to call me at 530-913-2724 or email me at rubes@countryrubes.com

Update on Sammie Ramsey

Submitted by Janet Brisson

I was at the Nevada State Beekeeping Conference in Yerington, NV end of last February and heard about the exciting updates on Sammy. When he spoke to us last April, 2018, Sammy was working on finishing his doctorate and looking for funds to get him back to Thailand to do research on the newest and 10,000+ times worst mite than Varroa, the Tropiclaelaps mites. (read more here <https://www.gofundme.com/fundhoneybeerresearch>).



Last year conferences and clubs, including ours, were doing fund raisers for Sammy, as his government funding to go back to Thailand suddenly dried up. Thanks to Bonnie Morse from the Marin County Beekeepers (who will be our speaker this November) started a GoFundMe account to start raising money. Sammy figured he needed a minimum of \$25,000 to do his research and live in Thailand. When the account got to \$15,000, Bonnie saw that GoFundMe took 4% of desperately needed

money, so she started another campaign to fund Sammy directly.

In the meantime, Sammy finished his PhD and is now Dr. Ramsey. He got a job in the Bee Lab at the USDA in Marysville, literally across the street from his old campus at the University of Maryland. Because of the government shut down, Sammy wasn't getting his mail. As soon as the government was running, bags of mail were dumped on his desk and most of them were checks for his research in Thailand. Along with the GoFundMe account, he raised over \$41,000!!!! And the best news yet, the USDA is going to continue to pay his salary and insurance while he is doing his research overseas. Doesn't get better than that.

Sammy gave several incredible talks over the event on his research. These conferences have amazing updated information for beekeepers. And, best news ever, Dr. Meghan Milbrath was a speaker and Bonnie and I were able to commit her to coming to California and speak to our clubs in April, 2020. In addition to that, Bonnie and I were also able to also secure Dr. Jon Zawislak from Arkansas for October 2019 and Dr. Wayne Mangum, Scientist and author in June, 2020. What a great line up.

Minutes ~ Last Meeting

Submitted by Ann Hiner – Acting Secretary

The Nevada County Beekeeper's Association was called to order by President Jerry Van Heeringen in the downstairs meeting room of the Veteran's Memorial Building in Grass Valley, CA at 7:00 PM.

New Business: 6 newcomers were welcomed and introduced themselves. Several had been taught beekeeping as children and were now interested in returning to learn more.

Janet Brisson, treasurer, introduced a motion which passed without opposition, to increase NCBA dues for 2020 to \$20/year for those receiving the newsletter via e-mail and \$25/year for those receiving a mailed version. The additional funding will be used to help bring in nationally recognized speakers by pooling our resources with other beekeeping associations in our region.

Old Business included the treasurer's reports, listed below. Unusually cold and snowy winter events were discussed, and the treasurer reports were delayed due to the holiday dinner in early December, the cancellation of January's meeting due to road closures and heavy snow, and Janet's audit to find an error of double entry that is now corrected. (Thanks for all you do, Janet!)

Announcements:

Jack Meeks, NCBA Secretary, is parting with his bee equipment. Several people were interested and will work with President Jerry to contact Jack, who was unable to attend tonight.

Randy Oliver is tonight's speaker, asked to update us on his exhaustive 2018 research, progress on the data results, and the recent flooding of area almond orchards and hives.

Scotten School is inviting beekeepers to bring an exhibit to their March 14 school open house event. Contact Pres. Jerry for details if you can help raise awareness about the art, science and career of beekeeping. Inspiring children is a must do for our club's future.

Q&A

Q: Weather issues and the effect of so much snow led to a discussion of hive dysentery. Randy Oliver was asked if moisture and mold in the hive was the reason bees were leaving yellow streaks around the hive box and in the snow.

A: He explained bees can hold their waste for several months, but when they fly out of the hive on a reasonable weather day, they may defecate immediately and their feces may hit the face of the hive. If, during inclement weather, they defecate within the hive, that may transmit Nosema spores.

It helps to prevent cold condensate from falling on the cluster by placing Styrofoam insulation on top of the hive. A heavy rock may help secure it. It's also important to tip the hive box forward and fix it in place so water

flows away from the hive entrance.

Q: How long does a pollen patty pack last in the 'fridge?

A: Not sure. But since they are acidic and high sugar, they would be resistant to bacteria and fungi. Perhaps a year??? Taste it...it should taste sweet without 'off' flavor. If not, spit it out.

Q: Should we worry about nosema? **A:** Nosema ceranae builds up during winter and spring, but there doesn't appear to be a strong correlation between nosema level and winter survival. In this area, nosema typically disappears over summer.

The only way to diagnose nosema is by microscopy. The best assessment is to examine a sample of 10 bees taken from within the hive (as opposed to at the entrance) from the outside of the cluster, and examine them for nosema one at a time. If 10-20% of the bees in the sample have spores, there is little effect. But when 40% of 10 bees have it, there is some measurable effect. The real collapse occurs when 6 or more or 10 out of 10 are infected. If you need to inspect your bees, you may be able to work with Randy and his microscope. Note: Much dysentery appears to be caused by amoeba or yeast in a bee's gut.

Q: Will cover crops help the nut growers have better harvests?

A: Yes, but note almond growers often put the mustard and other cover plants on the perimeter of their orchards. They do that because leaving the dirt bare between the trees and rows will raise the temperature a degree warmer during a cold spring.

Q: When we register to inform the county we have bees, do we have to label each hive?

A: No, state law requires us to label the bee yard if it is not on our own property, but not each hive. One-inch high lettering with the beekeeper's name and phone number requires a fairly large sign. The local county guidelines are still in the works.

Speaker - Randy Oliver - Scientist, Biologist, Teacher, Beekeeper

Randy gave updates on some of the projects he is working on now, beginning with fungicides.

Almond growers typically spray the blossoms with fungicides if there is rain. The best time to spray almonds is at dusk or dark, when bees are inside their hives. The California Almond Board is getting better at advising timing and safety issues. Still, some hives in almond orchards arrive strong and leave with dead brood.

Bee and Mite Drift:

Randy ran a large experiment to find out how bees and mites drifted throughout the landscape. One of his test hives received over 500 mites in late September and October. To his surprise, there was substantial bee drift to an apiary a half mile away, and some drift to a full mile. Bottom line: check your mite levels in late summer and fall to prevent spreading mites and virus to others, and to see whether your hives have been invaded by mites from outside.

Pollen Patty Nutrition:

Randy and his team ran a field test to see whether supplementing a commercial pollen sub with what he suspected were critical limiting nutrients would result in improved colony growth. Unfortunately, the results did not support his hypothesis.

Quick Update on Their Hygienic Queen Breeding Program:

They are still on track going into their third season. They re-queened their operation last spring solely with daughters of queens that headed the 2% of their colonies that maintained the lowest varroa populations without treatment in the previous year. And this year they will do the same. They are hoping that there will now be enough of a shift in the drone population to result in a noticeable increase in the percentage of colonies that don't require mite treatment. Randy is happy to provide free queen cells to hobby beekeepers along Highway 174 or down McCourtney Road. (Glad you are home again and our speaker, Randy!)

Treasurer's Report—February 2019

Submitted By Janet Brisson

Beginning Balance \$5,323.11

Deposits 276.00, Debits -128.88

Closing Balance \$5,470.23

CLASSIFIEDS

Honey Extraction House

A to Z Supply has a honey extraction house available for rent. Equipment is provided and the room is heated and there's lots of hot water for cleanup.

For more information: 530.273.6608

Amy Hustead, Bear River Bees

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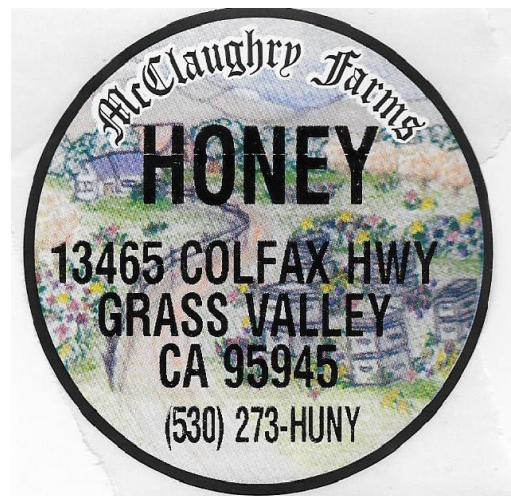
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- Honeycomb sheets for rolling candles - over 30 different colors!
- Bee themed gifts & decor for home and garden
- Wide variety of books - children's, beekeeping, DIY soap & candle making

NCBA Swarm Hotline List

The NCBA Swarm Hotline List is in the process of being updated for 2019. If you want to be on the list as someone who can be called upon to retrieve a bee swarm then send the below information via email to Lynn Williams at iamlynn@hughes.net.

- Name:
- Phone Number(s):
- Any area limitations:

Even if you were on the list for last year you must confirm your participation for 2019. Note that many calls come from the Yuba City/Marysville area.



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Advertising rates are \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members.

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

Advertising space (3" by 2") in this newsletter is usually available and need not be bee-related. Advertising rates are \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. Please email Janet Brisson at rubes@countryrubes.com



Nevada County Beekeepers Association
www.nevadacountybeekeepers.org



c/o Janet Brisson
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First Class Mail

April 1st Meeting 7:00PM

Wendy Mather from the
California Master Beekeeper Program

Nevada County Beekeepers Association

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