THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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🐝 Join Us This Thursday – Marin Beekeepers Meeting

📅 Thursday, August 7, 2025 – 7:00 PM

📍 American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA 94960

For beginner, intermediate, and advanced beekeepers

Feel free to come a little early and hang out with fellow beeks in the downstairs bar.

CLUB NEWS

This Month's Hands-On Workshop: Oxalic Strips & Protein Supplement

Prompted by a recent case where a local beekeeper opened his hive to find only a queen and a small handful of workers (a classic mite-collapse scenario), we're revisiting one of our most practical, hands-on sessions.

We'll be preparing Oxalic Acid + Glycerin strips, soaked into Swedish dishtowel sponges. While their "official" purpose is bleaching the top bars of brood frames, they also—by happy coincidence—help reduce and control mite populations. We'll also review the general timetable, and methods that work, for controlling mite populations, thereby keeping disease levels low.

As in our previous workshop, we'll:

- Mix several batches of Oxalic Strips for members to take home and use in their own hives (perfect timing, as mite levels tend to spike this time of year).
- If time allows, prepare a fresh five-gallon batch of Protein Supplement to support colonies through the late-summer dearth and into winter prep.

Why Protein Supplement Matters

Protein feeding supports nurse bee health, which strengthens the colony as it begins raising "overwintering" bees. Colonies boosted with protein supplement tend to enter winter stronger and emerge in spring with more vigor and resilience.

We'll have recipes for both Oxalic Strips and Protein Supplement on hand. If we make the protein mix, we'll also have Ziplock bags ready so everyone can take a portion home for their bees.

Bring your curiosity—and maybe an apron—because this is a hands-on evening you won't want to miss!

Is It Getting Hot Around Here?
Why You Can—and Should—Control Hive Temperament

Earlier this year in Corte Madera, one hive limped along through winter only to fail before spring. Then, in the middle of the season, a swarm discovered the empty single deep box. The comb looked inviting, with some leftover pollen and honey. The new colony quickly grew in strength; brood frames filled beautifully from edge to edge, and the bees busily brought in fresh resources. But as they reached full strength, their mood shifted. They went from cooperative workers to defensive stingers—far more than anyone would like.

This story is becoming more common. Pick up a swarm? It's hot. Acquire a hive from another beekeeper? It's hot. Even borrow a brood frame from a friend's hive—with permission—and you may find the colony uncomfortably aggressive.

Many newer beekeepers have never experienced the pleasure of working with truly gentle bees. They know bees can sting, but in a full bee suit and gloves, it's easy to miss the subtle "messages" bees send before they escalate. As Robert wisely said at a recent meeting:

> *Take off the gloves, take off the bee suit, but always wear a veil. You'll quickly know if your bees are gentle—and if they're not, you'll know it's time to get a better queen*.

Across California, and especially in Marin, the trend is troubling: not all hives, but more and more, are becoming "hot."

Why Hot Hives Are a Problem

Hot hives aren't just unpleasant—they're a risk. Some beekeepers choose to leave them alone, reasoning that they make more honey. But avoiding them means important hive work goes undone, leaving diseases unchecked. As for the "more honey" claim, that's more likely due to the colony's general health than their bad attitude.

The real danger comes from their drones. Drones from aggressive colonies can mate with virgin queens from other swarms, spreading hostile genetics across an entire region. One nasty hive can, over several years, turn a whole area into a bad neighborhood for both beekeepers and the public.

The Takeaway

If you find yourself with a hot hive, don't just tolerate it—have a plan. Requeen with gentler stock. Prevent the spread of aggressive genetics. And above all, remember: we have a responsibility to keep not only our own bees manageable, but our communities safe.

🐝 New Special Interest Group (SIG)

Successfully Replacing a Hot Queen – It's a Process

Two of our members share several hives locally. One of them is strong, healthy… and downright unpleasant to work. Even with a bee suit, the joy is gone, and everyone involved—two beekeepers and one wife—agrees: something has to change.

Why Replace a Hot Queen?

A bee suit might make her tolerable, but letting an aggressive queen keep producing drones spreads undesirable genetics to the neighborhood. Those drones can mate with queens from other hives, turning gentle colonies into defensive ones. We owe it to ourselves, our bees, and our neighbors to Bee Better.

Step One: Commit

If you're replacing a hot queen, do it with purpose—don't relocate her "to the back 40" or "the country." That just spreads the problem.

Step Two: Prepare a Gentle Nuc

Replacing a queen successfully takes more than a quick swap. You'll need:

- A 5-frame Nuc box (build or purchase)
- Gentle, productive queen stock from a reputable breeder
- Several frames of calm, mite-minimal bees to start the Nuc

Raise your Nuc until it builds into a full deep hive.

Step Three: Manage the Transition

1. Cage the old aggressive queen to stop her laying.
   - Use a Scalvini Queen Restriction Cage (available from Meyer Bees, IL) so workers don't start queen cells.
2. After 11+ days—once all larvae have aged out—remove the aggressive queen.
3. Leave the hive queenless for several hours to a day (no larvae left for them to make their own queen).
4. Combine the gentle queen's hive with the aggressive hive using the newspaper method.

Step Four: Enjoy the Change

Within weeks, the colony's disposition will shift. Once settled, move the queen and her full nest to the bottom boxes in proper configuration. Soon, you'll remember the pleasure of working with calm, cooperative bees.

Join Us

This SIG will walk through the process step-by-step. You can:

- Plan how to replace a hot queen in your own hive
- Build a "gentle queen" backup hive for future swaps
- Or create a brand-new hive with a calm temperament

Better bees make better beekeepers—and happier neighbors.

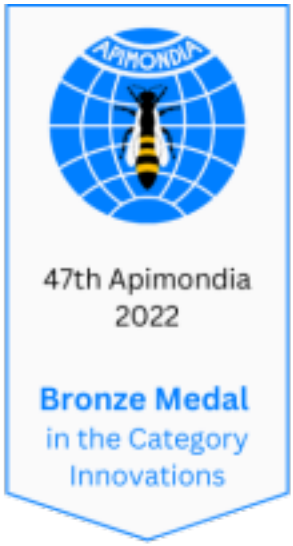
VSH, or Varroa Sensitive Hygiene bees, still being established as a 'thing' in the Bee Bay Area.

Robert MacKimmie continues the push to establish a breeding population of VSH bees, a trait where the genetic olfactory traits of certain bees allows them to identify the "distress pheromone" put out by many bees when a mite has jumped into the cocoon with the young larvae, and has started to feed on their Vitellogenin, their body store of protein. The VSH-capable bees tear open the cell, dropping the humidity, and somehow many the mites in with VSH bees aren't able to reproduce, being non-reproductive mites in the cell with the larvae. In this way, VSH bees are able to control the mite populations on their own.

A number of VSH bee stocks have been brought in from bee breeders around the country, and hives of these varied VSH queens are being established in an isolated Bay Area mating location. Bees from James Lee in Michigan; Ryan Williamson of Sour Wood Farm, Virginia; Cory Stevens from Missouri; Kobe Bees in Michigan; and Jason Bragg of Appalachian Queen Bees, West Virginia, are included in the mix.

Record keeping is essential for VSH breeding. Knowing queen lineage, with breeding drone stock origins flown in isolated locations, helps to control the genetic traits of the resulting queens.

Typical essential records for virgin queen bees purchased for inclusion in the Bay Area VSH program are provided when purchasing VSH stocks. Daughters can be grafted from any of these queens, or they can be further tested for strength of VSH traits by any of several methods. "Harbo Assay" where 100-300 brood cells are opened and analyzed, looking for present, but non-reproductive Varroa mites. Another recent tool is the "UbeeO" product which mimics the distress pheromone of the larvae with a mite feeding on them. A new method for identifying the VSH trait is the "Weimer Needle Stamp - Pin Test for Hygiene." Using the needle test, you can quickly and easily exclude colonies that exhibit little to no such hygienic behavior. The test is not suitable for highly accurate scientific testing, as it includes defective cells. Those colonies that are still of interest after this pre-selection can then be monitored and recorded using the traditional methods. Use of the Weimer Pin Test to identify hygienic traits, then use of the Harbo Assay to identify accurate percentages of Hygienic traits, allows a rating and classification for highly accurate VSH breeding programs, and brings us very close to having scientifically tested and verified mite resistance in our local bees.



Here are typical notes on VSH Virgin Queens purchased for our local VSH Queen program. These are notes from Ryan Williamson of Sour Wood Farm, and these are the notes from actual Virgin bees purchased from his VSH program. Notes are about the Virgin Bee Mothers:

#5 StarFox. Moderate mite resistance and scored a Harbo 3 but I'm getting better mite resistances in many of her daughters. Purdue did genetic testing she is ~94% apis mellifera mellifera (European black bee) with the rest Caucasian. This surprised me as she and her daughters are light toned and brood up well with great honey production. Most daughters are light toned with a dark tip and pretty gentle. She tested a UbeeO 88%. Last year 4 out of 6 open mated daughters scored a Harbo 3 or 4.

#12. F1 2022 Daughter of a Cory Stevens breeder. She has had all Harbo 4 assays and consistently low mites. UbeeO 66%. I worked a bunch of her daughters in full size production colonies in shorts and no smoke last week but I have had a bit of spice in a few daughters open mated in certain locations. Mite wash numbers in 300: 6/2/23 0m 8/26/23 5m. 8/21/24 0m. 10/5/24 0m. 3/18/25 0m. 5/7/25 0m.

#37 as seen in the video. https://youtu.be/711yM2Grsnk and https://youtu.be/muNRC-k3ys4

Daughter of #5, super gentle and productive with two Harbo 4 scores and consistently low mites. I am really excited about her. Mite wash numbers in 300 bees:7/21/24 0m. 9/13/24 0m. 10/9/24 4m. 3/13/25 2m. 5/1/25 0m.

#94. Latshaw II Carni breeder. Virgin is pictured with this post. Very gentle I can work them in shorts without smoke. Daughters are consistently dark colored. I have not tested this breeder for mite resistance yet but Joe Latshaw said her mother is still going strong in her fourth year treatment free.

#119. A daughter of my #43 breeder that was raised in the lego nuc as seen in some videos on youtube. She has been very prolific this year but like her mom was also very conservative with stores overwinter. Harbo 4 scored brood with no reproductive mites found. Mite wash numbers in 300: 8/2/24 0m. 8/23/24 1m. 9/20/24 2m. 10/5/24 1m. 3/18/25 0m. 5/8/25 0m.

From the Kobe Apiary in Michigan:

These F1 VSH Michigan queens are daughters from one of our 2023 Michigan queens that has not been treated or experienced a brood break since the Fall of 2023. The colony has overwintered twice in Michigan and is still going strong. The colony washed 0.6% (2 mites) and scored a 4 on the Harbo assay in July of 2024. Here is a video showing the uncap/recap and VSH characteristics we observe in the colony:

https://youtu.be/gCQW0LUYkFg

Queen with blue tag

Queen cell

With all these genetics flying in the dedicated mating apiary, a Breeder Queen from James Lee's #50 Queen, inseminated by Cory Stevens with drone semen mostly from Ryan's Red #98. When a VSH tested queen is inseminated with other specific VSH Drone Semen, very high VHS Hygienic numbers are the outcome, and the resulting bee colony suppresses the mite reproduction. The VSH mite levels stay very low in the hive, with health of the colony being superior to most other hives.

Talk to Robert if you have an interest in running some of these early VSH queens. You will likely not have to treat these hives, but mite testing is requested to track the success or extent of the VSH Hygienic traits.

Transition Time - What's Happening in Hives This Month - August 2025

As Climate Change continues to show how much impact is in our future, you know, massive rain dump flash floods in Texas, New Mexico, North Carolina, as an example. Locally in the bee world, Climate Change shows up as ever more specific differences in what the hives are up to. Some hives are experiencing dearth already, with little nectar coming in because flowering plants have dried up, while other hives have experienced a continual flow of nectar. They seem to be able to find pollen in most locations.

As an example of how things can change, a month ago several hives near Golden Gate Park in San Francisco had three partially full supers, but all the frames looked extremely dry of nectar, and it looked like they had little food for producing brood. I thought Dearth had arrived early in an extreme way. Three weeks later when I stopped for a hive check, all three supers were nearly full, with most of two boxes being capped and ready to harvest. What was a dry dearth quickly became a gushing landscape with plenty of sweet liquid available. The question was, is Dearth still ahead, or is this a nectar flow that comes after Dearth, and how long will it last?

You can shuffle all of the finished and capped frames to the top box, and harvest the box when 90% of those frames are capped off. Now is the time of year to reduce the boxes, keeping maximum bees in all boxes, reducing the boxes on the stack so that things stay warm and cozy as the populations reduce. Be aware, with the shorter growing days, the bees will be less ebullient about keeping their maximum populations, and the queen will start to reduce her laying. As they start to have less bees in each of the boxes, you will want to harvest honey, but not put back an empty drawn comb super, replacing a box for the one you pull off. The hive can now have fewer bee boxes, and it will become easier for the bees to keep the space warm in their effort to continue condensing the moisture out of the honey to cure it. Remember that you will be transitioning your hive stack to a single deep box, with one super for honey as an over Wintering configuration, or two deep brood boxes if that is your religion.

On the mite front, you should be doing mite counts by either the Sugar Roll Method, or the Alcohol/Soapy Water Mite Wash. Mites start building in early Spring, and by July/August, the mites have built up their populations significantly. By doing a mite wash now, you will be able to determine if you have mite resistant bees (unlikely, but possible), or that your bees have reproducing mites, and how many, often overwhelming numbers. People get different mite numbers from different people, but the working truth seems to be that anything over 2% mites washed from 'One Half Cup' of bees, (300 bees in 'One Half Cup' of Bees), will start to exhibit health impacts on the hive populations. Katie Lee, bee expert trained by Marla Spivak, was asked how many mites were permissible in a beehive going into winter - "Zero" was her reply.

If it is a high mite population, you may need a second Formic Acid treatment with either Formic Pro, or regular Mite Away Quick Strips (MAQS) which can bring mite levels down when the acidic vapors penetrate the brood cells, killing the mites in with the bees in the cell. If it is a high population, or if your Drone cell numbers are high, you may need to treat a second time using a single strip with each treatment. Drone cells seem to have a thicker rind on their cells, so Formic doesn't penetrate as easily with the acidic vapors. Also, using two Formic strips, or a 'Full Dose' can sometimes confuse the bees with the strong acetic smell, and they might become confused not being able to smell the queens' pheromones clearly. They might get excited about things, with individual bees causing a frenzy where they ball their queen, killing her. Not good if you like your queen.

Presumably, you will have Oxalic/Glycerin strips in your hive for most of the year if you are not running VSH or Hygienic bees. Non-treatment is a reasonable practice if you are testing for mite resistance, but once the mite numbers in a hive are determined to be elevated and not controlled by the bees, they should be assumed to be not mite resistant, and must therefore have their mite numbers controlled to

avoid standard mite collapse through Deformed Wing Virus ,the disease that kills most hives that go down.

So, what is happening now in your hives?

The nectar flows will be halting at any time, on a hive by hive basis, as the last of the Spring bloom dries out. Hopefully you have left enough honey on the hive to get them through up to two months of not much food coming through the front door.There is an important nectar flow that should kick in after our Indian Summer, sometime in September, and should last until our first big chill. Keep reducing the bee boxes through the Fall months as the bee numbers reduce, and this way the function of the beehive will remain working as a fully functional moisture condensing machine, driving the moisture out of the curing honey. You will likely need to provide another Formic Acid treatment in October because the mites will have built up again, impacting bee health. September/October are the months when the "overwintering bees" will be born, so they need no health impacts from mites so they are strong, they need food (protein supplement) and honey to fund their operation of the hive, making as many bees as possible, with each bee living as long as they can (number of days in their lives) so they help to keep the hive big, strong, and productive.

While Spring is about expansion, abundance, exuberance, and prosperity, this time of year is about reduction, preparation, hunkering down, building stores, and being ready to get through Winter. It's a long path until next Spring when they expand again, so do all you can to keep your bees healthy, strong, and pampered.

Marin County Fair

We had a great presence at this year's Marin County Fair thanks to Cecil Nielsen and her bevy of booth babes (and bro's). From Cecil:

> Our BeeKeeping Booth at the Marin Fair went well. The weather was great too. Beekeepers throughout the Bay Area entered their honey, wax, and full frames and received many awards. We were very fortunate to have Bonnie Morse from Bonnie Bee and Co and Michael Zilber from Heidrun to help judge entries. They spent a good part of their Sunday afternoon judging. Thank you!!
>
> A shout out to Marin Ace Hardware of San Rafael who let us have fresh pollinating plants to display at our booth! All plants had labels with their names so folks could snap a pic.

Thanks also to the booth set up team: Lynette Denison, Chikara Motomura, Jim Lawson and myself. Together we tackled the job! Not an easy task to say the least!!

Dave Peterson lent us his Observation Hives and Jim Lawson was our point guard bringing them to the fair and picking them up each night. Thank you!

Of course, let's not forget the members that volunteered to work! Thank you too!

On Sunday, Latino Day, our club invited Joe's Bees from Hayward to spend the day in the booth and give a talk in both Spanish and English to the public. They brought the most elaborate wrought iron stand to display their OB hive along with an assortment of other informative material and they answered questions in both English and Spanish. Joe and his son Julio gave over an hour long talk on beekeeping at the Fair too. Joe spoke in Spanish and then his son translated. It was great!

Financials

Please find below the FYE 2025 financial statement. This fiscal year the bee club operated at a deficit. Total income is down 63% from the previous year due to a 40% decline in membership dues and a significant reduction in grants. FYE 2024 space rental expense was paid FYE 2025. With total expenses for FYE 2025 adjusted for the timing of the space rental payment, the club's NOI for FYE 2025 is at a deficit of 132%.

MARIN COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION				
Fiscal year End June 2025				
	Budget FYE 2025	**Actual FYE 2025**	**Actual FYE 2024**	**DIFFERENCE**
Cash at July 1	20,000	20,581	17,192	3,390
INCOME				
Membership Dues	5,500	2,775	4,729	(1,954)
Grants	600	600	4,442	(3,842)
Interest	0	0	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	6,100	3,375	9,171	(5,796)
EXPENSES				
Meetings:				
Meetings - General				
Space Rental	1,500	3,786	0.00	3,786
Food & Beverage	200	91	0	91
Meetings - Board			0	
Food & Beverage		130	0	130
Speaker Fees	1,250	300	0	300
Community Events			1,045	(1,045)
Supplies	800	122	0	122
Event Fees			0	0
Marketing/Educational Material	197	268	2,281	(2,013)
Annual Member Mailing	500		0	0
Equipment	400	432	2,030	(1,598)
Website	1,000	399	43	356
Financial Fees	0	54	382	(328)
Miscelaneous				
TOTAL EXPENSES	5,847	5,582	5,781	(199)
NET OPERATING INCOME	253	(2,207)	3,390	(5,597)
CASH FLOW	20,253	18,375	20,581	(2,207)
LESS RESERVE		10,000		10,000

Club Equipment

The club has electric extractors for harvesting your honey. Each extractor comes with an extraction kit that includes uncapping bin, electric knife, and a scratcher.

David Peterson, in Ross, manages six and 12 frame extractors. He also has a hand crank two frame extractor for those who need the exercise. Mary and Neil Nordquist, in Novato, manage six, 12 and 20 frame extractors.

The six and 12 frame extractors can generally fit into an SUV, station wagon or minivan. The 20 frame extractor requires a pick up truck or something equivalent.

You can schedule a request for use by contacting them at:

dpeterson307@aol.com

neilmary@verizon.net

OTHER EVENTS

Log Cabin Fund Raising

The location where we hold our monthly meetings - the American Legion Post 179 - requires emergency repairs and is soliciting donations.

Please use this link to make a donation:

https://www.gofundme.com/f/emergency-repairs-for-american-legion-post-179-log-cabin

Apis Arborea Online Workshop

Beelining – Tracking Wild Honeybees; August 19 @ 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm, online

Join the growing community of wild honey bee trackers and learn the ancient art of beelining. Beelining is the craft and science of locating wild honeybees.

More info at https://www.apisarborea.org/event/second-round-5/

Film Screening

Local independent film maker (and club member) Chikara Motomura will be showing a screening of his latest film: Journey to Hokusai at the Lark Theatre on 10/14/25. Please follow this link for information and to purchase tickets.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership Dues are now $25.00 for the year for single members, $40.00 for families.

We need to hear from you. Please renew your membership Online at www.marinbeekeepers.org. There are many benefits from being a member, aside our monthly meetings, where you can chat with guest speakers from all over the beekeeping world:

- Use of the Club's extractors, electric uncapping knives, wax-melter, hive carrier, embedding tool, and other beekeeping equipment;
- Free subscription to the Marin Beekeepers Newsletter (11 issues a year). Back issues on the website are available for background information and beekeeping tips;
- Preferred registration for beekeeping workshops (usually 4 or 5 per year) and special events;
- We have a great library that includes books, magazines and catalogs on everything from starting your first hive or baking with honey to raising your own queens.
- Free admission to our monthly meetings, where we have speakers among the foremost bee experts in the world (normally a $10 donation);
- Subscription to our "BUZZ" email listserv which is where we converse online about beekeeping in Marin;
- Subscription to our "SWARMS" email listserv which is where we notify members of any swarms that need hiving;

- Subscription to our "Event List" email listserv which is our general notification list of events and workshops.

The best and easiest way to pay your 2025 dues is online at www.marinbeekeepers.org. You do not need to sign in or use a password. Just click on "become a member", fill out the form and submit. Be sure to complete the payment section at the end, which is via PayPal. You do not need to have a PayPal account to pay using a credit card. There is a small transaction fee added to your dues that is assessed by PayPal.

Or... you can mail a check payable to Marin Beekeepers to our Treasurer:

Malcolm Goldsmith 105 Molino Ave, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

ABOUT THE MARIN BEEKEEPERS CLUB

We are people who share an avid interest in honey and native bees. We are a mix of hobbyists as well as professional beekeepers. We have a wide range of interests, covering bee biology, pollination, sustainable bee breeding, health aspects of bee products, international beekeeping, and other bee-related topics. We welcome you to attend our meetings and to become a member:

https://marinbeekeepers.org/become-a-member/

Monthly meetings are typically on the first Thursday of the month and usually feature a knowledgeable speaker and/or project and includes informal sharing of information by members throughout the meeting ($10 donation for non-members). Meetings are a good way to learn about beekeeping. Please consider becoming a member whether you have bees or not.