

Local Buzz



April 2008

President's Message

Hello everyone, and welcome to the start of the busy bee season! Yes it's split/nuc time, and the equipment you worked on this last winter should be in use shortly. I just finished painting my last two deeps yesterday. I'm looking to increase from 16 to 34 total colonies, and the money I made in almonds will help accomplish this. If you have not ordered your nucs or packages yet, you better get on it fast! Lastly anyone interested in showing off their apiary to some beekeepers from Uzbekistan later in the year please let me know.
Your President, Rob Slay

April 7th Program

Member and co-administrator of the swarm hotline Deborah Morawski will present April's program: "Swarms and the NCBA swarm hotline". She will be putting together this year's swarm hotline list, so be prepared to sign up if you are interested in retrieving swarms when people call in. Bring your own swarm stories to share. Below Gary Plount shows off a particularly nice swarm several years ago.



Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

(Editor's note: Following are excerpts from an article that Randy's writing entitled 'A Trial of HoneySuperCell® Small Cell Combs'. The article describes the results of a field trial he performed in 2007 comparing the small-cell HoneySuperCell plastic frames to the standard size Dadant Plasticell® foundation to evaluate potential effects on varroa mite reproduction.)

Introduction

There has been considerable discussion as to whether "small cell" foundation (4.9mm diameter vs. the industry "standard" of approximately 5.4mm) has potential as a means of controlling varroa reproduction. Research on Africanized bees in South America indicates that small cell size may reduce mite reproduction, yet data from South Africa and Europe have been equivocal, or demonstrated just the opposite. Unfortunately, most reports of its success have been anecdotal. Despite the great interest in this subject, there have been surprisingly few controlled field trials published.

Field Trial

The purpose of this experiment was twofold: (1) to see if fully-formed small cell combs suppressed varroa mite population buildup, and (2) to determine whether package colonies developed differently on HoneySuperCell (HSC) plastic frames as compared to controls.

We started ten colonies on each type of new combs in identical 9-5/8" depth equipment. The donor colonies had recently been treated with Tactik®, thus, initial mite infestation was very low. No mite treatments were used during the trial, other than the colonies having screened bottom boards. Bees readily accepted both types of frames, and clustering and colony appearance was similar. There was perhaps a slight tendency for the queens in HSC colonies to move more slowly into the second brood chamber. The colonies built far more burr comb between the plastic HSC top and bottom bars, and to the lids, than they did with the wooden controls. Queens initiated egg-laying similarly, but larval development was spotty for the first two brood cycles in

HSC colonies. After that, brood appeared similar between groups. The HSC colonies gained weight more slowly than the controls, and by September 9 averaged approximately 25 lbs lighter--46 lbs gain vs. 71 lb for controls. However, there was less weight variation with HSC frame hives. On October 14, there was no significant difference in frame strength of colonies. Average frame strength was about 10 frames, and most colonies had put on adequate stores of honey for winter. The most striking result of this trial was the difference in natural mite drops HSC colonies consistently had lower mite drops, especially toward the end of the season. Unfortunately, all but one of the control colonies perished at the onset of cold weather, and most of the HSC colonies followed suit in February. It appeared that they suffered from the sort of CCD-like collapse that occurred at that time in my operation, especially in colonies untreated for mites.

Discussion

A surprising result was the greater amount of honey stored in the control group. One would expect the bees to be able to store more honey in the preformed cells, since no wax would need to be produced to form the cell walls. I have no explanation for the contrary results observed.

The most notable result was the great difference in natural mite falls between the groups, which implies a lower mite buildup in the HSC colonies. At face value, this result would appear to support the hypothesis that small cell combs hamper mite reproduction, and indeed, they well may. However, it could well be that mite buildup was suppressed by some other factor or factors. Since the cells are rigid, none could be reworked by the bees into drone cells, which alone could greatly suppress mite buildup due to the greater reproductive success of mites in drone brood. The smaller cell size, thickened walls, or tapered shape of these combs might affect mite invasion of the cell, foundress mite relocation during the process of cocoon spinning, postcapping duration, or mite feeding, reproduction, or mating in a restricted space. Since HSC combs are fabricated from plastic, the plastic itself might have some effect upon the mite. So what do we make of the anecdotal reports by beekeepers claiming success with small cell? Skeptics point out that some small cell proponents keep bees in areas with a strong Africanized bee presence, and that the vigorous hygienic behavior of those bees is the true reason for their success. But what about more northerly small cell beekeepers (a number in the Nordic countries)? This may be where the concept of "retrogression" comes into play. European honey bees do not take the transition from standard cell size to small cell easily. They generally need to be retrogressed onto an intermediate size (e.g., 5.1mm) cell size before

working them onto small cell. Often, a substantial proportion of colonies "fail" during this process. The skeptic will say, "Well, then you are simply selecting for bees that are genetically resistant to mites, and "retrogression" has more to do with selecting for mite resistance, rather than for cell size preference. Indeed, this is the very process that happened in South Africa, and anywhere else that mite-tolerant honey bees have evolved."

Bingo! Small cell debate aside, I would like to commend Dee Lusby, and the organic beekeepers, for taking on the challenge of keeping bees without chemical support. Just as organic farmers have been instrumental in slowly shifting American agriculture toward more healthful, Earth-friendly, and sustainable practices, organic (or semi organic) beekeepers allow natural selection to promote "hardy" bees with innate disease and parasite resistance. Their successes will be to the benefit of the entire industry. As Mark Twain quipped, "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example."

I have no desire whatsoever to enter into the small cell debate. The sheer number of small cell beekeepers claiming success with the method, plus the fact that natural combs typically contain smaller cells in the middle of the brood nest, lead me to keep an open mind on the subject.

I had planned to continue with this trial through the next season, but the untimely collapse of the colonies unfortunately prevented further data collection. There are other trials currently in the works, both by researchers, and by commercial beekeepers. I will post updates to scientificbeekeeping.com.

For Sale and Free

Janet Brisson mentioned a number of things at the last meeting, and will bring them to sell April 7. She ordered a case of Nozevit, 50ml bottles that will treat 30 hives two times for Nosema. \$20+tax. She will also be bringing a case of 50 frames, like the one she brought with the pointed ends at the top and bottom for natural or small cell beekeeping. The unassembled frames will sell for around \$3 a piece, or maybe a little more, depending upon postage. Finally, she's bringing in a variety of pond plants. These are free! By Janet Brisson

For Sale: Country Rubes Combo Screened Bottom Boards

Special NCBA Club Price! Will have at club meeting.

Call Janet for details.

530-913-2724 or email at rubes@countryrubes.com.

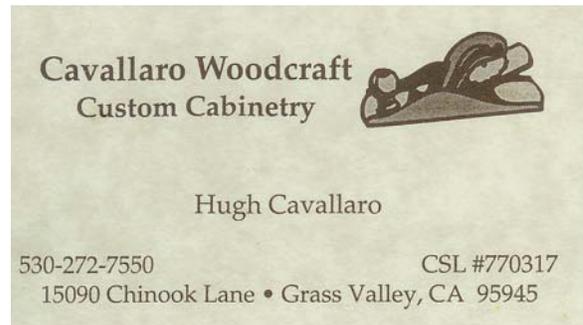
March Minutes

Pres. Rob Slay opened with Q&A and comments. An article on control of Varroa by control of hive cell size was provided by Janet Brisson. Non-chemical Varroa control has not been very successful large scale. MOTION: Lynn Hanson, 2nd Glen Williams. Sell our \$900.00 club extractor for past rentals rec'd, plus active offer, to break even. Ayes15, Nays10 Passed. Rob Slay will make plywood base. PROGRAM Randy Oliver: This is first 2008 class-Nosema ceranae testing and control: then every Monday 7PM at the Imaginarium, plus field sessions N. ceranae has replaced N. apis and is one of six new pathogens reducing the bee gene pool. A new Varroa virus attacks the bee's exterior, and a Nosema virus attacks the gut. They are carried in pollen, prevent development of digestive system, and may destroy a colony by starvation even with plenty of honey. These bees can't fly, only crawl. Spores of a fungus, Microsporidium, can be detected from a sample of 25-60 returning foragers collected at midday and ground up in water or a blender. A drop from the bottom of the liquid portion on a microscope slide shows oval spores. 400X. Nosema is controlled with fumagillin in sugar syrup. <www.scientificbeekeeping.com> contains Randy's investigations and correspondence with UCDavis, UPenn and bee researchers worldwide. Jack Meeks, sec

Cottage Cosmetics

A how-to guide for making fine olive oil soap and all natural personal care products using beeswax is available from local author and herbalist, Linnie McNaughton. The guide includes detailed instructions. To order send a check for \$15 to:
Green Blessings
21055 Dog Bar Road
Grass Valley 95949
Call (530) 906-0831
Green Blessings - Class Schedule 2008
June 22- Herbal First Aid
July 13- Luxurious Lavender
October - 4 Felted Pumpkins
November 1 - Cheesemaking
November 15 - Kitchen Cosmetics
November 22 - Soapmaking

December 6 - Kitchen Cosmetics for Holiday Gift Making
For more information & to register for classes go to secure website: greenblessings.com or call Linnie at: (530) 906-0831



Raffle Items Appreciated

Please help to support the club through the raffle! Bring your unwanted extras of bee equipment, home made items or whatever you think someone else might like! Thanks for your support!!! Karla Hanson, Raffle Chair

Photos Vets Hall Wanted

Pat Schoellerman of Nevada County is putting together a presentation for the Board of Supervisors for mid-April, and would like photos of the Veteran's Memorial Hall before, and after, the recent renovation. If you have photos she might use, please contact her at: pat.schoellerman@co.nevada.ca.us

Sacramento Beekeeping Supplies

- Complete line of all beekeeping supplies
- Candle making supplies (molds, wicks, dyes, scents)
- Glycerin soap making supplies (soap base, molds, scents, and dyes)
- Honeycomb sheets for rolling candles (50 colors and in smooth)
- Beeswax and paraffin, special container candle wax
- Gifts, books, ready made candles

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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 Leslie Gault at lesliegault@yahoo.com. The deadline for the April 2008 edition is April 23rd. 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 lesliegault@yahoo.com

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Nevada County Beekeepers Association



c/o Steve Reynolds
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April 2008

April 7th Program

Deborah Morawski will present "Swarms and the swarm hotline" 7 PM at the Grass Valley Veteran's Hall.