

# The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

# Local Buzz



July 2010

## Message From Our VP

Our President Larry Merritt decided that since his bees went south for winter he would go north to Glacier National Park in Alaska on vacation. So this month you get a VP message! Hopefully Larry has a great vacation. Our bees are booming--blackberry is in full bloom in most of Nevada County. This month's speaker will be Randy with the second half of bee breeding. I am looking forward to finally not having rain. See you at the dinner and meeting.

Your Vice President, Jeremiah Farrell

## July 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Presentation—Continuation of the presentation regarding 'bee breeding and the logic of Nature' by Randy Oliver. No-host dinner will be at Lin-Q @5:30 PM, in the Raley's shopping center in Grass Valley.

Jeremiah Farrell, VP

## Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

We're back from Australia (my sons Eric and Ian went with me this time). When we left Grass Valley it was wet and wintery. We enjoyed winter weather in Oz, and returned to summer weather in Nevada County! When we left, the blackberry was coming into bloom. But it was raining! The weather report was for warm sunny days two days after our departure. We were faced with a difficult situation—some hives were on the verge of starvation, yet we needed to super up for the expected honey flow when we were gone! So we took out both syrup and supers to the yards. Problem was, if we put empty supers over colonies lacking stores, they might to go up to a top feeder. So we reversed the lightweight colonies, putting deep supers of drawn comb *underneath* the brood chambers,

and a half gallon of syrup on top. This would give them enough food to last the three days of rain left. It worked in most yards. Unfortunately, in one yard, the "hefter" misjudged colony weights, and ten strong colonies starved out, full of brood. Not only did I feel for the starvation of my poor bees, but the loss of ten strong colonies at this time is a hard financial hit—loss of 50 lbs of honey each, plus later almond pollination income. That's about \$300 each, or a hit of \$3000 for a little bitty misjudgment! A few dollars worth of sugar syrup would have averted thousands of dollars of losses. Bummer!

Anyway the flow is on. Will be over by the time those of you at lower elevations read this. But there is more moisture in the ground than we have had in several years. That means that we may enjoy a yellow star thistle flow for the first time in a decade! We should also get more general forage into the summer.

For those of you at higher elevations, make sure that your colonies are not plugging out, and give them room to store honey!

I still have a few Russian queens for sale if you call soon. The Russians appear to be thriving without any treatments—but the real proof will be how this second generation performs over the winter.

On an entirely different subject, I report with sadness that one of the founding members of the Nevada County Beekeepers Association, Burt Spangler, passed on this week. Burt was a driver of the Association, and we spent years working closely together. Although many of today's members never met him, we owe the success of this organization largely to Burt, and his wife Betty. Even after Burt found that his health did not allow him to attend meetings, he followed the Association via email, and continued to keep bees, thanks to the help of member Karla Hansen. For those of us who knew him, Burt will be sorely missed!

## Raffle

Remember for every item donated to the raffle, you will receive a raffle ticket—up to five tickets per evening. Plants are always a great idea, or bring your unwanted bee equipment or whatever else you have extra at the house. Thanks, Karla Hanson, raffle chair.

## Fair Booth Sign-up

The Nevada County Fair is August 11-15, and workers are still needed for some shifts, 10 AM-2 PM, 2-6 PM, or 6-10 PM. Please contact Karla Hanson before July 25 at 265-3756 or email [queenbeez@att.net](mailto:queenbeez@att.net)> Working at the fair is not only fun, it also serves as outreach and education for the public, and the NCBA gives you a free entry ticket!

## Breaking the Mite Cycle

By Janet Brisson

As promised during my talk last month, I contacted Doug Vincent at Beekind Beekeeping Supplies in Sebastopol about their method for breaking the mite cycle.

Doug is telling his students to kill their queens in Mid-July. At this time, the queen has just laid her eggs. You are leaving fresh eggs for the bees to make a new queen with. By doing this, it will take 14 days for a new queen to hatch and another week for her to start laying. Here you have a fresh new queen who's laying, you've broken the brood cycle and you will have lots of worker bees and few mites going into the winter. If something goes wrong, you still have time to buy a new queen. You need to monitor your hives and make sure they all have new queen cells and if one doesn't, you could take one from a hive that has extra. By dusting with powdered sugar 3 weeks from removing the queen will knock down the phoretic mites and greatly reducing your mite load. I thinking I would start dusting on the 9th day, the 17th and the 24, basically once a week as we usually do at this time.

But I have a bit of a problem with killing our queens, especially since I requeened this spring. So I'm going to do it a little different. I am going to remove the queens and make Nucs and try and winter these ladies over the winter. If someone goes wrong with the queenless hive, I would have queens to put back in. And I might have to dust the nucs a little more intensively to rid them of mites. But that's what I do.

I started to think about the timing of taking your queen out in Mid-July. Usually around the end of June, beginning of July we remove our blackberry honey and do a 3 week dusting that runs us into the thistle honey crop. We found that the bees do not utilized the sugar, instead, carry it out during a honey flow. This might be the ideal time to remove the queen. We're removing honey, going through the hive to remove the last of the drone brood, dusting and getting ready for the next flow.

OI thought I would consult Randy Oliver on this procedure and he thought this could work really well, especially if you have queen cells ready to go in. By installing new queen cells at the beginning of July, there are still enough drones out there to mate with her and ensuring strong worker brood going into winter. The queen would hatch, take a week to mate and start laying. You would then dust your hive on day 24 to remove phoretic mites. I was worried that this wasn't long enough to break the brood cycle and then came across this article titled "MEL DISSELKOEN FIELD DAYS: COLONY REARING FOR SURVIVAL" from <http://www.mdasplitter.com/>

".....As time passed, and as imported bees soon brought varroa into our apiaries, the traditional manner of keeping bees became unsustainable. Mel began to notice that his colonies did not have problems with mites and he never lost a colony to mite infestation. He began to take a closer look and discovered that whenever he killed a queen and then inserted one of his self-reared queen cells, which automatically paused the honeybee brood cycle, the mites would be greatly reduced. Upon even closer examination, he realized that the varroa mites, which depend upon honeybee brood for their reproduction, would desperately enter the first available larvae laid by the new queen. The mites enter each available cell all at the same time thereby overloading the cell and within which they perish from starvation after the bees cap it because one larva cannot provide enough food for so many mites. In time, Mel observed that the bees would respond hygienically to these first new brood cells and remove the carnage and clean the cells in preparation for fresh eggs."

For those of you who would like to try this with queen cells, Randy will have queen cells ready to purchase on Wednesday, July 8th and will explain what to do at the meeting.

Have a great day,

Janet

## Fair Entries Accepted Now

The Nevada County Fair is now accepting entry applications for the honey and bee products competition, now through July 10 at 1 PM. Online entries will be accepted until July 16. See <http://www.nevadacountyfair.com/> for the competition handbook and entry application, or visit the fair office.

## Snack Sign-up

Thanks to the people who signed up to bring snacks to our meetings. Remember that our hearts appreciate no partially hydrogenated oils. We'd like to have at least four people per month, so if you can help please email Karla Hanson at [queenbeez@att.net](mailto:queenbeez@att.net).

July: Dan Wheat, Boorinakis/ Harper, Patrick McCauley

August: Rob Slay, Myra Traugot

September: Mari Wolf

October: Sherry Skolfield, Charles Whittlesey

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## June Minutes

President Larry Merritt opened with members' comments: Laying worker in queenless hive will deposit one or more eggs in random, leaving shotgun pattern of cells.

Finance: Janet Brisson: MayStart\$3214.19; Inc\$264: Exp\$36.86; MayEnd\$3441.33.

PROGRAM Janet Brisson 'Environmentally Friendly Beekeeping' Bees tolerate cold but not dampness--protect from rain. Mites enter 7-10 day old larvae, which are capped at 10 days. They breed and eat 12 days in worker cells. Two cups of powdered sugar is sprinkled through strainer across all frames three times in three weeks, jams mites' footpads. Screened bottom board and/or sticky board removes them. Two pounds treats 3 hives--spring and summer; check 3 days later on sticky boards, which can be cleaned with soapy water and recoated with Vaseline or Crisco. Check after 3 days--35 to 50 mites is OK.

Drone frames (bees fill empty space with drone cells, which queens fill all spring) should be emptied after 3 weeks or as soon as capped. Can be left in freezer overnight to reuse--bees will clean them out. Mites prefer to invade drone cells; so removing them before they hatch saves worker cells.

Jack Meeks, sec

## For Sale: Country Rubes Combo Screened Bottom Boards

Special NCBA Club Price!

Call Janet for details. 530-913-2724 or email at [rubes@countryrubes.com](mailto:rubes@countryrubes.com).

## Swarm Hotline

Call Lynn Williams 530-675-2924 to get on the list of people who will pick up swarms. Please state where you will drive to, Marysville/Yuba City area is needed since a lot of calls come from here. Co-chair of the swarm committee is Karla Hanson 265-3756.

