

Susquehanna Beekeeper's Association

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President's Message

I have finally gone over to the dark side and began applying varroa treatment to my hives this year.

Some beekeepers will say I am only adding to the pesticide problem and others will ask what took me so long. After losing almost all my hives last winter, I had to start beekeeping

a different way. I suspect that varroa was a part of the cause along with the prolonged cold, lack of quality stores, dysentery, and other maladies our bees suffer from. Another thing that convinced me to apply treatment was the monthly results from the Sentinel Hive Project Joe Lewis and I are participating in. Hives that had a high mite count 1 month that were then treated dropped to zero the next month. Knowing your mite level is important. The sugar roll test or alcohol wash (yes, it does kill a few bees) are common methods. It is important to follow treatment handling instructions. I did adjust the dose based on the hive size. I did not observe absconding, dead bees, or failed queens. Hopefully, with reduced



varroa and other management changes I am making, I will have several hives that make it to spring 2016!

We are starting the last third of the year and the SBA meetings are resuming. We have some great speakers scheduled for the September-November meetings and the holiday party for December. There is one more volunteer event scheduled for this year. The SBA will be at the Fall Harvest & Craft Festival at Steppingstone Farm Museum, Havre de Grace, 26 & 27 September. We could use your participation. Sign up will be at the September meeting.

A reminder to the 1st year beekeepers, as well as myself, that the beekeeping year starts in the fall. Review fall management that was taught in the short course, talk to your mentor if you have one and attend the SBA meetings to help you get your beehives through the winter.

See you at the meetings.

-Harry

Fall Management



“Colonies need ventilation to get rid of metabolic vapor the bees produce”

Good management now is critical to bolster winter survival; below are some of the key items.

BY ROBERT CROUSE

1. *Check for diseases and apply preventative medications:* I was taught to treat my bees to prevent disease; I no longer do this. I treat only if I have a problem or know I will have a problem. If you have a history of nosema, you should give new, package colonies one gallon and mature colonies two gallons of medicated Fumidil B syrup by October. Don't wait too late or the bees may stop taking in the syrup. If you have tracheal mites, treat with menthol; if you have Varroa mites, treat as directed with the medication of your choosing and not while storing honey that you plan on removing for your use.

2. *Reduce colony size for normal cluster behavior:* Unlike in the spring, you should under-super, or crowd the bees. This forces them to consolidate food stores higher up. You want every frame above the brood nest to be full of stores and it's OK to shrink down the brood area with stores coming in from each side. If a colony is small late in the season, you have some options. The best is to combine with another weak colony, saving the best queen.

3. *Protect the colony from pests:* Don't forget some type of mouse control at the entrance if needed. Small Hive

Beetles (SHB) will be a problem for weak or small colonies. Just reduce the number of frames in the colony so that there are enough bees to take care of the problem. Don't store frames with stores in them where the SHB or wax moth can get to them. I use paradichlorobenzene (check local supermarket for moth crystals).

4. *Ensure adequate ventilation:* Colonies need ventilation to get rid of metabolic vapor the bees produce especially during the winter. Propping the outer cover up slightly can help. I have cut some tapered pieces from a cedar shingle that I then insert to make the gap to the size that I want. A lot of inner covers purchased today have a cut out in them for upper entrances. I have also cut small grooves into the frame of the inner cover, too small for the bees to use but enough to aid ventilation.

5. *Provide protective weather measures:* Some beekeepers like to wrap their hives to provide some insulation for winter cold. I personally have never done this as most of our winters here in Maryland are mild enough. Even when we do get a cold spell it does not usually last long enough to harm the bees if the hive is strong and well supplied with stores. Be prepared to remove snow and ice from entrances as needed.

Fall Management, continued

6. *Ensure hive food stores:* Starvation can be a real threat in late summer as the weather is hot, bees are active, and food consumption is high. You need to keep check on stores either by observation—my way—or by checking hive weight by lifting or scale use. You should plan on at least 60 lbs. of food stores per hive for winter consumption. Make sure equipment such as queen excluders and pollen traps are removed. Take care that the colony does not get honey-bound—leave 3 or 4 combs with brood or

empty cells in the center of the colony. Both honey and pollen should be directly above the cluster. Feed light hives syrup at 1 to 1 mix by weight and heavy syrup, (2 to 1 water mix by weight) in the fall (late Sept. thru Oct.); it can be either sucrose or HFC 50% syrup base.

Enjoy your Bees!



Misadventures of a Backyard Beekeeper

I am a discreet backyard beekeeper. I live in a townhouse, surrounded by other townhouses on all sides, and my bees are on my deck. My goal is always to keep the visibility of the bees to a minimum—I even stained the hive to blend in with the deck. As far as I know, most of my neighbors are unaware or unconcerned with my hobby...

Misadventure #1, Removing the Honey: When I went to get the honey out of the hive for the first time, my plan was to take off the super and wait for the bees to return home at dark. This was completely unsuccessful—not only did the bees fail to vacate the super, other bees came to join the party. My deck looked like a scene from *Birds* (but with bees). It did quiet down after dark, which meant I could head out in my suit to pull the frames out one by one and shake the bees off. However, this meant that my neighbor, four decks down, could see me, and started shouting many questions about the bees congregated at his light. A short, hopefully informative visit later (no, bees do not eat mosquitos, and no, you can't breed mosquitos to eat the bees), I was able to return home with my neighbor's

BY AILEEN RICHARDS

demand for hush honey ringing in my ears.

Misadventure #2, Extracting the Honey: I really, really should have attended the honey extraction demonstration (silly triathlon training!). I could have learned so many lessons the easy way, like how, exactly, to use the uncapping knife, or what, specifically, I do with all those cappings. One of the most important lessons would have been that if you use the extractor on the table, the vibrations from the extractor will cause other things on the table to fall off, like the box full of honey-drenched wax cappings...I was able to extract nine pounds of honey and chunk honey (half a pound of which is earmarked for hush honey).

So, please learn from my mistakes—use an escape board to get the bees out of the super (or really, any method other than hope), attend SBA demonstrations, and do not use the extractor on a table that has other things on it!

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Reminders, Odds and Ends

- 2 Sep - SBA Honey Sales Day at Maryland State Fair, Timonium MD
- 5 Sep - SBA Display at the Havre de Grace Farmer's Market, 9am—12 pm
- 9 Sep - SBA meeting. Featured speaker is Alan Hayes, "Gadgets You Could Keep Bees Without, But Won't Want To"
- 19 Sep - The Maryland Honey Harvest Festival, Brookside Gardens and Nature Center, Wheaton, Maryland
- 26 & 27 September - Fall Harvest & Craft Festival at Steppingstone Farm Museum, Havre de Grace, MD
- 14 Oct – SBA meeting. Featured speaker is Keith Jardine, President of the Chester County Beekeepers Association