April 2024

BROWN COUNTY BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

Mission: We are dedicated to promoting sustainable, responsible and healthy beekeeping practices in Northeastern Wisconsin for both experienced and first time beekeepers. We strive to create a fun environment where learning opportunities exist for association members and the public.

www.browncountybeekeepers.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In last month's message, I mentioned the early warm weather. As I write this, mother nature reminded us winter isn't over yet.Someone commented to me about this year's weather- we had spring during the winter and winter during spring. How true! Cabin fever has set in and the need to move forward is strong. I am sure the bees feel the same way. They have moved forward with brood production. Today the temperature is 44 degrees and sunny. My bees are out and flying.

The urge for every living creature is reproduction and the hive is no different. If the conditions warrant the hive will swarm to produce new colonies. As beekeepers we don't desire that because it reduces the number of workers that can bring in nectar, i.e. honey production. Remember your plan? What tasks do you have in place to deal with swarming behavior?

Swarm management is the "art" of beekeeping. You are observing the conditions of the hive and indicators that the bees are looking to swarm. This knowledge comes with experience. Weekly inspections are crucial. Remember it takes 8 days for a queen cell to be capped. 16 days for her to hatch. The following actions would be used in a swarm prevention mode. Space for brood and nectar by adding supers or rotating brood boxes hopefully will reduce the swarming impulse.

If you see uncapped queen cells, well you are now in a reaction mode. The hive is going to swarm. Don't confuse queen cells with queen cups. Queen cells have eggs or larvae in them. Don' fret if you find queen cells, you have plenty of management options to choose from to deal with the pending swarm.

The first and easiest is to let them do their thing and swarm. Just realize it may reduce the amount of honey that you harvest from that hive. The other methods are going to be dictated by your goals. The hive is going to swarm and the old queen is going to leave. We can artificially do this and move the old queen into a nucleus hive with some of the workers and resource frames. Now you have two hives or a spare queen for future issues. Another similar method is a walk away split. There will be multiple queen cells it the hive. You could take some of those and make multiple nucleus hives using bees from the original hive to reduce crowding. You have the potential for multiple hives. This also gives you resources to deal with potential issues further in the year.

Is there a method to deal with swarms and maintain honey production? Yes. Most of these methods involve a two queen (old and new) hive, being split by a double screen board. Demaree method and Snelgrove board method are examples of two queen hives. One of the down sides with these methods is doing inspections. A lot more boxes to move during the inspection. If they are full of honey, do I need to say more?

I am sure there are other methods to deal with swarming that I haven't mentioned. You just need to figure out what is going to work the best for you. Because, Spring is going to come and things will really start to happen. The bee yard is going to get busy.

- That's what this month's buzz is about

Chris
president@browncountybeekeepers.com

April 2024 Association Meeting

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Location: Green Bay Botanical Garden

Zoom Meeting: Meeting ID: 860 0227 1620 Passcode: 007514

MBM: Installing bees. Feel free to arrive at 5:30p for the MBM, along with Networking & Socializing

May 2024 Meeting Location Update

The location for our May meeting (NOT the next meeting in April) has been moved to the Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve. The time and format will remain the same.

FACEBOOK SITES MANAGED BY BCBA

Brown County Beekeepers
updates on club happenings

Northeast WI Beekeepers
beekeepers helping beekeepers

"Bee"ing Funny"

Why do bees hum?

Indoor Overwintering Update

Hello all. As some of you may know, I converted a small, enclosed trailer into an “indoor” overwintering space. To do so, I insulated it, gave it heating, cooling, and remote monitoring. This is my 2nd winter using it, and my 2nd winter failing. I have no problem with failure (ok, maybe a little...failure killed my plan to split 5 hives to 10) as long as I learn from/correct my mistakes. This year, I have identified my problem: bad ventilation. I believe this is from 3 sources: the lack of air circulation within the trailer, the lack of ventilation in the trailer, and too much air infiltration through the pillow box. I’ll dissect each.

Inside the trailer I have a thru-wall A/C unit that I use to circulate (and potentially cool) air. Although the unit does well to circulate air around the hives at the front of the trailer, the hives at the rear of the trailer show signs of very poor circulation. Signs included: visibly wet joints at the corners of the box, excessive condensation inside the box, and excessive mold in the pillow box and top lid. Prior to next winter I plan on adding a small ceiling fan or 2 oscillating fans to promote additional airflow and eliminate dead-air spots in the trailer.

Secondly, I believe I have a lack of ventilation in the trailer. Please keep in mind that circulation and ventilation are completely different. Circulation is air moving around an enclosed space. Ventilation is drawing in fresh air while exhausting unwanted air. Although circulation of air in the trailer helps the hives ventilate, we must ventilate the entire space to remove “bad” air. At this point in time, I don't have any ventilation. Recently while attending the Beek Meet and the WHPA Central Division Meeting, I realized how important ventilation is.

Thirdly.....pillow boxes. It’s my opinion that pillow boxes are useless for individuals overwintering hives indoors. Here’s why. Commercial beekeepers don’t use them. Do you remember when Chris Hansen discussed indoor wintering? Did his hive configurations discuss pillow boxes? No! Standard configuration is a migratory pallet, single or double deep, and migratory lid, frequently with no to little entrance reducer. This is because he has adequate circulation AND ventilation that helps the bees manage the hive conditions. On top of this, think about your Yeti tumbler. When’s the last time it condensed/”sweated” on a hot summer day? Never. Yetis don’t allow direct contact of warm, moist air to cold surfaces. However, as beekeepers, we believe that we should allow the inside of our hives to directly mix with cold, frigid air. What does this give us? Condensation. Some condensation is needed for our bees to consume honey. Too much and we are giving a cold shower to our cluster.

Lastly, what do I know and why does this matter to those outdoor wintering? Well, I’ve spent 15 years managing HVAC and indoor spaces....for humans. We often form our opinion of how a hive should be set up based upon how our homes are set up. But we forget humans don’t live in hollowed out caverns of trees, nor do we have air-moving wings. Hives are capable of managing conditions of their “homes” in a way that humans cannot. As for those of you who choose to winter outdoors, I hope this mild winter has been kind to you, allowing you to have a better hive survival rate than mine. Your situation is much different, as I'm trying to manage the environment my hives are exposed to. Either way, if your current strategies aren't working, I strongly advise that you explore different methods of hive insulation and find what works best for your hives and your goals.

I’ll continue to share my failures and successes with you as time ticks on. My hope is that you can learn from my mistakes and ‘keep on.

Nathan
vicepresident@browncountybeekeepers.com

2024 BCBA Meeting Education Calendar

Reg = Regular Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30p
MBM = Meeting Before the Meeting: Same Wednesday, starts at 5:45p

Date	Education	Type	Presenter
January 17, 2024	Winter Management Panel	Reg	
February 21, 2024	Honey Judging and Working Bees in Texas	Reg	Stephanie Slater
March 20,2024	Heritage Honey Bee, Queen Rearing, Nucs and Packages	Reg	Tim Wilbanks
April 17, 2024	Spring Management Installing Bees	Reg MBM	
May 15, 2024	Beekeeping with Nucs Swarm Recovery	Reg MBM	James Arvey
June 19, 2024	Bees and Butterfly Habitat Fund & Native Pollinators	Reg	Mike Laes & Julie Mazzoleni Dave Elsen
August 21, 2024	Fall Management Honey Extraction	Reg MBM	Nathan Frailey
September 18, 2024	Pollen Analysis	Reg	Angie Perrotti, Owner, Mellifloral | Honey Pollen Solutions
October 16, 2024	TBD	Reg	
November 20, 2024	TBD	Reg	

April Management Info

Seasonal conditions (weatherspark.com)

In Brown County, Wisconsin
Average Temperatures: High: 54F Low: 34F
Average Precipitation: 5.5 inches (3 inches of snow, 2.5 inches of rain)
Average Hours of Sunlight per Day: 13.5 hr

In the Hive

On cold days, the bees are still clustered, but on warm sunny days, they should be bringing in lots of pollen and nectar. If their flights are limited by cold or inclement weather, they may still be at risk of starvation. The colony, if big enough, begins to rear drones in greater numbers.

Nutrition

- The colony should have at least 3-4 combs full of honey. Feed them if the hive is light or the stores obviously empty, or if the bees are visible through the inner cover at the very top of the hive. Use dry sugar or a candy board, or replace empty combs with combs of capped honey. Sugar syrup is also an option: feed a 1:1 mix in a feeder that holds enough syrup that it doesn't need refilling every day, but not so much that it gets moldy before the bees finish it. If the bees are reliant on this food, you will likely need to continue to feed until nectar and pollen are accessible outside.
- The location/proximity of the bees to their food stores is key. If the cluster is far to one side of the food stores, you can carefully move it closer, keeping it together while you do so, or move frames of honey closer to it.
- You might consider feeding pollen substitute or supplement to support or further stimulate egg laying. If you do so, be sure to use clean pollen.
- Feed package bees or nucs upon their arrival.
- If you plan to rear queens this year, lavishly feed the cell finisher colony chosen in the fall (carbohydrates and protein) for early spring buildup.

Equipment

- Remove insulation, winter wraps, mouse guards, etc. Entrance reducers can be left on; many beekeepers use them year-round.

Yard maintenance

- Check that any bear fencing is still working properly and replace batteries if necessary.

Education

- In the event that some colonies did not survive the winter, this is a good time of year to diagnose dead-outs and learn from your mistakes.

April Management Info

Pests, parasites, and diseases

- Begin monthly monitoring for Varroa mites. At this point in the year, if you find two or more mites (per 100 bees) from a sugar shake, ether roll, or alcohol wash, you will want to treat. Treatment methods will depend on your management goals, the condition of the colony, and external conditions. This is an ideal time to use treatments that cannot be used when supers are present.
- If drones are being reared in significant numbers, you can use drone comb for early Varroa management, but be sure to return within 28 days at a minimum, to ensure that it doesn't become a haven for mites!
- Carefully check every brood frame in each colony for an American foulbrood infection.
- Cleaning dead bees and detritus off the bottom board during the first thorough inspection may help keep the hive disease- and pest-free.

Population management

- Install any new packages or nucs that arrive.
- Equalizing can be accomplished through donating a frame or two of brood from one hive to another or swapping hive locations.
- If your inspection reveals that a queen is under-performing, if you want the vigor of a young queen, or if you want to introduce new stock for hygienic behavior or other traits, you might consider re-queening. This is a good month to do it, although local queens are probably in short supply this early in the year.
- To rear queens yourself this year, continue to build your cell builder colony while preventing it from swarming. Check often for swarm cells, and cut out any you find.

For more April management info, visit our month by month education on the management info, visit our month by month education on the management info, visit our month by month education on the management info, visit our month by month education on the BCBA website.

Brown County Beekeeping Association
Member Benefits

Club Sponsor – Hansen Honey Farm, Rhinelander, WI
·$5 off each package or nuc of bees until May 2024 (Min purchase required)
·5% discount for all BCBA members for ongoing purchase
·For online discount code, contact secretary@browncountybeekeepers.com
·When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

Club Sponsor – Let It Bee, Inc., Greenville, WI
·5% discount for all BCBA member purchases, except nucs. In-store only.
·When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

Click here for the Club Sponsor Website Page

Club Equipment Rental
Perks of being a member! Click here for the full rental list.

American Bee Journal Subscriptions
(Contact Club Treasurer for Discount form)

Club Education Reimbursement Opportunity
Club members are eligible for up to $25/ calendar year for continuing education
Eligibility Guidelines:

- Must be a current member for at least 12 consecutive months.
- Member must submit their request to the Leadership Team prior to the event including details on how it aligns to the Club's Mission.
- Note: BCBA sponsored events, books or magazines not eligible for reimbursements.
- Club Expectations of Members Receiving Education Reimbursement
- Overview of the education to the club or an education session.
- Write-up with photos and/or video for club publication.

2024 Club Officers

President: Chris Groth
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Treasurer: Tom Cashman
Tcash99930@aol.com

Vice President: Nathan C. Frailey, Sr.
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Secretary: Edmund Poillion
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Website Chair: Carl Fisher
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Education Outreach Chair: Julie Mazzoleni

Social Media: Wayne Steigelman

Board Member at Large: Dick Sturm

Club Education CoChairs: Emily Skala and Dave Elsen