

The Nevada County Beekeepers Association

Local Buzz



February 2010

President's Message

I hope everyone who attended the holiday party had a great time! The gift exchange is always lots of fun, people “stealing” your gift. Everyone says now is the time to start checking your bees. Well, with mine it is a little hard—they’re under 6” of snow and it’s still snowing. The big guys are getting ready to take their bees to the almond orchards. At Christmas when my daughter came over from Reno NV, she saw five trucks and trailers loaded with bees. I called Randy and he said they were bringing them in to stage them in the valley.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting, 1 Feb.

Your President, Larry Meritt

February 1st Meeting

The February 1st program will be presented by Robin Martin and Arlo Acton of O La La Farms in North San Juan. They will talk about soil preservation, alternative fruit tree management, and bee plants. Join us for a no-host dinner at the Lin Q Buffet in the Raleys shopping center in Grass Valley at 5:30 PM.

Bee Bits

By Randy Oliver

The warm weather that we got in early January was wonderful for the bees. I saw tons of pollen loads going into the hives. Such an influx of pollen is a real shot in the arm for the colonies. However, as I write this article, we’ve got snow on the ground, with more falling outside the window. The long series of storms

can quash colony buildup. Since I depend upon renting strong colonies in almonds, we’ve been out feeding pollen supplement heavily.

Speaking of which, I have a yard on Dog Bar road to which I moved about three dozen hives late last spring. They generally do well there on the blackberry bloom. However, when I went to pull honey in late summer, the colonies were starving! Small clusters, little brood, hungry. No way that they’d make it through winter.

So we gave them each 3-lb pollen supp patties and sugar syrup. Within four days they had eaten up all the patties! So we gave ‘em another round, plus more syrup (thanks to Janet Brisson for reporting on them to me). Here’s the amazing part of the story—by fall, those colonies had grown big, strong, and healthy. I just can’t get over how effective it is to feed pollen supplement to colonies during our dry late summers! This is one of the most cost-effective management tactics for keeping healthy bees in the wildlands (away from irrigated areas where there is forage) of Nevada County.

I’ve just returned from the Orlando National Convention. I got to spend time with the researchers from the USDA Baton Rouge lab, which developed both the Russian bee stock, and the VSH varroa resistant stock. Of interest is that they first called the mite resistant stock SMR (suppression of mite reproduction), but later changed the name to VSH (varroa sensitive hygiene) when they found that much of the mite resistance was due to hygienic behavior—bees chewing out mite-infested pupae.

However, they are now looking back at SMR, since they are finding that some lines simply suppress the reproduction of mites by causing the mites not to lay eggs. As you have heard from me before, this is exactly where I feel that the breeders should be looking. In any case, the Baton Rouge researchers and I are on exactly the same page, and are puzzling over the same results of their data. Bottom line is that the VSH line is now greatly improved, and beekeepers are

getting closer every year to having truly mite resistant colonies!

I spoke with several researchers about *Nosema ceranae*, and found that almost no one is associating it with major colony mortality. It's just kinda there, typically spiking in May, then dropping to lower levels. Back in Nevada County, in my test yard for the Remembee antiviral trial, we inoculated all 72 colonies with a virus "cocktail" made from both local viruses and those from a commercial beekeeper who had CCD last year. The result was astounding—CCD-like collapses in a little over a week! You've all heard me say how my opinion has been that CCD is a virus issue. After the inoculation experience, I'm even more convinced.

Almond update: the apparent glut of bees for almonds is rapidly evaporating. The grapevine is buzzing with reports of beekeepers scrambling to find enough bees to fill their contracts.

Randy Oliver

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Sacto Beekeepers Classes

The Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association (SABA) is sponsoring a series of classes this season:

Class Open - Beginning Natural (no chemical) Beekeeping *Sunday* March 14, 2010 Serge Labesque

Class Open - Beginning Natural (no chemical) Beekeeping *Saturday* April 24, 2010 Serge Labesque

Class Open - Beginning Traditional Beekeeping *Saturday* May 22, 2010 Randy Oliver

Class Open - Intermediate Beekeeping *Saturday* June 19, 2010 Dr. Eric Mussen

Class Open - Intermediate Natural Beekeeping *Saturday* July 17, 2010 Serge Labesque

Class Filled/Closed - Beginning Traditional Beekeeping *Saturday* Feb. 20, 2010 Randy Oliver

Sign up early! Seating is limited!

All of the classes will be presented at the Sacramento County Department of Agriculture building at 4145 Branch Center Road, Sacramento, CA. The course hours are 8:30 am to approximately 4:30 pm. The instruction will start at 8:30; registration starts at 7:30 am.

Each course fee is \$35.00 (\$30.00 for SABA members). Registration is required by the Monday before the course date. Late registration will require specific approval of a course coordinator.

These courses are an incredible value, the instructors are TOP NOTCH.

Serge Labesque has been keeping bees for nearly 15 years. He teaches beekeeping at Sonoma Community College and is a published author of numerous articles on beekeeping. Serge is an innovator and follows natural beekeeping practices using NO chemicals in his colonies.

Randy Oliver started beekeeping in his teens, he commercially works approximately 500 colonies leasing his bees for pollination and also selling packaged honey wholesale. He is a researcher and much published author in prestigious bee journals, and a keen observer of honey bee behavior.

Dr. Eric Mussen is a nationally and internationally recognized expert on honey bees. He is on staff at the

University of California, Davis. He is a highly sought after speaker and has published numerous articles about various aspects of apiary science. Because of differences in Serge's and Randy's style and process we strongly recommend that you take both of their beginning classes. While there will be some redundancy, you will be presented a wide range of "how tos" based on the styles of these experienced beekeepers.

More information is contained on individual course flyers and available on the SABA website, www.sacbeekeepers.org or by contacting one of the course coordinators: Ernie Buda at 2211budae@att.net 916-761-3802 or Bruce Waln at bruce.i.waln@gmail.com.



After the bees emptied a dry birdfeeder during the warm weather in January, I decided to feed them a mixture of dry soy flour and brewers yeast in addition to some pollen patties.

-Leslie-

Honey Causes Bakersfield Airport Shutdown

Janet Brisson sent along this article with the comment "I have a feeling this guy doesn't have very good honey!"

January 05, 2010

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — The suspicious material found inside luggage that prompted the shutdown of a California airport Tuesday morning turned out to be

five soft drink bottles filled with honey, authorities said.

A passenger's suitcase tested positive for TNT at Bakersfield's Meadows Field during a routine swabbing of the bag's exterior, Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood said. When TSA officials opened the bag, they found bottles filled with an amber liquid, he said.

"Why in this day and age would someone take a chance carrying honey in Gatorade bottles?" Youngblood asked. "That itself is an alarm. It's hard to understand." Investigators said the bag's owner, Francisco Ramirez, 31, is a gardener from Milwaukee who has been cooperating with authorities. He flew to Bakersfield Dec. 23 to spend Christmas with his sister and was returning Tuesday when the alarm sounded.

When TSA agents opened one of the bottles and tested the contents, the resulting fumes nauseated them, Youngblood said. Both were treated and released at a local hospital.

"It's encouraging that the system did work, because something is not right there," Youngblood said. "The system worked the way it was supposed to, but it just takes time when you close an airport — and it costs a lot of money."

All flights into and out of Meadows Field were cancelled for much of Tuesday as authorities searched the terminal for other potential explosives.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office bomb squad was expected to

perform further tests on the honey to determine why at least two false positives were recorded for both TNT and the organic explosive acetone peroxide, or TATP. Bakersfield is about 110 miles north of Los Angeles.

Investigators want to know whether any chemical Ramirez uses in his gardening work could have left traces of potential explosives. They will also run tests on the honey to see if the smoke beekeepers use to subdue the insects could have triggered the false positive test. Ramirez was not arrested Tuesday.

Authorities initially questioned his immigration status, but U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Virginia Kice said Tuesday afternoon that Ramirez is a legal permanent resident of the U.S.

"I suspect after this he won't want to eat honey again, ever," Youngblood said. The discovery came less than two weeks after a man was charged with trying to destroy a Northwest Airlines flight as it approached Detroit. He is alleged to have smuggled an explosive device on board the aircraft and set it off, but the device sparked only a fire and not the intended explosion. Airline security has been tightened since the arrest.

