



Beeing
Prepared

Cowlitz Beekeepers Association Newsletter

Dedicated to Preserving the Honey Bee through Community Action, Awareness and Education
October 2021

Next Meeting:

Where: In person at the Sons of Norway Building (224 Catlin St. Kelso WA. 98626 or nearly any place Via Zoom

When: October 20, 2022, 7:00 PM

Speaker: Still waiting on a response to speaker invites. Will let you know if/when a speaker becomes available.

Topic:

If you live in Cowlitz county or the surrounding area and find honeybees fascinating, then you should consider joining us. Reach us on Facebook by searching for Cowlitz Beekeepers Association or check out our website at:
<https://cowlitzbeekeeping.wixsite.com/website>

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Barbecue/potluck

We had our annual Barbecue Potluck in the Pavilion out at Willow Grove in place of our monthly meeting. It started at 12:00 p.m. and was over by 4:00 p.m. We had a wonderful day of sunshine. It wasn't cold, hot or windy, just right. Along with the great food and conversation, we also had our honey tasting contest. Which is always a hit. There were 9 participants and 10 entries for the contest. The top 3 winners of the honey tasting contest were: 1st place Scott Stulgis, 2nd place David Scott, and 3rd place Cherice Cardwell. Congratulations to our winners! A big thank you for all who came out and for those who participated in the honey tasting contest. Hope to see you next year.

Our next monthly meeting will be October 20, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. at the Sons of Norway Building in Kelso, Washington. Hope to see you there.

Zenobia Scott, Secretary

Elections: Each October we nominate candidates for Trustees and Officers. We will do this during the October meeting.

If you are a new beekeeper or just thinking about becoming a beekeeper there is a free introductory beekeeping course offered by PERFECTBEE. The link to sign up for the course is <https://www.perfectbee.com/introductory-beekeeping-course>.

Beekeeping in the Fall (Autumn)

By Ken Curtis

Fall is a busy time for beekeepers. It's the time beekeepers prepare their hives for the cold wet winter weather ahead. It is important that a hive is ready for winter before the first cold snap.

Fall is the time of year the queen bee's egg laying is dramatically reduced, drones begin to disappear, and the hive populations are decreasing. It is time to install entrance reducers. As more and more flowers disappear be aware as this is the time when other bees are on the lookout for honey and could rob your hives. This is also the time when yellow jackets and bald-faced hornets are seeking food and could attack your hives. Fall is the time to set out yellow jacket / hornet traps around the perimeter of an apiary.

Harvesting the honey is done from late summer to early fall. It's always wise to leave plenty of honey for the bees. After all, bees produce honey to feed the colony during the winter. Leave at least 60 to 80 pounds of honey for the bees. If the honey stores are not sufficient bees should be fed a 2 TO 1 sugar syrup until the nighttime weather drops below freezing and/or daytime weather consistently drops below 50 degrees. Use only white sugar (I prefer cane sugar).

Fall is also the time of year when hives should be treated for Varroa mites. If winter bees experience a high degree of Varroa infestation the colony will be doomed. The method of treatment is one of personal preference for each beekeeper.

Fall is also the time of year to determine what type of windbreak will be used if necessary. Shrubs make good windbreaks, as does a building, a wooden wall, etc. Pallets are an inexpensive or in many cases a free source of material if a temporary wall must be erected.

It is important that hives be well ventilated as the weather begins to cool to help prevent excess moisture from condensation to collect inside of the hive. If a hive has a solid bottom board it should be tilted slightly forward to allow any moisture in the hive to exit through the hive entrance. If any extra forms of moisture control and/or ventilation such as insulation, quilt boxes, etc. are going to be used fall is a good time for installation.

Fall is also a good time to install mouse guards. Mice love the nice dry warm conditions inside of a hive. Even if they don't damage the comb or honey their feces can lead to diseases.

Field Day 2022

Thank you, David, and Zenobia Scott, for allowing the club to use your apiary for the field day gathering in August. This is much later than normal, but the spring weather was not in our favor. Hive inspections and honey harvesting were a hit with all participants, especially beginning beekeepers. I would also like to extend a thank you to John Holmes and David Scott for leading groups through the hive inspections and honey harvesting.



Hive Inspections and Record Keeping

By Ken Curtis

Lack of good record keeping is a primary problem for beekeepers. When I first started beekeeping, I didn't understand the importance of record keeping. That was before my first two honeybee colony's absconded in the fall. My first response was I can't do this anymore. I was discouraged. However, the more I thought about the bees absconding, the more I wanted to know why. As I began researching, I discovered that bees abscond for several reasons. It could have been from yellow jacket and bald-hornet invasions, it could have been because of a lack of food stores, Varroa Infestation, chemical poisoning, or one of several other reasons. To this day I have no idea why the bees absconded, primarily because I didn't have any records from my first year as a beekeeper.

What I learned from the experience is that record keeping is vital and could have made it possible to determine why the bees decided to leave and maybe even prevented them from absconding. Since that first year I have tried several different record keeping methods until I found one that I was happy with. Below is a list of things that I feel should be noted when inspecting hives.

1. **Did I see the queen?** It is not always necessary to see the queen during inspections, but it is a good skill to possess.
2. **Is there a significant amount of capped brood and is the brood pattern spotty, slightly spotty, or solid?** If only a small amount of capped brood is present it could be a warning sign that something inside the hive is not right.
3. **Is there no uncapped brood?** A lack of uncapped brood could be a warning sign that there is a problem with the queen or no queen is present.

4. **Are there multiple stages of uncapped brood?** Multiple stages of capped brood are important as each colony depends on a progression of bees of all ages for survival.
5. **Did I see eggs?** A lack of eggs is an indication that a queen may not be present.
6. **Did I see any cells with more than one egg?** Multiple eggs in uncapped cells generally indicates a laying worker.
7. **What is the approximate weight of each hive?** Estimating the weight of a hive provides an indication of how large the honey stores are in preparation for winter.
8. **Is the colony at or near full strength (a percentage estimate from 0-100%)?** If a hive is at full strength, especially early in the spring it could be time to perform a split. If a colony is weak in the fall it could be a good time to combine with a stronger colony providing there is no sign of disease.
9. **What is the Varroa level, over 2% exceeds my acceptable mite threshold?** If the Varroa level is above a beekeepers acceptable threshold it is time to treat.
10. **Are there any signs of disease such as unusual spots on the outside of the hives, bees walking on the ground, a large amount of dead bees in front of or inside of the hive, etc.?** Signs of disease or chemical poisoning within the hive and the beekeeper should take action to discover the reason for the issue, and determine the best treatment option.
11. **Are there adequate food stores in the fall?** If a hive does not have 60 to 80 pounds of honey stored in the fall the bees may need supplemental feeding of a 2:1 sugar syrup.

Weather conditions during the inspection. First off if it's raining no inspection is going to happen. If the temperature is in the 50's or below no internal inspection.

I like to know the certain aspects of weather conditions including temperature, Humidity, and wind speed. I compare this information with past inspections to see how weather conditions might impact how the bees act during inspections if at all.

Conditions inside the hive:

There are a number of elements I look for inside of the hive including:

1. **Hive odor.** A hive should smell pleasant. A foul odor could be an indication of American Foul Brood.
2. **Equipment condition.** All hive boxes and frames should be inspected, and replaced if necessary. Additionally, all frames should be replaced every tree years.
3. **Hive condition.** Is there an abundance of excess burr comb or propolis that needs to be cleaned off? Also keep an eye out for dead bees that could be an indication of insecticide poisoning, disease, or a number of other things. If bees do not remove dead bees from the hive check for disease conditions. Also check for excessive moisture inside the hive.
4. **The presence of queen cells.** Any hive will build queen cells to be ready for a potential occupant. However, if there is an egg or larva in the cell it should be noted. If there is an occupant in the cell the location on the frame should should be noted. A cell in the middle of the frame iis a supercedure cell, which indicates that the workers have

determined it is time for a new queen. A cell on the bottom of the frame is a swarm cell, indicating the colony has either swarmed or is in preparation to swarm.

5. **Hive temperament.** When the bees are calm you know you have a queenright colony. If the bees seem nervous it could be an indication that they recently lost the queen or that the hive is being disturbed at night. If a colony goes queenless for an extended period of time they could get angry and become aggressive.
6. **Hive population.** Are frames heavily, moderately, or lightly covered with bees or is the population diminishing?
7. **Brood pattern.** The brood pattern indicates a lot about the quality and viability of the queen. A spotty brood pattern throughout all frames indicates the queen could be failing, and should be replaced.
8. **Is the queen, eggs, and/or larvae spotted?** The presence of eggs and larvae indicates the queen was in the hive as little as a couple of days ago, and is probably present.

Signs of disease and pesticides

During inspections I am actively looking for signs of disease. The primary pests that a beekeeper should be aware of include:

1. Chalkbrood
2. Nosema
3. European Foulbrood
4. American Foulbrood
5. Varroa Mites

Feeding and Food Stores

During inspections a beekeeper should be aware of food stores available to the colony, especially in the fall. The amount of pollen available should be noted as workers use pollen to feed young larvae. If supplemental feeding is necessary record what you are feeding including any supplements added. This could provide valuable information about if what you are feeding results in faster growth and health of the colony.



Zoom Meeting Recordings

Most of our meetings have been recorded and loaded to our website. I frequently forget to start the recording at the beginning so it's like you came to the meeting late. Look for "Bee Information" then video.

<https://cowlitzbeekeeping.wixsite.com/website>