

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 4, Issue 4

April 2012

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Eric C. Mussen, Ph.D., Extension Apiculturist, University of California Davis. Eric is the only extension apiarist west of the Rocky Mountains. As an extension apiarist, he is the liaison between the bee researchers and both the commercial beekeepers and hobbyist beekeepers.

Dr. Mussen's talk was about the current state of beekeeping. Eric started by announcing that he was planning on retiring at the end of August 2014. He hopes by announcing his retirement early a successor can be found before he retires and the transition will be smoother.

Eric then spoke about the claims in the news lately by the Food Safety Organization that most honey on the grocer's shelf is not really honey because it does not contain pollen. They claim that the honey on the shelf is ultrafiltered so that its origin is impossible to trace. He said that is not the case, that ultrafiltered honey is primarily used in research and medicine. The process is expensive so ultrafiltering honey would be cost prohibitive.

Honey is a mixture of water, glucose, fructose, and whatever was in the sap from the flowers. Pollen is not

see What You Missed on page 2

What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, April 5, 2012 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30pm.

Katie Lee, the Bee Informed Project

Katie will speak about "The Bee Team: Helping CA Bee Breeders Select Stock"

Upcoming Meetings:

May 3, 2012

Serge Labesque, local beekeeping guru
Serge will speak about spring beekeeping.

June 7, 2012

Dan Stralka, Marin beekeeper
Dan will be discussing survivor stock bees.

June 30 to July 4, 2012

The Marin County Fair
Watch the Beek News and the Buzz for more information about how you can participate.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 What you Missed
- 1 What's the Buzz
- 2 Workshops
- 3 Farm Day
- 3 2012 Marin Bee Census
- 3 Club Bee Order Update
- 4 NewBee 101 Class
- 4 Celebration of the Bees
- 5 Split Workshop
- 5 Split Squad

necessarily an ingredient in honey. It is a contaminant. However, it is not uncommon to find grains of pollen in honey.

Most people in the United States won't buy crystallized honey. In order to create a salable product, honey producers heat honey to 140 degrees F and filter it through fine filters such as you see in chemistry class. This removes the sugar crystals, dust and most pollen grains, which would cause the honey to crystallize faster if they were left in the honey.

Eric explained that this organization appears to be a bunch of lawyers who go around looking for problems so they can sue.

Eric spoke briefly about honey labeling. He said that if you sell honey to the public your label is required to state the USDA grade. Grade A honey has no detectable foreign material. Comb honey is automatically Grade A but you need to strain your extracted honey through a nylon stocking or a nylon sieve, such as a paint strainer, to remove any bee parts, etc.

Eric then talked about pesticides. Exposure to pesticides does not help bees. How harmful are pesticides? It is hard to say because tests are only run for LD50 (how much pesticide is required to kill half of the adult bees).

Eric then discussed adjuvants. Adjuvants are usually listed as inert ingredients on a pesticide bottle. They are not the actual lethal chemical but are added to deliver the pesticide more effectively. They allow the pesticide to spread more readily on a plant and some even allow the pesticide to penetrate into the plant. Studies at Penn State University have shown that some of the common "inert" ingredients are toxic to honey bees. They found that they are particularly harmful to brood.

Eric then spoke about the synergism between various chemicals that have commonly been applied to bees as miticides. For instance, coumaphos combined with fluvalinate is much harder on bees than each chemical individually. Since each chemical builds up in the beeswax, the potential for synergism is very real.

Eric closed by pointing out that chemical interaction can be very complex. There are no black and whites with chemicals. He felt that it is going to be very difficult to try to regulate pesticides based on potential danger to bees when so many inert ingredients and adjuvants are complicating the picture.

Workshops

Event: Bee Testing Classes: "[Are there any diseases in your Hive?](#)"

Date: Saturday, April 7: 9:30 am to 11:30 am and a repeat at 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Instructor: Katie Lee

Location: Draper Farms, 11 Sacramento Ave, San Anselmo

Cost: \$30 Make check payable to Marin Beekeepers and send to:
Richard Hyde
10 Bayview St.
Belvedere CA 94920

"What's in Your Hive?" A rare opportunity to learn to test and analyze the pathogens in a bee colony will be presented in classes on Saturday, April 7 at 9:30 and 1:30. Katie Lee, the researcher who analyzed a thousand hives to come up with the simple and now widely used test for Varroa mite will teach the technique.

Participants will learn to analyze their bees for a hygienic behavior, a genetic trait that guards against disease and pests. They will also acquire the skill to diagnose a dangerous gut pathogen, Nosema, through a bee club owned microscope. Lee will discuss selection of the most suitable colonies for the Marin survivor stock project and lead discussion from her deep experience as a leader of the national Bee Informed Project Tech Team.

Sign up through the Marin Beekeepers website, apr7@marinbeekeepers.org. All proceeds from this workshop will be donated to Project Apis m. for honey bee research.

Farm Day



The Marin County Beekeeper's Association was as popular as ever at this year's Farm Day on March 24th. At the county fair exhibit hall, approximately 1200 K-6 kids had the opportunity to learn about a variety of farm animals and other topics of importance to agriculture.

As always, Dave Peterson's observation hive was a highlight. Although the queen only made a few brief appearances, the swarm cells made for interesting discussions with the kids. Kids also had the opportunity to identify differences in honeybees and yellow jackets with our flashcard game. Correct answers earned a bee eraser.

2012 Marin Bee Census

It's survey time again! Over the past three years, we have been able to collect a lot of data on what is happening with our local bee population, and what methods/equipment/etc. local beekeepers are employing to get these results.

Whether you have one colony or twenty, your input is important. Even if you don't keep bees, but observe a feral colony in a tree or the walls of the house, we want to know what's happening with the bees.

Past surveys have indicated that some of the fewest losses occur with local splits, however, few beekeepers have split colonies before last year. Did you do splits or receive splits last year? How did it work out? How about Old Sol nucs? Anecdotal evidence doesn't sound good, but let's see the numbers!

The survey will be open from April 1 – April 30. Go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J5D3N6Y> and take a few minutes to complete the survey to track April 1, 2011 – March 2012:

Club Bee Order Update

An update from club members Bonnie Bollingier and Gary Morse (aka Bonnie Bee & Company):

With the guidance and expertise of Melanie Kirby and Mark Spitzig of Zia Queen Bee Company and cooperation of 10 local beekeepers and 9 apiary locations, we have kicked off our efforts to provide nucs with local – and locally mated – queens. Queens were grafted from 10 colonies across Marin. Some of these queens were bound for the nucs purchased, others are bound for colonies in our apiaries so we can observe and test for possible future inclusion in our breeding program.

Queens are scheduled to be emerging no later than the middle of the first week in April. If weather reports are accurate, it looks like the queens will have good conditions for mating flights coming up and nucs may be available by the end of the month.

In addition to the orders placed by March 15th, we have started a wait list. While we wait to see the results later this month, we will not be taking any more wait list requests for nucs at this time. If we find we have additional bees available, we will send a notice out on the buzz.

Many thanks to all the beekeepers who shared their bees, larvae and time to contribute to the effort to select and breed local survivor stock, as well as those who have purchased nucs from us. We couldn't have done it without you!



A fully capped queen cell on a grafting bar waiting to be introduced to her new hive

NewBees 101 Class

Saturday, April 28, 2012: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Rain Date: May 5, 2012

Location: 307 Upper Toyon, Ross

Dave Peterson will be holding a beginning beekeeping class, "NewBees 101" on April 28, 2012. The class will be at his home in Ross. In the event of rain, the class will be held the following Saturday, May 5, 2012.

The class is intended for Marin Beekeeper Members, with dues paid for 2012, who have bees but are new to beekeeping, or plan to start with bees this spring.

It is expected that participants will have done some reading to familiarize themselves with beginning beekeeping and have their own equipment and protective gear. Any one of these books will give you a feel for what's involved. They are all available from the online suppliers and the Club library has copies for checkout.

First Lessons in Beekeeping
The Backyard Beekeeper
ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture

There will be a discussion touching on all aspects of beekeeping necessary for a beginner to get started with their own hive(s). The class will spend a couple hours in discussion and then go into the apiary. NewBees 101 is intended to provide basic knowledge about bees and beekeeping but also to provide some practical experience working with the bees so as not to be intimidated when working your own hives. The timing of the class is designed so that new club members who have ordered Nucs through the Club's Bonnie Bees order, or other sources, will be able to manage their new bees.

Everyone will be handling frames of bees, so bring your sting protection clothing -- whatever makes you comfortable. Dave's bees are quite gentle and well behaved -- He works them with a little smoke, no gloves, in shorts and sandals. However, with beginners handling them, the girls might get a little testy. In past classes, participants have been known to drop a frame or two.

You will learn to spot the queen, identify each caste of bees, recognize eggs and larva as well as capped brood cells and capped honey cells. Anyone interested in spending more time in the apiary or taking a tour around Dave's garden is welcome to remain after the class is completed.

The workshop will be limited to 8 Marin Beekeeper Members. If there is sufficient interest, a second class may be held on Sunday, April 29. Last year we had

two full classes. If you would also be able to attend on Sunday or would prefer the Sunday date please let Dave know in your e-mail. If you are unable to attend after reserving a spot, please cancel immediately to make room for others.

You can reserve a spot in the '12 NewBees 101 by sending an e-mail directly to dpeterson307@aol.com, with your request. Dave does not charge for the class but requires a \$40 donation to the Club. After sending Dave an e-mail to register, to secure a place in the class, send a check for \$40, payable to Marin Beekeepers, to the Post Office Box below. Further instructions and directions will follow.

David Peterson
dpeterson307@aol.com
(415) 596-7124 Cell
PO Box 1445
Ross, CA 94957

Celebration of the Bees

Saturday, June 6, 2012: 1:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location: Hillside Gardens in Mill Valley

Cost: \$35; children are \$1 (2 per adult maximum)



Join us for an afternoon sponsored by Savory Thymes and SuperOrganism to celebrate the wonder of native and honey bees, both of which are suffering declines due to pressures in their ecosystems.

This day will bring exhibits and a honey tasting presented by the Marin County Beekeepers Association, native bee walks lead by Gordon Frankie of UC Berkeley, honey bee talk by Mea McNeil, Master Beekeeper, along with delicious foods, meads, and Celtic music. This is a kid-friendly event so please bring your children.

Tickets can be purchased online at: <http://www.superorg.org/> (click on Buy Tickets in Celebration of the Bees section). For more information contact Jerry Draper at 415 457-3431 or email at celebees@superorg.org

Split Workshop

There was a good turnout for the Split Workshop held on March 17 at Dave Peterson's Corte Madera apiary. His opening statement to this Workshop was the same as in the past:

"To make a split, you take one or two frames of brood with fresh eggs plus one or two frames of honey and some pollen, put them in a box and walk away... That's really all there is to it. You can all go home now."

Dave always gets a laugh, but seriously that is all there is to it. Anyone who has experience managing bees can do it with no more instruction than that. But for those lacking the experience and self-confidence to "just do it", we managed to fill several hours in the classroom discussing the various ways to divide a hive.

The intention was to limit the number of participants and spend much of the time in the apiary making splits. Unfortunately the weather didn't cooperate so we were unable to actually make any splits. However, the day warmed enough to allow the 20+ attendees to go into one of the hives and learn to recognize stored honey, pollen, capped brood, young larva and most were able to detect the presence of eggs -- a necessary skill when making "walkaway splits". The following week several from the Workshop were able to go by Dave's home apiary and observe making several splits to replace two colonies lost over the winter as well as creating a couple of additional nucs.

Splits can be made by properly dividing a hive's assets into one or more new hive boxes to create a new colony. When the split is expected to raise its own new queen, eggs must be present. This is called a walk-away split. Queens can also be supplied to the split in the form of a ripe queen cell or the introduction of a mated queen. The new, soon to be colony can be moved a few miles away to maintain its field force or located in the same apiary, knowing the foragers will return to the location of the mother hive.

Splits are made for several reasons:

1. To replace lost hives or increase the size of your apiary.
2. To help prevent swarming.
3. To interrupt brood rearing as a method of controlling varroa mite reproduction.
4. As a way to create a queen bank for hives that might go queenless.
5. As a way to create a resource bank for extra bees, honey and pollen.

Split Squad

The fruit trees are blooming the drones are flying and a lot of us have colonies that already need a super! It is time to think about splitting Marin colonies in the hope of propagating survivor bees. The ad hoc volunteer Split Squad was formed last year to learn how to split and to see if we could get local survivor bees from ourselves to ourselves in the future.

Here is how it worked last year:

Cynthia Perry volunteered to coordinate our Marin beekeepers who wanted to learn how to split their bees, were willing to share those splits with Marin beekeepers who had lost their bees, and get a bit of money for their trouble (\$75.00) and maybe keep a split for themselves if they needed bees. Also everyone who participated (15 givers and 15 getters) kicked in some money so we could hire Serge Labesque to come to Marin and teach us how to split. The idea is that those who learned from him would go on to teach others.

We got 21 splits and of those, two did not take, five were ok until winter and then died, 11 are still alive, and three people have not reported in yet.

Here were the conditions:

Splittees had to be beekeepers that had bees which survived at least one year with NO TREATMENT WHATSOEVER. Feeding ok, but powdered sugar, thymol, formic acid, oxalic acid or anything else that interferes with natural selection is not in the spirit of this experimental project. And we would discover which bees could make it on their own, having evolved to live with the mites and survive and having adapted to our local area.

Splittees had to be experienced beekeepers that had bees but lost all of them. They agreed to care for the splits, not treat them and if they survive, keep records, report the progress of the split, and to share them with other Marin beekeepers in 2012.

This year we will change things a bit, having learned quite a lot from the first go around. The split squad will have a hands on workshop and those who learned last year will be offering their advice too. If you want to participate this year, please contact Cynthia Perry directly OFF THE BUZZ to her personal email: cynthiasps@gmail.com. She will put you on the list and will send out info.