



May 2006

## President's Message

First of all I need to apologize for my dereliction of duties for last month's newsletter. I had escaped the rain soaked hills of Nevada County for the tropical waters of Southern Florida and missed my submission deadline for the Buzz. Florida was nice though, the air temperature was 80 degrees and the water temperature at 88ft below the ocean surface was 78 degrees! I thought I would return and it would be spring.....wrong!

The weather around here has impacted our lives considerably. Our annual rainfall for Grass Valley is around 50 inches. We are now hovering at close to 78 inches so far with more rain expected. I don't mean to be a big complainer about the weather, but like most everyone else, I have things to do that require decent weather. The bees have taken a considerable hit due to the weather. Queens have been almost impossible to obtain, and while queen cells have been available, it's been a risky proposition to purchase them not knowing if they will be able to go on their mating flight. Also, colonies have had a rough time foraging for food due to the weather. Check your colonies to see if they are close to starvation, if so, FEED THEM.

In spite of it all, we are expanding our operation from 3 colonies to 40+. As of yesterday I am up to 27 colonies with more splits to occur in two weeks. Last week I made an attempt to graft some queen cells. I started with 14 cups and checked them yesterday. I found three cells had been produced! The rest of the cups had fallen out of the bar because I did not secure them with wax. Live and learn.

The week before last I spent half a day with John Miller and his crew placing several hundred queen cells into hives in Placer County. I was amazed at his operation. If you have the time, call John and see if he needs the help. He is a wealth of knowledge and a good teacher. I recently purchased bees from Bob and Joan Seifert. They too have a nice sized operation and are very knowledgeable. I recommend that if you are

serious about beekeeping that you take the time to work with people like John Miller, Randy Oliver and Stephanie Hughes, and the Seifert's. This is their business, and while no one knows it all, these people are on the forefront of what currently works best for them and it is guaranteed that you'll learn something. Good luck and we'll see you at the May meeting.

~Your President, Shane Mathias

## The 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. If you cannot attend, Randy will mail you a copy of the handout if you send him a SASE, including an extra stamp for copying costs, to 14744 Meadow Drive, GV 95945.

## Honey as Medicine

Submitted by Detlef Osburg, NCBA Vice President

Honey has been used medicinally, for a wide variety of ailments, since ancient times. It continues to be used as a folk medicine to this day; however, recently, even mainstream medicine has started to take a serious look. In 1989 an editorial in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (Zumla and Lulat) expressed the opinion "The therapeutic potential of uncontaminated, pure honey is grossly underutilized. It is widely available in most communities and although the mechanism of action of several of its properties remains obscure and needs further investigation, the time has now come for conventional medicine to lift the blinds

off this 'traditional remedy' and give it its due recognition."

In New Zealand, the Honey Research Unit of the Department of Biological Sciences of the University of Waikato is actively conducting research to better understand the therapeutic qualities of honey. They have gone beyond anecdotal evidence and are conducting controlled scientific research.

Respectability, however, is hard won. An editorial in *Archives of Internal Medicine* assigned honey to the category of "worthless but harmless substances" (Soffer 1976). Most medical practitioners and researchers remain unaware of the positive findings of current research.

Research is being done for both internal and external use of honey. The most promising results are for honey's therapeutic effect on wounds. Briefly, these include:

- Viscosity - honey provides a protective barrier which prevents cross-infection
- Osmolarity - drawing fluid out from tissues it creates a moist healing environment
  - Tissue growth is not slowed by drying
  - Fibroblasts are able to pull wound closed
  - Epithelial cells grow level with the skin surface so there is no pitted scar resulting
  - Dressings do not stick to the surface of wounds as they sit on a layer of diluted honey
  - There is no growth of new tissue into the dressing, so there is no pain when changing dressings and the new tissue is not torn away
- Osmotically induced outflow also creates 'drainage', flushing away from the tissues in the wound any harmful substances from bacterial contaminants
- Sugar content of honey also aids in the rapid removal of malodour from wounds
- Rapid effect of cleaning up wounds
- Hydrogen peroxide produced in honey promotes a rapid rate of healing

In New Zealand Manuka (aka: tea tree) Honey as a folk medicine has long been used for its antiseptic properties. This unique characteristic, found only in Manuka Honey has been the focus of research by the

University of Waikato. All honey has antiseptic properties; however, these break down with the introduction of catalase. Catalase is an enzyme present in the cells of plants, animals and aerobic (oxygen requiring) bacteria. It promotes the conversion of hydrogen peroxide to water and molecular oxygen decreasing its effectiveness. Only Manuka honey retains significant levels of antibacterial effectiveness when exposed to catalase, thus retaining its curative properties.

The potency of this catalase inhibiting factor varies greatly and standards have been developed to grade Active Manuka Honey. A UMF (Unique Manuka Factor) rating is now placed on all medicinal Active Manuka Honey. The UMF value is calibrated to be the same as the equivalent percentage of phenol in controlling *Staphylococcus aureus*. For example UMF 15 is equivalent to 15% phenol.

The research available is extensive. The University of Waikato website has a wealth of information including an extensive list of source materials both print and web. I encourage you to research this yourself. There are also a number of commercial sources of both product and information both in the US, the UK and of course New Zealand (Google - Active Manuka Honey). These tend to include a great deal of anecdotal information on a broad range of applications for Manuka Honey. These do not have the same scientific credibility, however, its only honey and unless you are allergic or diabetic it can do no harm.

<http://bio.waikato.ac.nz/honey/special.shtml>

## **Please Look at your Mailing Label**

Is it telling you this is your last issue and you have paid? Please contact me so you don't get bumped from receiving your monthly '**Local Buzz**'.

Our newsletter keeps you up to date with what your hives should look like, what you should be doing at that month and important information concerning your bees. Your dues not only support local beekeepers by buying books and videos for our library, you support agriculture, which is vital to our food supply. Without bees, we would be in a sorry state.

If you have not paid, please bring your dues to

the May 1st meeting or mail them by May 15th.

\$10.50 will get your newsletter on-line or \$12.50 if you like your newsletter via the post office. Please make out your check to Nevada County Beekeepers Association and mail to:

NCBA c/o

Janet Brisson, Treasurer

20693 Dog Bar Road

Grass Valley, CA 95949

530-346-6439

[rubes@infostations.com](mailto:rubes@infostations.com)

(call or email me if you paid your dues this year, thanks)

## Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

As I write this, the National Weather Service forecast is actually predicting sunshine on the horizon! The sogginess we've been experiencing has been annoying to nearly everyone, but to California agriculture, it's been a disaster (literally, in several counties).

Poor Chris Bierwagen in Chicago Park got virtually no peach crop last spring, and is facing the same prospect again. Rice growers haven't been able to plow their fields yet, and may not have time remaining to grow a crop this season. And finally, beekeepers: we're running about five weeks behind normal schedule, since the weather has not allowed us to mate out queens. Many of our colonies have been on the verge of starvation, for both nectar and pollen. Without the protein in pollen, the bees cannot rear brood, and are very susceptible to disease (more on this later).

We're making nucs like mad-the problem being that it takes two weeks to mate out a queen, then about six more weeks for a nuc to build to full colony strength. Unfortunately, we have only three weeks until the honeyflow begins, and it will largely be over nine weeks from now. This puts us up against the wall with timing. For nuc orders by Members, I'm giving you a jump by setting aside nucs headed by proven high-quality queens from last season. I have a simple method for prioritizing the order of the queue-those who come out and help make up nucs demonstrate to me the most interest, and therefore go home with nucs first (plus they get to pick out their own queens!).

Lynn Williams and others report that swarming is in full swing in the Valley. This especially scares me, since we've got one remaining load of 70 colonies in the almonds that we have not been able to reach due to the sticky clay soil (we're hoping to go get them tonight). So we don't know if they are starving, or all swarmed out! Many of our colonies in the foothills started swarm cells this spring, but wisely ate them up before completion. As soon as the weather breaks, expect major swarm action up here.

This spring is remarkable on the length of bloom of manzanita. It started early, in late January, and is still in full swing at the 2800-foot level in late April! On good flight days, the bees are putting on nectar weight like I've never seen before! After a day of flight, the entire apiary is redolent with the aroma of ripening manzanita nectar, and every free cell in the colony is full of the sweet stuff. Shaking bees off combs results in a shower of sticky nectar over everything. To my surprise, though, one of our yards on Lime Kiln Road, although surrounded with blooming filaree, which normally produces a nice nectar flow, was so close to starvation, that I had to make an emergency trip out late yesterday to give them each a frame of honey to avert disaster! As usual, beekeeping is just a series of surprises.

I am in full swing producing queen cells. They are available for \$3.00 each if you give me several days' notice. I'm grafting off a variety of queens: the best stock from last year, MH x SMR, SMR x MH, Russian x SMR, pure MH, and some extra-gentle queens (MH = Minnesota Hygienic, SMR = Suppression of Mite Reproduction). Our MH x SMR breeder from last year has gone over a year now with absolutely no mite treatments, and is dropping only about two mites a day on the sticky board! Her daughters are heading some of the best colonies I've seen in years-beautiful huge brood patterns, producing lots of honey under adverse conditions, and very gentle-you can't ask for much more!

I mentioned earlier disease caused by stress due to lack of pollen. American Foulbrood is one of those diseases, and I'm seeing way too much! You wouldn't notice it unless you were nuking up your colonies and inspecting every frame as I do. I'm

seeing a few cells here and there. If I see it, I close the colony up and haul it to the sick yard. Normally, I shake the adult bees off the combs to save them in new colonies on foundation, but this season I think I will experiment with the new antibiotic, Tylosin (sold as Tylan). I'm planning to discard any brood frames showing sign of disease, then treat the colony with Tylosin, and monitor it for the rest of the year. I'll let you know the results.

A final item of interest: the National Honey Board is financing research on developing "solid honey" products--honey throat soothers, honey tea drops, and honey essence. Their article begins "Imagine a pure honey lozenge infused with natural lemon or menthol to soothe a sore throat. Or how about popping a tea-and-honey infused disk into a cup of hot water for an instant cup of honey flavored tea?" This could be a whole new market for honey! Their current report also shows that 46% of wholesale honey sales are to industrial users, 40% to retail stores, and 14% to the food service industry.

## April Minutes

Vice Pres Osburn opened with Q&A. Swarm Line: Lynn Williams (530) 478-4078 and 675-2924, Karla Hanson 265-3756, and Jim Weidert 268-8520.

The American Bee Journal contains Randy Oliver's analysis of California's business climate for migratory bee importers for almond pollination payment, growers require each box have 70% bee coverage on all 10 frames, inspected at 60°F. The result is many abandoned boxes after combines of midwest beekeepers failed to meet CA standards. Raising queens requires wax free of buildups of Apistan and Coumaphos, which kill queen larvae.

PROGRAM: Video "Honey In The Comb."

~Jack Meeks, Secretary

## Tips from the Internet!

Submitted by Janet Brisson

[Requeening your Hot Hive!](#)

Michael Bush, Nebraska Beekeeper used to live in Texas and answers questions on many beekeeping forums. I found this great tip on the Beesource.com Forum.

"I learned to do this from bees from Texas. Get a bottom and a lid (makeshift will do) for every box. Put every box on it's own bottom with a lid. Put an

empty box at the old location. The mean bees are mostly field bees and they will return to the old location, where you KNOW the queen is not.

The rest are now just ten-frame "hives" with no field bees, MUCH less bees to face. Look for the one with the most bees (or if you noticed, the one with the brood) and look through it. You'll be AMAZED how much nicer the nurse bees in a one box hive are compared to the field bees in a huge booming hive.

If the ten-frame box with brood is still too hot, put half the frames in another box and put the lids back on. After they calm down (a few hours), look through each of them. Divide and conquer."

If you want to read the rest of the post, how they suggest making nukes out of the smaller hives and methods of requeening, that post is [http://www.beesource.com/cgi-bin/ubbcgi/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get\\_topic;f=5;t=000517](http://www.beesource.com/cgi-bin/ubbcgi/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=5;t=000517) or Beesource.com, then find "The Exchange" which takes you to the forum.

Under "Queen & BeeBreeding," under "My Requeen Strategy (4/15/06)." Contact me at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com) if you have trouble finding it.

## Honey Stix a Hit at Coffee Show; Honey Producer Involvement in Shows Could Lead to Sales Opportunities

Honey stix were a huge hit at NHB's booth at the Specialty Coffee Association of America 18th Annual Conference & Exhibition in Charlotte, N.C., April 7-10. Many of the thousands of show attendees were also able to sample a honey-based Dulce de Leche, whipped honey spread and solid honey wafers at NHB's booth. All of these products are the result of NHB's applied science research effort. The show was attended by coffee shop owners and various other types of companies involved in the coffee industry. It was the first time NHB had participated in this show.

NHB urges honey companies and individual beekeepers to consider participating in similar coffee and tea trade shows, as they represent an

opportunity for companies and individuals to sell their products. Such participation could involve exhibiting at shows, or simply attending and circulating product information. Pairing local varieties with a specific type of tea or coffee is one suggested display idea at such shows.

Several shows, sponsored by industry organizations, are held throughout the year at various sites around the United States. For more information visit the following web sites:

Coffee Fest (includes three regional shows) - <http://www.coffeefest.com>

Fresh Cup Roadshow (four regional shows) - <http://www.freshcuproadshow.com>

Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) - <http://www.scaa.org>

World Tea Expo - <http://www.worldteaexpo.com>

Information also may be obtained by contacting Charlotte Jordan at [charlotte@nhb.org](mailto:charlotte@nhb.org) or at 800-553-7162.

## Research Indicates Honey is Effective as a Wound Dressing

Substantial evidence demonstrates that honey, one of the oldest healing remedies known to medicine, produces effective results when used as a wound dressing. A review article in the most recent issue of SAGE Publications' International Journal of Lower Extremity Wounds summarizes the data. The article "The Evidence Supporting the Use of Honey as a Wound Dressing" can be found on The International Journal of Lower Extremity Wounds' website at <http://ijlew.sagepub.com>.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/04/060407151107.htm>



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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 Bonnie Bagwell at [arwg@infostations.com](mailto:arwg@infostations.com). The deadline for the June 2006 edition is May 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 [arwg@infostations.com](mailto:arwg@infostations.com).

Nevada County Beekeepers Association



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First Class Mail

May 2006

**The next meeting of the Nevada County Beekeepers Association is Monday night, May 1st, 2006, at 7 PM. Randy Oliver will update us on the state of the art of Varroa mite control without synthetic chemicals.**

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