



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 31

Number 2

February 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers
Propolis
Note change in Registration Social place
see right column

FEBRUARY MEETING

TIME: 7:30 PM
DATE: FEBRUARY 18
PLACE: Culpeper Cooperative Extension
corner of Davis St and West St
entrance on West St
PROGRAM: "So you thing you want to be a
commercial beekeeper?" Bob Wellemeyer,
regional inspector and commercial beekeeper
will discuss aspects of being commercial.

V. I. P.

President: Mike King
PO Box 213
Amissville, VA 20106
540-937-4792
kahu9@juno.com
Vice President: Deb Parker
540-854-4883
brokenpost@gemlink.com
Secretary: Craig Williams
540-937-3260
williams22701@comcast.net
Treasurer: Lele Hankins
540-547-4711
hankins77@comcast.net
Website: www.npbee.org
Webmaster: Mike Wilson
webmaster@npbee.org
Newletter Editor: Ann Harman
540-364-4660 ahworkerb@aol.com
Regional Inspector: Bob Wellemeyer
540-428-0420 beeswax7@wildblue.net

ATTENTION ACHTUNG ATTENCION!
Memberships were due January 1st. If you
haven't already done so, please remember to
send in your dues. Membership renewal is \$10
(payable to NPBA), and can be mailed to Lele
Hankins, 18182 Pine View Drive, Culpeper,
VA 22701. DO IT NOW!

NOTE THIS CHANGE

Bee Course Registration Social Sunday
February 7 will meet in big red barn, parking
in field on right. Pay attention to the signs.

Bee Course will be given, as usual in class-
room building starting on Tuesday February 9.

HIVE WORKS FOR FEBRUARY

Pick a sunny, wind-free day and check those
stores.

Check beeyard for tree limbs, debris. Our high
winds can blow off covers even with a brick on
top.

Check tilt of hive and make sure covers have
not blown off. Don't worry about your bear
fence yet—bears still asleep.

Start watching trees for blooms. Willows, red
maple. Keep an eye on the temperatures—can
bees fly out during the warm part of a day?

Did you put off ordering needed equipment?
Do it now!

Here's how to remember queen color:

Will You Raise Good Bees? for years
ending 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 0

So that gives us ---

2010 queen color - blue

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Our Regional Inspector, Bob Wellemeyer, who is also a commercial beekeeper, will be the guest speaker at our February 18th meeting. Bob's presentation "So you think you want to be commercial beekeeper?" will give a perspective of some of the differences in scale between our smaller apiaries and a larger commercial operation. He plans to bring his truck loaded with actual equipment to for a real "show and tell" - hope to see all of you there!

A big "thank you" to all those club members who have graciously volunteered to help with the bee class "Registration Social" on February 7th. Due to a scheduling conflict at Verdun, the Social will be held in the big red barn - the bee classes, which begin the evening of February 9th, will again be held in the Education Conference Center (same location as they have been the past few years).

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I attended the American Beekeeping Federation conference that included the Apiary Inspectors of America (AIA), the American Association of Professional Apiarists (AAPA), the Canadian Association of Professional Apiarists (CAPA) and the Canadian Honey Council (CHC).

I spent two days listening to the scientists' presentations at AAPA. Part of these sessions were the presented papers of graduate students, many of which were entered in a competition for best presented paper. Twelve students competed.

After listening to the work being done on various aspects of bees, I would say that the future of honey bee research is in very good hands indeed. The judges had a tough time deciding the winner. Now let us hope that these students, after achieving their degree, will be able to find a job in honey bee research. We need to keep the pressure on Congress and other places for funds to keep research from disappearing.

Do come and help welcome newbees on February 7 or at the first class on the 9th.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

Your grandmother probably did Spring Housecleaning. Everything inside the house was opened, emptied, turned over, dusted, scrubbed—and put right for spring and summer. Generally the family felt most disrupted by all the activity.

Plan on doing some spring housecleaning for your beehives when the weather really breaks. Generally I am committed to "let-alone beekeeping." The bees know best; let them get on with their work. However during the winter months things tend to accumulate in the hive. Bits of wax from uncapping honey cells, bits of bees that died and fell apart, crumbs of pollen. (Since it's called "bee bread" can we call those bits "breadcrumbs?")

Take the hive apart. Generally it is easier to remove each piece and set aside. When you get to the bottom board, scrape out the corners, clean it up and check that it is in good condition for the bee season to come.

Then take each hive body in turn. How are the frames and comb? Mark any for replacement. Now you are at the inner cover and telescoping cover. Give them some good scrapes.

Feeders really do need a thorough cleaning. Sugar syrup left on can be a source of mold. If they are really grungy you may need a weak solution of bleach, followed by a thorough rinsing.

Now your hive Spring Cleaning is done. Would your grandmother approve? Maybe.

Go around the beeyard and clean it up from the winter accumulation of sticks and dead leaves. Check that bear fence! The bears will be waking up hungry. In the early spring the two-year-old males have to establish their territory so they are usually the ones traveling around looking for food on their way to their new home. Of course your resident bears are hungry, too, but there's not much to eat yet. Protect your hives.

I assume you have already cleaned out your bee bucket, washed coveralls (if you use them) and rediscovered your smoker.

PROPOLIS

It's about time we had a look at some of the other things usually called "hive products." This month we'll investigate **propolis**.

In truth, propolis is not a product of the honey bee but is a plant product. This is important to keep in mind as we discuss this substance.

Beekeepers are familiar with propolis because it sticks to our hands, our hive tools and smokers, our clothes, and anything else that is used around a beehive.

Propolis was named by an early beekeeper who coined the term from "pro" meaning "before" and "polis" meaning "city," i.e., city of the bees. You see, some stocks of bees, notably Caucasians, seal up the entrance to the hive with a thick wall of propolis and leave only a few entry holes. This may work but it definitely decreases the ventilation through the hive, especially in our climate. Anyway, the wall of propolis was "before the city of the bees" - a wall at the entrance.

Bees obtain propolis—a sticky resin—from the buds of trees, especially poplar. Some resin is also collected from wounds in any woody plant. Some would be collected from evergreens, too.

Bees usually collect propolis when the nectar flow is absent. The field bees are needed for the much more important task of food collection. As far as we know bees do not change the composition of propolis except by adding beeswax.

In areas where the supply of propolis is low, bees will cheerfully collect road tar, caulking, partly dried paint, or other sticky substances.

Propolis comes in a range of colors from reddish-brown, tan, to very dark brown, almost black. It is very difficult to analyze since it does not dissolve completely in many solvents and since each plant makes its own distinctive resin. The bees will collect a mixture of resins.

Some parts of propolis are soluble in alcohol so if you want to remove some propolis from clothing or other item you can try washing it with rubbing alcohol.

Bees frequently mix propolis with beeswax in order to use it in the hive (perhaps it makes it less sticky?). Propolis will become brittle when cold so it can frequently be chipped away from hive parts in the winter. Bees will collect propolis only when it is needed inside the hive. Some colonies are determined to stick everything together making a tough struggle for the beekeeper; other colonies are not so enthusiastic. (A side note. I found very little propolis in parts of Egypt—a lack of deciduous trees—and were those hives nice to work with!)

Bees use propolis to caulk over cracks, to smooth rough surfaces, to fill in spaces that are too small for bee space, and to "varnish" the inside of brood cells. Just because we give colonies a nice wooden hive with frames that fit does not mean that the instinct to propolize everything is frustrated. Bees just keep on gathering and sticking to make your beautiful hive better.

Propolis does not support the growth of certain bacteria and certain molds. Therefore, propolis can be used inside the hive by the bees without creating unhealthy conditions in the hive.

Man has made use of propolis in the past. At one time it was used as a wound dressing. Today there is renewed interest in propolis. It is found in cough drops and in tinctures for various types of sores. However, use caution.

It has been well documented that propolis causes contact dermatitis, sometimes quite severe. That is no surprise since **propolis is a plant product**. Many people experience rashes, itching and discomfort from plant resins, notably poison ivy. Some gardeners find that tomato plants or petunias cause skin irritation.

Some beekeepers find that every time they open hives and work with frames their hands become red, irritated and itching. Propolis is most probably the culprit. The only way this problem can be avoided is to wear rubber gloves when working inside the hive or repairing hives and parts.

If you have a colony that loves gumming things up with excessive propolis, just queen!

COOKING WITH HONEY

It's Valentine's Month. Make something with chocolate—and honey, of course!

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE COOKIES

Go ahead and celebrate, and give as Valentine's Day gifts. Chocolate and honey!

1/2 cup shortening
1 cup honey
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup whole bran cereal
1 cup quick-cooking oats
1 cup finely grated coconut
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate pieces

Cream shortening. Add honey in a fine stream and continue until fluffy. Add egg and vanilla; blend well. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Mix with bran, oats, coconut and chocolate pieces. Add gradually to creamed mixture until dry ingredients are well moistened. Chill dough about 30 minutes. Drop from spoon onto lightly greased pan, Bake at 350° 15-18 minutes. Yield about 4 dozen

TOPPING

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate pieces
1/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon water
1/4 chunky style peanut butter

Melt chocolate with honey, water and stir in peanut butter. Drop 1 teaspoon topping on each cookie while hot from oven.

Cooking Hints:

Use slightly warmed honey for easy mixing. A one-pound jar, well-drained, is 1-1/4 cups honey.

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

willows of all kinds
skunk cabbage
red maple
perhaps alders
snowdrops
maybe some snow and ice

GOOD STUFF

Remember to come to the Registration Social to meet the class of new beekeepers. Here is how to get to Verdun Adventure Bound.

Get on Rt 229. It runs from Culpeper to Rt 211. Verdun is 4.5 miles south of Rt 211.

From the North from Rt 211, go 4.5 miles. Just past the Rescue Squad building on the left, you will see the sign that says Verdun Adventure Bound.

From the south: take Rt 229 out of Culpeper, past Rixeyville Post Office. On the RIGHT you will see the sign for Verdun Adventure Bound. If you pass the Rescue Squad you've gone too far.

PACKAGES, QUEENS, NUCS & BULK SUGAR AVAILABLE

Bob Wellemeyer of Windsong Apiaries has bees and bulk sugar available. Three lb. packages (Italian) are \$65 per package with expected delivery to Castleton, VA, around March 30th. Italian queens are \$15 each. Add \$2 for marked queens. Minnesota Hygienic queens are \$20 each and available from mid-April until September. Nucs are 3 deep frames or 4 medium frames w/queen, \$85 per nuc. Please specify medium or deep. Bulk sugar is clean, in 40 lb. bales (8-five lb.bags/bale), maybe a few larger bags but manageable. Price will be around \$0.30/lb., with pick up in Castleton (50lb bags at Costco are \$0.55/lb).

A 50% deposit is needed to book orders, with the balance due March 11th. Place orders by e-mail to beeswax7@wildblue.net You must include your contact phone numbers (**not** email) with your order. Bob will phone you for pickup. Make checks payable to Windsong Apiaries and mail to: 120 Mill Run Lane, Castleton, VA 22716. If you need to reach Bob by phone, home: 540-937-7775 or cell: 540-229-5359.

VIRGINIA BEE SUPPLY

Local authorized Brushy Mountain dealer offering a complete selection of woodenware and bee supplies. Save shipping costs. Contact Jerry Headley at 540-905-5563 or www.virginiabeesupply.com.