

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association



President's Message

Hello all: please don't forget about our potluck and pirate gift exchange at our next meeting. If your last name is a-m bring a side dish, n-z desert. And gifts for the exchange no more than 15.00 please. It's a good time, my wife and I will be there! See you then.

Your President, Rob Slay

December 5th Meeting

Our next meeting will be our Holiday potluck and pirate gift exchange - Monday, December 5th starting at 6 PM (NOT at our usual 7 PM) at the Grass Valley Veteran's Hall. Thanks to Debbie and Karla, who will cook the main course items provided by the Association. Last names beginning with A-M please bring a side dish to share; N-Z please bring a dessert to share. Please bring serving spoons, knife etc. to serve your item, and bring your own place settings and drinks. Per Veteran's Hall policy candles cannot be lit. We have a creative place setting contest but no lighted flame candles are allowed.

After dinner we will have a pirate gift exchange. Please keep your gift at a \$15.00 value. Once again, Deborah Morawski will be overseeing the gift exchange and have numbers ready for people to pick. Each person that brings a gift will get a number and participate in the fun. Ho-Ho-Ho! See you there for the festivities.

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

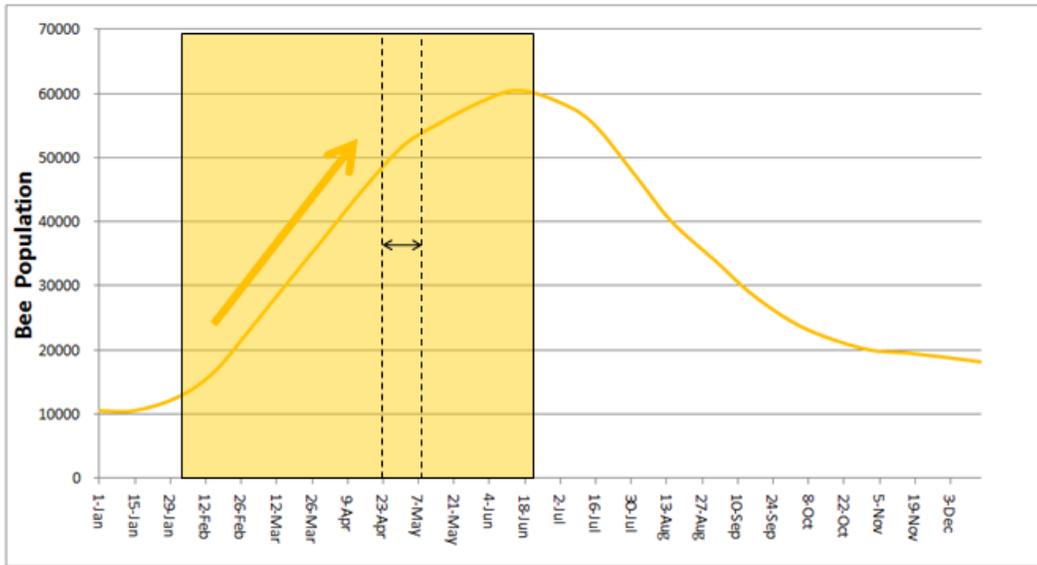
This fall and winter have been very easy on our bees. Most of my yards were actually able to put on some weight in October, and even November! We're hitting everyone with a dribble of oxalic acid syrup (<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/oxalic-acid-treatment-table/>), which is a gentle, natural way to "clean out" most of the varroa mites prior to the colonies beginning their late winter build up.

I'm currently working on a series of articles on nosema (both species). When I started digging deeply into the published literature, I found, to my great surprise, a really good paper from 1919, by Dr. E. B. White, who first identified nosema in North America. Dr. White spent nine years intensively studying the parasite, and I feel that he gained a clear grasp on its effect upon colonies. In fact, the article that I'm sending off for publication in next month's Bee Journal is based largely upon his findings!

What I found was that we beekeepers have been using the wrong method of monitoring nosema levels! The standard assessment has been to grind up a sample of bees, and then to dilute them and then use a blood cell counting chamber (a hemacytometer) to count the average number of nosema spores per bee. However, with the invasion of the "new nosema" (*N. ceranae*), average spore counts simply haven't correlated well with colony health, leading to great confusion.

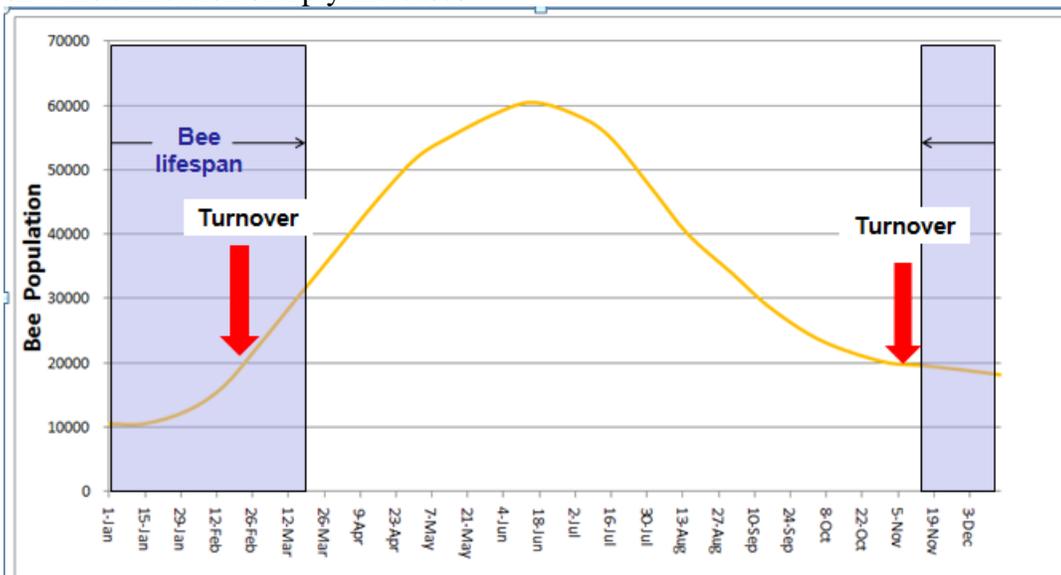
But when I looked back at Dr. White’s work, I found that he didn’t count spores—rather, he determined the percentage of bees in a hive that were infected. When I investigated this aspect further, I realized the apicultural scientists have been going down the wrong track for some time, and we beekeepers simply followed them. What is now apparent to me is that we have sick hives, that we should be going back to viewing the guts of individual bees under the scope. I’ll be publishing a shortcut method.

Another thing that beekeepers are sometimes not clear on is the effect of normal population dynamics upon colony health—here are some slides that I made for a recent presentation:



During spring, the colony population builds rapidly, and the hive is full of young bees (the dotted lines indicate the average lifespan of a bee during this time of year). Any bees that get sick simply fly off and die unnoticed.

After about July 1, the colony ramps down its broodrearing, and the population drops as it ages and sick bees fly off to die. It is at this time the varroa and Deformed Wing Virus really become issues, as the relative rate of varroa infection sharply increases.

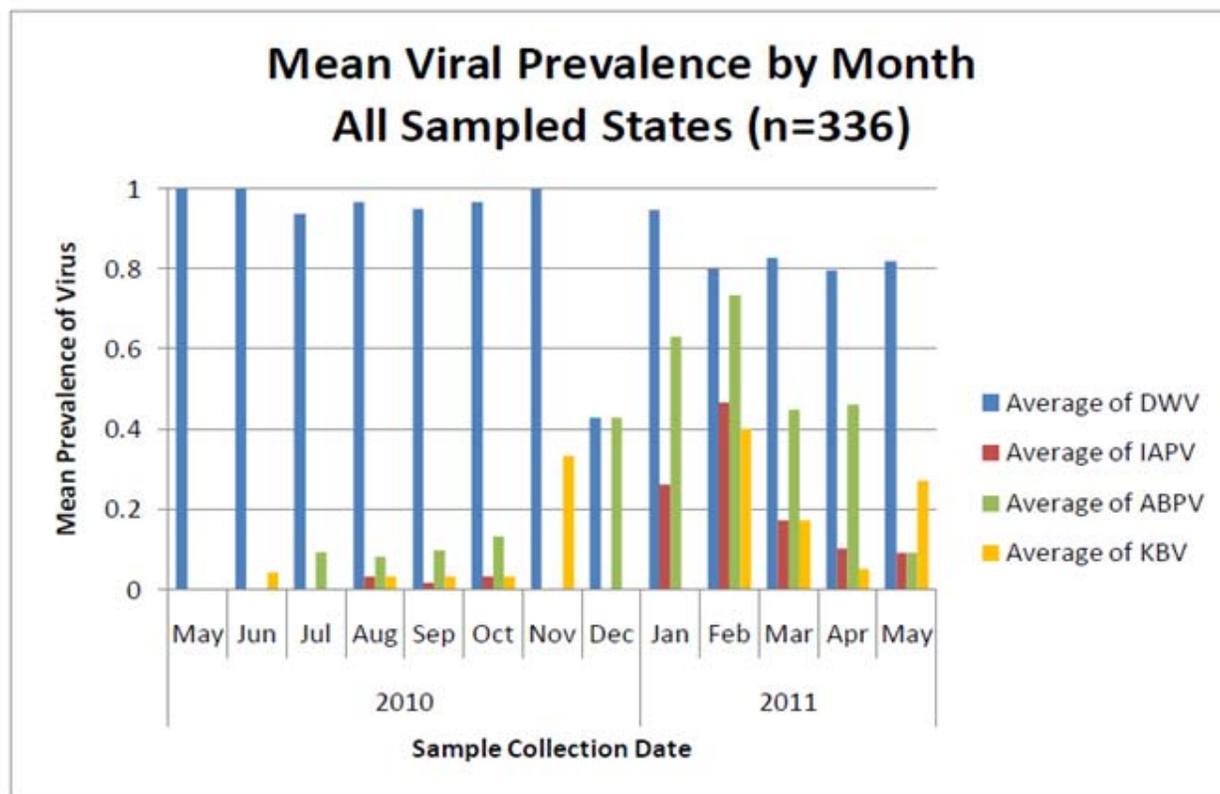


The colony “turns over” its population during two critical periods—in the fall, when any bees that ever reared brood fly off to die, and are replaced by young bees that never reared brood. These young bees become long-lived “winter bees.” They must live for a very long time (blue shaded area), but are unable to do so if they are highly infected with DWV. It is during this period of time that the “acute” viruses and nosema build up in the aging bees.

Then during the critical spring turnover, those aging, often sick bees must forage for spring pollen, and also heat, feed, and care for enough brood to replace them before they die. Some colonies are unable to pull this off, and crash during almond pollination in February.

This graph is from Rennich, K, et al (2011) 2010-2011 National Honey Bee Pests and Diseases Survey Report. Note how the “acute” viruses (any color but blue) build up in the aging winter bees. It appears that nosema builds up during the same period.

The take home of this is that mites are mainly a problem during late summer and fall, and nosema and viruses can be problems in winter and early spring. The more I study bee health issues, the more fascinating they become.



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Nevada County Beekeepers Association Gift to Heifer International

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association bought 4 hives through Heifer International to promote beekeeping worldwide. Thanks to all you

members, your dues and raffles make this possible. Heifer International sent us a thank you:



“In your honor, a gift has been made to Heifer International to help struggling people around the world become self-reliant for food and income

May this gift bring you joy as it brings hope to a family in need.”

November Minutes

Pres Rob Slay opened with Q&A: We need more raffle prizes--each item contributed gets you a raffle ticket. Wax moths only attack dark, used, brood comb. They don't eat the wax, but organic leftovers from the brood. Exposing combs to air and sun, or temperature below 75F, keeps them for storage.

Treasurer Janet Brisson: Oct Begin \$4449.60; Inc \$212.37; Exp \$558.90; October End Bal \$4103.07.

PROGRAM: Dr. Dewey Caron, Oregon State Univ. and Univ. of Delaware dmcaron@del.edu presented a color slide account of the latest in beekeeping.

Our Dec 5 meeting starts at 6PM with dinner followed by gift exchange

Jack Meeks, sec.

