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Barnstable County
Beekeepers Association



buzzwords

<http://www.barnstablebeekeepers.org>

February 2021

Upcoming Meetings

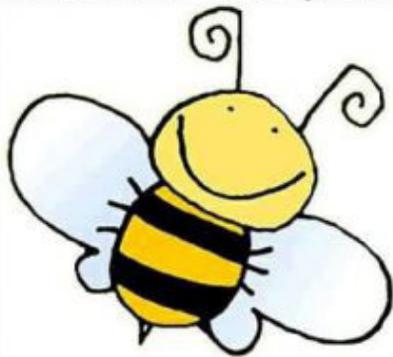
Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 7:30 pm

Topic: Mite Management with EAS Master Beekeeper John A. Gaut

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82167556793?pwd=Tmo2WW5aMDIyY1A2ckR1bnhmQWxXdz09>

HAP-BEE
NEW YEAR!



February is an excellent time to plan your beekeeping year. Mite Management is an important part of beekeeping and needs to be integrated in your other beekeeping plans.

John is based in Northeastern New Jersey. He has successfully managed low mite levels resulting in very low winter losses and strong healthy bees that produce nice honey crops. An effective mite management plan is key. John will explain the interrelationship of the honey bee and varroa mite biology. He will also share the root cause of many of the colony losses in winter. John will also suggest a treatment plan that he has used successful for several years. As a bonus, John will also update us on ApiVar and any resistance observed.

If you have any questions about mite management, please send them to john.a.gaut@gmail.com

Further Meeting Connection Information:

Meeting ID: 821 6755 6793

Passcode: 333520

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,82167556793#,,,,*333520# US (Chicago)

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Dial by your location

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+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 821 6755 6793

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Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82167556793?pwd=Tmo2WW5aMDIyY1A2ckR1bnhmQWxXdz09>

BCBA Seeks Scale-Hive Data to Aid in Seasonal Colony Management

Knowledge of seasonal weight gains and losses should be critical information for colony management during the growing season. Appreciating this, the club has recently begun monitoring weight changes using automatically recording electronic scales as part of the Cape Bee project. Otherwise, we're unaware of existing continuous records other than from an apiary in north Wellfleet (see article below).

Therefore, this is to solicit member help in finding, generating, and sharing scale-hive data among the membership. If you have such data from any year and from anywhere on the Cape, we would love to see it. If not, and you have the time to read a scale ideally daily but at least every few days during the spring and summer, then we will make a concerted effort to find and loan you a scale.

Newsletter Submissions

Please send Buzzwords submissions to [David Whalley](mailto:david.a.whalley@gmail.com) david.a.whalley@gmail.com.

We are looking for good stories, photos, links, news about talks and presentations you've done or seen, book and movie reviews, and items for sale or free to good home!

PDF, scanned document files, and hard copy submissions are not acceptable. You can create files in Word, Pages, Notepad, TextEdit, etc. for articles.

As is often said, all beekeeping is local. The accompanying article gives a hint of the potential value of scale-hive data for successful beekeeping in your local area.

John Portnoy & Claire Desilets

Clean Up Reminder

On the few clear and warm winter days we have here on Cape Cod, you check the top of your hive for signs of life and to evaluate supplemental feeding. Have you stopped and considered the underside of your hive? It's the time of year were colonies loose population just prior to spring buildup. This can leave a pile of dead bees just in front of your hive entrance. You want to make sure bees make it outside for critical cleansing flights on good days.

While bees are generally good at keeping their entrances clear, there is a good chance they can use your help. Take a long piece of scrap wood, a twig, or anything else you can fashion, and remove the mouse guard/entrance reducer and make a sweep of the bottom board. Keep in mind a bottom board is 16" deep so you need a fairly long tool to reach the back of the hive. One of the easiest tools I've seen people make is a wire clothes hanger, straightened to provide the length needed with a slight hook left on the end to act as a scoop. The sky is the limit in what you can use.

Forage

[These Special Bees Craft Nests From Flower Petals](#)

[Winter Weight Loss](#)

[Bee Reports over the Past Century Indicate a Loss of Diversity | The Scientist Magazine](#)

[Honey detective work raises fears for bees](#)



Remember to replace the mouse guard or entrance reducer when you are done! Keep in mind the correct way to install an [entrance reducer](#) in the winter is with the opening facing up. This position helps to keep the inside of the entrance clear of dead bees.

So What Is The Color Of Your Hive?

Reading through recent newsletters, we came across this rather interesting approach to painting your hives. A veteran beekeeper from Plymouth County paints his hives as seen here. The white painted sides are facing the east/south in the summer to keep the hives cooler and come winter, the boxes are rotated so the dark colors are facing east/south to help absorb some heat from the sun. Nothing ventured, nothing gained so giving it a try on a few hives.

Claire



That Dreaded Propolis

We are not sure of how many of you sat in on our January meeting but for those of you who did not, there is interesting research on the inclusion of propolis on the inner sides of the hive. This creates a propolis envelope to help increase the health of your hive. Roughing up the inside with rasp or wire brush will cause the bees to fill the damaged wood with propolis.

The lower deep box was constructed of rough sawn lumber and you can see the amount of propolis added to the inside of the brood boxes in one season.



Check out the BCBA Facebook page for shared links, photos, and questions/answers! Join the conversation!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BarnstableCountyBeeA/>

A Summary

“Pollinators, Understaffed, Underpaid and Underappreciated – Samuel Ramsey, PhD

Those of you who do any amount of reading must have come across the accusation that those of us who manage honeybees do so creating harm to the native pollinators. This was the subject of Dr. Ramsey’s presentation recently. If you also happened to sit in on the zoom, please correct the following information if wrong.

There are 4000 types of bees in North America today. Many of us are aware of the orchard mason bee, sweat bees and leaf cutters and many other native pollinators. Well, these and our honeybees are all currently affected by some of the following so stated Dr Ramsey.

Invasive parasites most damaging to ALL bees
Bacteria (AFB and EFB)
Fungi (Nosema and Chalkbrood)
Viruses
Pesticides
Poor land Management
Poor nutrition from poor foraging
Inbreeding (thin pool for honeybees – not native bees)
Climate change -blooming off
Socioeconomic factors.

This list of problems has spilled over in both directions. Native bees are sharing viruses with honey bees and vice versa. Native bees have specific mouth and body parts that are specific to certain native plants that honeybees do not or cannot pollinate. Honeybees are not the direct problem but we do need to better manage them and their diseases for a better ecological balance. Mankind bringing predators into the area (varroa, small hive beetle) have caused some problems.

Ironically, the January issue of Bee Culture has an article by Jay Evans, USDA Beltsville Lab “Over-sharing by Honeybees”. Dr. Evans shared two research papers on this very same subject. Is there a spillover on some viruses from honeybees to bumblebees? If interested check out the following: (Scientific Reports (2020)10:16847, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-73809-3>) and (Viruses (2020)12,1229;doi:10.3390/v12111229).

So what can we do beyond good management practices of diseases in our hives? We can house homeless bees such as building or buying tubal homes and planting pollinator gardens with more native plants.

Claire Desilets

Mite Monitoring and Treatment Timing are Critical to Having Live Colonies in Spring

I recently happened upon a research article in the Journal of Apicultural Research (Martin et al. 2010, abstract available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3896/IBRA.1.49.1.10>) that crystalized for me the need to get Varroa mites under control before winter bee production, or have dead colonies in spring. The study, conducted in the UK, followed both mite infestation and Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) infection levels throughout the year comparing miticide-treated to untreated colonies. DWV is probably the primary cause of over-winter colony deaths in our mite-infested colonies. Major findings of the study:

In untreated colonies, the most rapid increase in mite infestation and DWV infection rate occurred in July and August as the colonies began to prepare for winter. This pattern is well known: in late summer the Varroa population is still increasing on bee brood to emerge on a declining adult bee population – thus the higher mite-to-bee ratio.

Treating for mites during spring or summer resulted in a rapid decline in both mites and DWV, usually within a four to six-week period, probably due to the short lifespan of summer workers. However, treating mites in the fall killed most mites but did little to reduce DWV in the winter bees, with infections persisting for up to 23 weeks, in other words all winter. Thus, a single fall “clean-up” mite treatment, with oxalic acid for example, does not rid the winter bees of debilitating viruses, and probably explains winter mortality and spring dwindling of colonies despite the fall miticide treatment.

CLASSIFIED

Organic Farm in Orleans looking for hives for pollination. Contact Michael Herman at michaelaherman7@gmail.com. Location is Bessom Country Farm in Orleans. Must maintain an organic approach to management of your hives.

Nate Weeks, a beekeeper from Yarmouth Port, is hanging up his smoker (and all his other beekeeping equipment). He wants to give away a honey separator, smokers, white suits and veils, feeder, boxes, frames, and foundation to anyone who could make good use of any of it.
Contact Nate at 508-364-0687.

Based on the authors' experimental mite treatments at varying times throughout the summer, they conclude that: "to ensure colony survival in temperate regions, mites must therefore be removed prior to the start of the brood production for overwintering which starts in early September". A most cautious approach would be to be sure that mite infestations are below published injury thresholds (e.g. 3 mites per 100 bees) in late August. If not, immediate treatment at that time is recommended.

Of course, miticides aren't the only way to suppress summer Varroa-mite production. Other options include bio-technical methods like drone-brood removal and brood interruption via queen caging, as well as the use of mite-resistant honey bee stock.

John Portnoy

Winter Angst - When Is A Good Bee A Dead Bee?

New England winters. They can be breathtakingly beautiful. They can also cause a great deal of angst for beekeepers. After carefully caring for our bees all spring, summer and fall we have to take a step back during winter's chill. After the feedings, varroa checks and treatments, and winter preparations, how can we know that our bees are surviving the winter?

Did You Know?

In 11th century Germany, honey was so highly valued for its beer-sweetening abilities that German feudal lords required their peasants to make them payments of honey and beeswax.

Articles in books and magazines talk about tapping on and listening to a hive for signs of life in winter. Others recommend using infrared cameras to see the heat signature given off the hive. I've found that tapping rarely, if ever, works. The practical Yankee in me wants to spend money on needed hive parts and not on single use gadgets. I'm more for a common sense and practical approach.

There are signs to look for. A healthy colony continues to function throughout the year. One of those functions is undertaker bees removing the dead. Look for dead bees on your landing board. This is the one case where seeing dead bees is a good thing! Remove any dead bee you see and recheck every few days to reassure yourself. You'll appreciate our winters all the more knowing your hive survives them.

Winter Is The Time To Plan For A Cool Hive In Summer

Are there times when your bees are hot? Have they been defensive during the prior year? Winter is a good time to put a plan in place so your apiary work is more comfortable next summer.

Biologists define defensive behavior as a response to negative stimulation. This stimulation could come from you, the environment, or as a reaction to unhealthy conditions. As a beekeeper you have positive and negative effects on your colonies. For instance, a rushed inspection of a hive under less-than-ideal conditions is you having a negative effect on the hive. Expect defensive behavior from the bees in return. The goal is to reduce defensive behavior.

A lot of books and blogs advise re-queening as a solution to a defensive colony. This should be done as a last-ditch effort. There are a lot of things you can do prior to replacing the queen. Common-sense management practice helps regardless if your hive is hot or not: Winter is the time to start planning your management strategy to keep your bees calm.

Hive placement and environment

Make sure the hive is on a stand 12-15" above the ground. This helps with predators harassing the colony at night and putting the bees in a bad temper. Don't think you have predators on Cape Cod? Think again. My driveway camera picks up an astonishing number of possums, skunks and raccoons every night, year-round. Animals can be surprisingly compulsive in their habits. They may be harassing your hot hive every night and no others in your apiary simply because it's in their routine path.

Move the hive back from a lawn, path or other frequently used area. Preferably with a fence or bushes in front of the hive to turn bees skyward.

Having a hive behind a garden can be ideal. As the bee population increases during the year so do the height of trellis of peas, beans and tomatoes. This sends the bees skyward and not towards your used areas. The downside is you have to defer inspections if someone is working the garden that day.

Mow/weed-whack your apiary between 9am and 2pm. Most of the foragers will be out during that time period. Foragers are the most aggressive members of the colony.

Make sure your bees aren't harassed by lights at night. Sometimes this can be hard to discern without careful observation. Yours or a neighbor's lights might be on a timer or only be used on a weekend or other particular evening. We had our bees flying into our deck's fire table and the guests around it until the garden got tall enough to block the view from the hive.

Make sure the hive is not near running equipment like HVAC compressors. Bees are sensitive to vibrations and should not be near running equipment.

Inspections

Limit inspections to every 2 weeks. Inspect only from 9am to 2pm when foragers are out, the yard is quiet and the weather is favorable.

Keep inspections under 15 minutes. Find a way that track your time that works for you.

Here is trick: I like to take photographs so my first and last photograph of each inspection is of my watch. Since I started doing this my inspection time average dropped from one hour to under 10 minutes. I can no longer kid myself that "I wasn't in the hive that long" as the start and end time is in the pictures. I put the elapsed time in my inspection notes.

Zen and the art of calm inspections. See video from University of Guelph on [opening hives](#).

Have a goal for each inspection. Checking for Queen Right, Resources and Health are covered on University of Guelph [colony inspection](#).

Always check to see if the colony is queen right. This does not mean you need to see the queen. If you see eggs and worker brood of all ages then stop. Close up the hive and keep your inspection time brief.

Always do inspections from the side or rear of the hive. Approaching or blocking the front antagonizes returning foragers

Always wear enough protective gear to feel comfortable and relaxed around your bees. This helps to keep the bees calm.

Give your bees time to calm down from inspections. Don't inspect on days when you know there will be a lot of activity anytime afterwards. If your apiary is adjacent to a busy yard, accept that you will have days where you have to skip inspections. On my inspection non-starter list is cookouts, garden weeding, grandkids visiting, lawn mowing, and next-door neighbor yard activity. Everybody's apiary placement and social calendar is different. Take your own into consideration and reschedule inspections to avoid busy days.

Be aware of the changing season.

Ensure your bees have a reliable water supply during drought. Thirsty bees can be cranky bees.

Feed your colonies 2/1 sugar syrup in a dearth. Hungry bees can also be cranky bees.

Have a [mite management plan](#) written down for the entire year. Check mite loads monthly. Keep records of your results. Be prepared to treat immediately when required to keep the virus load that bees get from mite load. Healthy bees are happy bees!

Keep records of your inspections. I use a software app in part because it automatically notes the time of day and the weather. I make note of both bee temperament and beestings during inspections. This way I can review my notes as the year goes on and see how the bee's behavior changes. If I see a change for the worst, I change my management practices.

Always remember that as the season goes by your bee's needs and the environment around them changes. We all know we can't put bees in a box and ignore the changing season. Getting in tune with what both the bees and changing nature around us is one of the joys of being a beekeeper. Be aware and don't miss out!

When can you consider a hive hot and need to re-queen?

If you do all of the above and your bees are still overly defensive plan re-queening. Signs of being overly defensive would include

- Multiple bees following you more than 20-30 feet from the hive after an inspection
- While conducting a smooth inspection, with smoke, you are Immediately being surrounded by bees pinging off your veil
- After an inspection, bees are acting defensively more than 20-30 minutes later
- Beekeeper unable to enjoy normal day to day use of an adjacent yard

Consequences of a hot hive on your success as a beekeeper

It's human nature to avoid unpleasant experiences. Hot hive inspections are no fun. Inspections will be missed. Missed inspections give disease, malnutrition, and swarming tendencies all time to build up. A successful beekeeper will have a plan in place to keep bees gentle. If that plan fails then requeening is required.

Recipe

Honey-Bourbon Toddy

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons honey
- 6 tablespoons bourbon (or better yet, Apple Bourbon, in which case you'll use 1 tablespoon honey)
- 3x1/2" strip of lemon peel
- 1 cinnamon stick

Directions

Stir 2 tablespoons honey and 1 cup hot water in a 2-cup measuring cup until honey dissolves.

Add 6 tablespoons bourbon (or better yet, Apple Bourbon, in which case you'll use 1 tablespoon honey; for recipe, see below).

Divide between 2 Toddy glasses. Twist a 3x1/2" strip of lemon peel over each drink, then add to glass.

Stir each with a cinnamon stick and serve.

To make Apple Bourbon, combine a 750-milliliter bottle of bourbon, 4 cored, sliced Fuji apples, and 4 cinnamon sticks in a pitcher.

Cover; chill for 3 days.

Strain and sip or use in recipe above.

RESOURCES

The following officers and directors are a great resource to answer questions and requests for assistance.

Officers		
President	Michael D. Smith	michaeldgetsmail@gmail.com
Vice President	Maria Cashdollar	winter64@aol.com
Recording Secretary	Claire Desilets	beekepr@gmail.com
Treasurer	Lynn Heslinga	lynnheslinga@gmail.com

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