



June 2006

President's Message

Hello To All,

As I sit here and write the President's Message, it's raining. If you had asked me two months ago if I would ever want it to rain again I might have said "no" out of frustration. But now it feels really refreshing. There was so much pine pollen and dust on everything around the farm, its nice have it cleaned off. As of this writing the blackberry bloom has just started in Auburn and will be working its way toward Grass Valley. I have honey supers on the colonies in the Auburn yard and will be placing them on the yards in Grass Valley in the next week or so.

Although it has slowed down considerably, it has been a busy time for the people on the swarm removal team. I received 6 calls in four days that resulted in 4 new colonies! This is good way to up the numbers and possibly pass on some mite resistant genetics.

Also, Bonnie Bagwell, who has done an outstanding job of editing The Buzz for some time now, will be taking a few months off. All submissions to The Buzz should now be

forwarded to Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. Thank you Leslie for volunteering!

Until we see you at the next meeting on June 5th, Happy Beekeeping!

Your President, Shane Mathias

June Program

The Varroa mite has evolved resistance to most chemical miticides. Randy Oliver will update us on the state of the art of Varroa mite control without synthetic chemicals. He will discuss the various methods of breeding queens, monitoring for mites, biotechnical methods, and organic chemical treatments. Randy will bring along various pieces of equipment used, and demonstrate mite sampling methods with actual brood frames, bees, and mites. Members will also receive his current handouts, including a treatment strategy table.

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

In preparation for this column, I reread last month's. What an amazing change in the weather—we skipped the entire season of Spring, and went straight to hot, dry Summer! As I write this though, thunderstorms are dumping rain and giving us some respite from the heat. The sudden change from cold and wet to hot and dry was a real stress on many plants, but gave some intense nectar flows during fruit bloom. The early heat is also getting wax moth going strong, so check on any stored dark combs before they're destroyed.

I've been working long hours in the beeyards trying to make up for lost time, working bees 'til it's dark. We've been making nucs like mad in order to fill orders, and to make up our own increase. Despite the poor weather earlier, the cell builders have been producing wonderful queen cells, and we're getting big, fat new queens. Pollen flows have been intense, and the nucs are building up well.

I'm very excited about my best breeder queen (I've dubbed her the "Dream Queen"). We've tried quite a few different lines of bees these past few years, in search of a mite-resistant line that was also a good producer. The daughters of Dream Queen outperform every other line in mite resistance, AFB and chalkbrood resistance, buildup, and honey production, and are also gentle to work with!!! As you might expect, I'm grafting mainly off her and her best daughters.

Mite levels this year seem low, so I asked Eric Mussen if he's gotten similar reports from

other beekeepers. The answer was "yes." There is no end to surprises concerning the Varroa mite! We had a similar year about four years ago, when no one had problems with mites, then they returned with a vengeance the next year. I've seen another report of yearly levels in Georgia, where mite level again fluctuated greatly. This is a mystery to me, since the mites live in a relatively stable environment (the brood nest at 94°F) and the bees have the same brood cycle each year. I've yet to hear any explanation as to why mite levels fluctuate year to year.

I've had some groups over to my beeyard for demonstrations. It always amazes folks as to the different tastes of honey in the combs. It's easy to pick up a single comb and find two or more different colors (and flavors) of stored honey. I even found a dark yellow honey this spring that fluoresced bright green when tipped toward the sun!

As I write this column, the black locust is in full bloom along the Golden Center Freeway, and blackberry blossoms are opening at the lower elevations. All the elements are in place for a good honeyflow from wildflowers, blackberry, and perhaps yellow star thistle, so make sure you give the bees adequate room right now, and don't let them run out of space.

Swarm season was intense in the Valley, but does not seem so up here so much. I'm not sure why, since any of my colonies that were not split have been building swarm cells like mad, and several swarmed from mid-May on.

May Minutes

President Shane Mathias opened with Q&A comments. Honey flow is good in some areas-check your honey supers. Check deep supers to make sure queen has empty cells. Some hives are packed with honey and pollen. Permament now makes foundation which draws out smaller 4.9 mm cells instead of usual 5.1 mm cells-may result in warmer packed brood unfavorable to mites. County administration wants to charge the Ag Comm office rent. If so, we have alternative-Helling county library will rent us meeting room first Mondays for \$5-no storage, but no insurance. MOTION Oliver: Contract with Helling library: Pass voice vote. Finance: J Brisson: March \$2117.90; Inc 137; Exp95.14; March End Bal \$2160.08. April Inc\$129.50; Exp \$25; April End Bal \$2264.58 Program: Dr. Eric Mussen UCD entomology. American Foulbrood: many strains now terramycin resistant-Tylan OK for treatment, not as prophylactic preventive. There is a diagnostic kit. Research now on probiotic bacteria to prevent infection. Tracheal mites can cause entire hive to abscond. Varroa mites in large numbers can collapse colony, spread Deformed Wing virus and Sacbrood. Thymol gel "Apiguard" soon in CA, will kill Varroa and tracheal mites. Small Hive Beetles invade beehives; larvae eat pollen, honey, brood. Submitted by Jack Meeks, Secretary

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Powdered Sugar Treatments – A Good Thing

By Janet Brisson

A few weeks ago, about a week before the raspberries bloom, we decided to do another powdered sugar treatment. We have been leaving our sub-boards (sticky board) out to allow for total ventilation and our last mite counts were really low. We had split our 5 hives into ten and requeened the splits with queen cells.

I had a problem with one of the splits. The queen cell was put in a cell guard, a little red plastic mesh piece that you slide the cell into. If you do this, make sure it's straight. When we looked in the hive about 10 days later, we found the dead queen stuck in the cage. Somehow the queen cell twisted so the end was hitting the size. She was able to uncap, but not to leave the cage.

I immediately requeened with another very ripe cell and waited another 10 days.

No queen, no eggs, nothing. It has been 3 weeks without a queen.

The raspberries look like they will start blooming in a week, so we decided to do one more treatment on all hives, even though the counts had been low.

In went the sub-boards, no oil or sticky since we're doing this treatment. We didn't split the supers, just poured the sugar on top of the frames of the top super. The next day I removed the boards and checked the powdered sugar. There were hardly any mites, maybe 20 at the most, in all except that problem split. There were maybe 100 mites on that board. Why all of the sudden did we get this mite explosion?

We had a broodless hive. All the mites were Phoretic. All capped brood had hatched and no place for the mites to hide. This is when a powdered sugar treatment would be most effective. We probably captured 95% of the mites.

There are a lot of beekeepers who will kill their queens (or cage them) in the summer and wait 3 weeks before requeening. Using powdered sugar right after requeening is the perfect timing for knocking down most of the mites. You would only need to treat once.

After the third treatment on the infested hive, wait 5 days before greasing up your sub-boards and inserting. We found after a treatment, the mite drops are much higher for a few days after. The powdered sugar promotes grooming for a few days and you would not get an accurate count.

Cottage Cosmetics

A how-to guide for making fine olive oil soap and all natural personal care products using beeswax is available from local author and herbalist, Linnie McNaughton. Detailed instructions are included.

To order send check for \$15 (Cost of book is \$12, plus shipping and tax) to:

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21055 Dog Bar Rd., Grass Valley 95949 or call (530) 906-0831 or e-mail at

greenblessings@infostations.com.

W.A.S. Conference July 24-27

The Western Apicultural Society will hold its annual conference this year at the Pea Soup Andersen's conference center in Buellton, California, July 24-27. The conference schedule looks exciting, with over four days of cutting edge speakers, social events, tours, and dining, and post-convention events. We're lucky to have the conference relatively close this year—for more information send an email to the conference organizer Adrian Wenner at wenner@lifesci.ucsb.edu and ask for conference registration materials (they apparently don't have a website yet.), or call him at (805) 963-8508.

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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.

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.

The newsletter is published monthly as a service to the membership. Articles, recipes, commentary, and news items are welcomed and encouraged. Submission by email is encouraged. Please submit to Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. The deadline for the July 2006 edition is June 18th. A limited amount of advertising space (business card size 3" by 2") is accepted and need not be bee-related. Rates are \$1 per issue or \$7 per year for NCBA members and \$16 per year for non-members. All revenue from advertising goes to the Association treasury and helps offset the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter.

To receive the *Local Buzz* via email: please email your request to lesliegault@yahoo.com

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First Class Mail

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