



# The Newsy Bee

Newsletter of the Delaware Beekeepers Association

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Spring 2013

## Chilly Spring = Postponed Hive Activities

Ray Walker

Mother Nature brought unusually low average air temperatures during March. Several spring activities at our apiary were postponed until warmer average temperatures arrived in April.

Hive body reversals to move the brood nest lower in the hive were postponed. When hive bodies are reversed, the brood nest is no longer a spherical shape and nurse bees need to cover a more distributed brood nest. If the ambient temperature is too low and there are not enough nurse bees to cover the brood, they will become “chilled brood”.

Hive brood nest inspections and frame manipulations were postponed until average daily temperatures rose above 60 degrees. To rear new

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## Introduction to Sticky Board Assessment Study

Don Coats

I would like to introduce our members to our sticky board assessment study. There are two primary goals. One is to standardize a simplified means of varroa testing using natural drop on sticky boards. Knowing the varroa level in your hive is probably the most important health management tool for all beekeepers.

Participation in this study will test the validity of the concept and help guide and motivate club members to monitor for varroa. Your club investigators would like to use your data and sample sheets to study what else can be learned from reading the detritus on the sticky boards.

**Purpose summary:** Confirm the value of a simple method of determining **the one day mite drop per deep frame of bees** without disturbing the hive. And, **using the same test sheet material, attempt to identify other insights to hive health and activity.**

If you choose to participate, these are the directions for a volunteer:

- A) Fill the blanks of the data sheet over the season as well as you can and share with investigators in December

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spring bees, the colony cluster maintains a core temperature of 95 degrees F. Heat is generated in the cluster by the bees contracting their two sets of flight muscles. If a cluster's mantle bee on the outer surface of the cluster were to cool below 59 degrees she would enter "chill torpor" and fall off the cluster - she cannot fly or warm herself back up by shivering (Per Thomas D. Seeley in "Honeybee Democracy").

Now that our chilly spring is history, it's time to begin colony monitoring for swarm control. This year, in addition to traditional monitoring methods, I plan to use both hive weight (using a low cost luggage scale/fulcrum design) and hive sound monitoring (using an iPhone n-track and Swarmy app with ECM mic and earbuds). I believe these additional monitoring methods will help me better understand colony conditions and behaviors during the nectar flow and during swarm preparations. I'm looking forward to reporting back on weight and sound monitoring in a future newsletter...

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

<b>July</b>	<b>Delaware State Fair</b> July 18-27, Harrington, DE
<b>August</b>	<b>EAS Conference</b> August 5-9, West Chester, PA Visit <a href="http://www.easternapiculture.org">www.easternapiculture.org</a> and click on Conferences
<b>September</b>	<b>Open Hive</b> Date to be determined

Monthly Meetings are held in each county each month. Please check the website for dates.

### B) Compare 3 day **natural drop and after sugar dusting** and with gold standard **sugar role**.

- Collect and assess detritus on sticky boards, attempting to identify other pests in the hive with individual particle types they produce
- Save and protect the sample sheets and help get them to the investigators. Mailing in a business envelope will also be tested.

### **Procedure:**

- 1) Determine where the busy zone is in your test hive by inserting the sticky board for a day or less.
- 2) Place oil or Vaseline on the board on that area of activity and a sheet of typing paper over it and then oil on the paper. Some opinion suggests Crisco or Vaseline traps the mites better. Leave in place for three days.
- 3) Retrieve sheet and count mites, then divide by three (days), then divide again by 5 ( or the # of frames of active bees located over your test sheet in a single deep hive).
- 4) Calculations should be adjusted depending on the colony configuration – double deep, deep/medium/ plus super, etc. This may be a little subjective yet is more insightful than alternative methods of drop counts generally suggested where the colony size is assumed to always be the same.
- 5) Sugar dusting could be done as a mite treatment without full inspection, especially on small colonies. This can be performed right after the counting natural mite drop
- 6) Do this every three or four weeks – more frequently late season.
- 7) Two or three sugar role tests conducted during the season and full hive inspections will test the validity of the sample sheets

## 2013 DBA Officers

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- 8) The retrieved sample sheet (#3 above) should be provided to the investigators asap, so their part of the assessments may proceed. The investigators may be invited to your inspection if scheduling can be worked out as the season progresses.

We are looking for volunteers. If you would like to participate in this study, please contact Don Coats at [doncoats@verizon.net](mailto:doncoats@verizon.net)

### Summer Beekeeping “To-do” List

Summers are busy times... Kids are out of school, vacations are planned, the beach looks very appealing and activities of every kind are planned back-to-back. However, for the successful beekeeper, there are summer duties that must not be neglected

- ✓ Inspecting the hive every other week, making sure that it is healthy and that the queen is present.
- ✓ Adding honey supers as needed hoping for a great honey harvest
- ✓ Keeping up swarm control through mid-summer. Late in the summer there is little chance of swarming.
- ✓ Being on the lookout for honey-robbing wasps or other bees. A hive under full attack is a nasty situation.
- ✓ Harvesting your honey crop at the end of the nectar flow. Remember that where we live the colony requires at least 60 pounds of honey for use during winter. This is the time to break out your gloves, because your normally docile bees are at their most defensive. They don't want to give up their honey without a bit of a fight!



# Ken's Musings

## A Message from the President

### Spring 2013: It's been a crazy one...

Well, after the annual meeting and election, there was a little buzz about getting our newsletter back up and going again. I thought this was a fabulous idea, so I contacted several experienced beekeepers and asked them to be contributing authors to our "Newsy Bee". Next, I would need someone to put this thing together, so I asked Debbi Serrano, who was excited to help out. Now, thanks to her, Mr. Ray Walker and Dr. Don Coates, we have our first issue, or maybe I should say the rebirth of our newsletter. Thank you guys! Hopefully, our next issue will have a few more of our members sharing their experience and expertise.

About the time this newsletter idea was all getting started, I lost my father. The timing was not the best; at least for a beekeeper... then again there is never a good time! Well, I lost a week and a half, and things kind of got away from me. Hives that I was going to split, well they decided to swarm. Sometimes things are just not in our control. Although events like this are tough on a family, I have to say, there has been a lot of good to come out of such a sad time. You see, my father has taught me a lot throughout my life, and he has taught me even more since his passing. Our word, character, and reputation are about all we really have. I was moved by the number of people who have expressed their sincere condolences and respect for my father and our family. The impact has a way of allowing you to see what things are the most important things. As I strive to live my life as my father did, helping and serving others, I can only hope to be half the man my father was. The lessons he taught me are worth more than any monetary inheritance. As he would say, "you are only as rich as the number of friends you have".

Next up: nuc sales. Thanks to people like Bill Leitzinger, Robert Bauer, and Warren Seaver, who promoted me, I've had more requests for nucs than I could handle. I thought I was pretty smart, and only took orders for half of the nucs I had hives for (that seemed safe). Then I thought everyone would want to get their nucs just before the nectar flow started, so I scheduled everyone within a week. Did I mention I have a fulltime job too? So much for being smart! Yeah, I learned a few valuable lessons this season. One of which is scheduling, another being management. See, you should have queen cells or queens for each split you make, but with the events previously mentioned, that didn't happen. I also underestimated the amount of time it would take to look through thirty frames of bees in search of a queen. Once you find her, you can proceed to stocking your nuc with the appropriate resources, but not until you know where she is! Someone should have put more than twenty-four hours in a day... And another thing, someone should have told the weather man about a beekeepers schedule. This is probably a result of global warming, but I really don't know☺

After talking with other extremely experienced beekeepers like Ronnie Quillen and Oliver Collins, one gets a better understanding of the condition many beekeepers are dealing with. One of the recurring themes in our conversations at the last Sussex County meeting, was the lack of a nectar flow. Considering that it really has not warmed up much yet this spring, our bees really don't have a lot to work with. And, if bees don't have nectar, they won't do what they do: make wax, brood or just plain "build up". As of last week, Ronnie stated that he "had not even put on a super yet". This was surprising, since in previous years,

supers were stacked up high on most hives. You see, when nectar starts to come in it stimulates the queen to lay, but when it shuts down, so do the queens. This can be frustrating if you're running over fifty to one hundred hives. Ever tried to feed that many hives sugar syrup? In the case of Ronnie and Oliver, they are running over two thousand combined! Management for these guys is a little different than most of us☺. What we can learn from such experienced men as these.....

To finish up, last weekend I planted four thousand strawberry plants and have just come in from cutting eight acres of hay. I think they call this time of year Spring. I personally think we are supposed to be busy...“Busy as a bee”. I hope you are busy too, at least when it comes to managing those hives. If not, get after it. Get your bees on a flow and make some honey. This year I'd like to see our members display their honey at the Delaware State Fair, in the DBA exhibit. We can have our member's honey set up for all to see. This could be another benefit to membership in the DBA. So go make some honey and join us at the Fair, it's always a good time!

Ken Outten

