

Beekeepers Gazette

beekeepersgazette@bellsouth.net

May, 2014

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 5

New Virus Linked to Colony Collapse Disorder

The Prelude to this month's issue is an article that ran in the Los Angeles Times sent to us from a Jacksonville reader.

It seems there is a link to a virus known as Tobacco Ringspot Virus and CCD. Routine screening of Honeybees by the USDA has found that the RNA of the Ringspot Virus is showing up in mites that are inherent with honeybees.

The article reports this is the first link to pollen based RNA and bees. We are not fortunate enough to have a release to print this article so to read this interesting piece you will need to use the link that follows.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/21/science/la-sci-sn-virus-bee-colony-collapse-20140120>

Scotty – Beam Me Up

Before we delve into this issue, , let's leave the subject of beekeeping for a moment. This video was sent by a friend and I found it totally amazing.

Newer uses of technology never cease to amaze me.

Plato said "Necessity, who is the Mother of Invention".

This is proven  true in the following.

Enjoy; <http://www.chonday.com/Videos/how-the-amazon-warehouse-works>

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Comments from the Editor

If all is as planned, by now you have added supers to your hives and your bees are busy making that wonderful elixir we all are in pursuit of; honey.

I have told many, many people that there is no honey better than that from your bees.

Your role in this process is to continue to periodically inspect your hives?

Are your bees bringing in nectar and pollen? Is the uncapped larva a pearly white color? Do you have a nicely shaped pattern of brood? Does your queen seem to move in harmony with the remainder of your hive? Is she  laying copious amounts of eggs? Look for deformed wings. Look for sunken brood. Look for excessive Small Hive Beetles and possibly dead bees around the hive. Periodically, perform a mite count. These are things that you need to observe every time you go into a hive.


Observe the activity going on in the hive and on the outside. More and more will become apparent each time you inspect them. This is the joy of beekeeping. Learning and becoming more aware.

This month we have a wonderful article from John Graf on the subject of Backyard Queen Rearing. John has done a remarkable job of making this subject doable by anyone. All of us need queens from time to time, mostly whenever they are least available. This is our chance to delve into a subject that is greatly misunderstood. Sit back and enjoy.

Finally, remember, we continue to want your input and suggestions.

Let us hear from you.

Until next month,
Happy Beekeeping

The Editor,

Ray

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Questions and Answers

Q. If you already have capped honey in your bee hives, would you extract it or leave it until the end of honey flow. Thanks, Kevin H.

A. Hello Kevin. I know this isn't the answer you are expecting, but both scenarios are viable.

If you don't need the honey right now to use or sell, leaving it on the hive will be fine as long as you don't have a large amount of Small Hive Beetles that could lay eggs and ultimately ruin the honey.

Also, if you are trying to get a specific type / flavor of honey such as Gallberry or Citrus then you would extract it right after the nectar flow and the honey is capped.

On the other hand, if you add a super after the previous one is in the 70% to 80% full range you could just extract at the end of the season.

Many beekeepers do this so they will have a nice blend at the end of the year.

So in short the answer to your question is yes. I really hope this helps.



Q. I have two hives. One hive seems to have weakened over winter, but they are more active than the other hive which is stronger. Any diagnosis would help. Thanks, Mark.

A. Hello Mark. There are a few possibilities that come to mind. You will need to inspect the hives to verify which applies.

The first being, the weak hive has re-queened itself and the new queen is laying copious amounts of eggs. Honeybees need lots of pollen and nectar to feed the young larvae.

It is estimated that each larvae will be fed somewhere between 12 and 14 thousand times a day. Now that she is laying large amounts of eggs, the foraging bees will be more active than whenever you had a weaker hive. One tell-tale answer will be to watch the returning bees and see if they are bringing in plenty of pollen.

The second consideration is the stronger hive may need a super to allow space for honey building. If the hive is honey bound the bees will get somewhat lethargic and be temperamental. This could make the previously weaker hive seem to have more activity. Check the hives and make sure they have plenty of room for both brood growth and honey making.

The last and least desirable possibility is in the weaker hive the queen may have died or gotten killed and the hive has become hopelessly queenless. In this scenario, the bees left behind will spend all of their energy collecting nectar and making honey. There is no need to care for young brood so collecting nectar is their goal. Look into the hive and make sure you are queen right. If you haven't done so already, look at the back issues of the Beekeepers Gazette on www.unklerays.com. We have covered some of these scenarios. I hope this proves helpful.

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Backyard Queen Rearing

Author; John Graf

Beekeeping is one of the most exciting hobbies I have had the pleasure of doing. But, if you keep bees very long there is going to come a time when you will need a queen. Several reasons for being able to raise your own queens are; it is cheaper than buying one, they are available when you need them, and you can raise daughter queens from your local survivor queen hopefully improving your genetics in the process.

There are several different ways to start your queen cells. There are also several different kits sold by the bee supply stores to do the same. Most of the kits sold revolve around not having to graft the larvae. Most people seem to be intimidated by the grafting process, but, it really isn't that hard. I recommend you try grafting before buying one of the expensive kits. A Chinese grafting tool and some wax cups will only set you back about \$10 and a cell bar can be made from an old deep frame. So give  grafting a try first, you really don't have anything to lose.

The first step with any queen rearing process is to start with a queenless hive. As with most beekeeping related tasks, making up your starter hive can be done many different ways. But, they all come down to the same thing. You want a very strong queenless hive that is boiling over with lots of bees

When you put in your cell bar you want it to almost float into the hive because there are so many bees. To keep things simple, I will only cover one process.

Let's start with a nuc. I personally use a 5 frame nuc for my starter hive. It must have a screened bottom board because of the excessive bees. You need one frame of honey, one frame of pollen, and two empty frames. This leaves one empty space for your cell bar to go. Place the frames in the nuc like this; empty frame, honey frame, cell bar, pollen frame, empty frame. Do the best you can to find a honey and pollen frame without any brood on it. If it has a small amount, it will be fine. Just get frames with as little brood as you can.

Now that you have your frames picked out, it's time to add the bees. Place a couple frames in the nuc so the bees have something to cluster on. Go through your hives and find frames with brood making sure your queen is not on the frame. Shake these frames into the nuc until it is overflowing with bees. If some of the bees fly back to their hive, do not worry, these are the older bees. The bees that stay in the nuc are young nurse bees and these are the bees you want to start your queen cells.

Now that you have your nuc full of bees place the remaining frames in the nuc being careful not to crush many bees.

Continued

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Back Yard Queen Rearing Cont.

Close off the entrance of the nuc and place a feeder on it. Now you see why I emphasized a screen bottom board. This nuc is extremely overcrowded and a solid bottom would cause suffocation. Do not leave your nuc out in the bee yard. Place it somewhere in the shade. I put mine in the garage with a fan blowing on it. Again, since this nuc is closed up and packed full of bees it needs to be kept cool so the bees don't get too hot.

Now let's talk about the cell bar. Most cell bars are simply a strip of wood placed horizontally in a bare frame (see photo). These can be purchased or homemade.

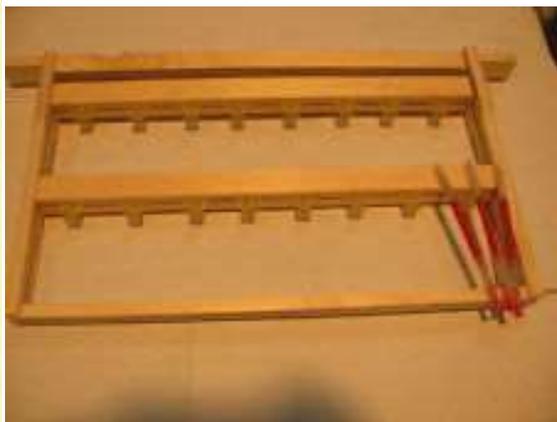


Photo of Cell Bar and Grafting Tools

Attach the cell cups on your cell bar and put it in the nuc. I like to do this in the morning I intend to do my grafting. Leave the nuc in the shade until the afternoon closed up with your frames in it. The bees will polish and clean up the cell cups.

In the afternoon go to the hive you want to use as a "Mother" hive to raise your queens from and find a frame with very young larva; 12-24 hours old larvae is ideal. These will be the smallest larva in the hive. You will barely be able to see them because they are not much larger than an egg. Start out by looking for eggs, the right aged larva will be the ones closest to the eggs. You can cheat finding larvae by putting a drawn frame in the middle of your queen mother hive 4-5 days before you plan on grafting. Normally your breeder queen will lay eggs in this frame right away giving you the right aged larva without having to guess.

Take your frame with the larva you intend to use and brush off all the bees. You don't want to shake the bees off as this will dislodge the larva and make your grafting harder.

Finding the right aged larva is probably the most difficult thing for beginners. Just keep trying until you get it right. You can better see the larvae by using some cheap reading glasses from the dollar store or a jeweler's head band. You have to use larva because eggs will not work. For some reason the bees will just take the eggs out.

Take this frame (the frame you are going to graft from) inside to a room with plenty of lighting. You will need a damp cloth, a grafting tool, the frame you're going to graft from, and your cell bar with the polished cell cups.

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Back Yard Queen Rearing Cont.

There are many different kinds of grafting tools, they all work the same. They allow you to pick up the larva and set them back down in your cell cups. I have found the Chinese grafting tool to be easier for me to use. Try a couple different ones to find out which one you like.

Once you find the larva you want to graft, you will slip the tool under the larva, carefully remove it and lay it down in the cell cup. It needs to be picked up and laid down just like it was sitting in its original cell. Make sure you don't flip it over. If you flip over the larvae, it will drown in the royal jelly. Take your damp cloth and cover the larva to keep it from drying out as you fill up the rest of your cells. Whenever you finish grafting your cells place them back into your starter hive. Leave it closed up for 3 days. Keep the feeder full the whole time the nuc is closed up.

After the 3 days have passed, you can take the nuc back outside and open it to see how many queen cells have been started. You will be able to see the ones the bees accepted and started queens with. They will be longer and you will be able to see the young queens floating in a nice big pool of royal jelly. Now at this point you can open up your nuc and let them fly. Doing it this way the calls will be started and finished in the same nuc.

Another option you can consider is to take the cell bar with started cells and move them to a queen right hive. This is normally called the finisher hive. You will want to put the queen cells above a queen excluder so the queen can't get to your queen cells because she will destroy them.

Ten days after you grafted your larva your queen cells will be ready to move into their own hive so they can hatch, mate and start laying eggs. Remember to write down the date when you graft your larva so you don't forget which day it was. This is an important step. You **have** to move the cells 10 days after you graft. Rain or shine or you run the risk of having a queen hatch and destroy the rest of the cells.

Now, here is the final step. This is really the hardest part of the whole process one that I think a lot of beginners underestimate. You have to make up nucs for all of the queen cells to go into so they can go mate and come back to start laying eggs. If you are just making up a few queens for your own personal use you can save yourself a lot of work by just using the cells like you would a mated queen. Put the cells where you want a queen. If you are re-queening hives just take out the old queen and put in the queen cell. If you are making up nucs to increase your hive numbers just make up nucs and put in a queen cell.

Continued.

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Back Yard Queen Rearing Continued



Photo of capped queen cells.

Queen cells are much easier to get accepted than a mated queen. You can often times re-queen a hive by just slipping in a ripe queen cell up high in a honey super. The bees will treat the cell as a supercedure cell and it will save you the work of trying to find the queen so you can remove her.

Using queen cells for your queen needs is very easy and I encourage you to give it a try. If you are re-queening you can make up a few nucs with the old queens to hold in reserve just in case some of the new queens fail to mate for some reason. Keeping a few nucs around for just that purpose is always a good idea anyway but, we will save that for another day.

You can contact John at missbeehaven4@gmail.com

Clay County Fair Honey Show

The Clay County Fair Honey Show is open every year to beekeepers in Clay County and to all members of the Northeast Florida Honey Bee Association.

All that is needed to enter this annual show is one pound of a beekeeper's own honey in a queenline jar. The judge(s) gives notes regarding the appearance and quality of entries to help beekeepers improve their placement in future honey shows.

This year, honey was judged on April 2nd by Debbie Claxton. She is a certified Welsh Honey Judge. There were eight entries from six participants.

Congratulations to Samuel Smith for his Best In Show entry of light honey. His jar of honey was perfect in every way. Ray Vickerman's honey placed second and Frank William's placed third in the light class. In the amber honey class, Joan Kramer's honey placed second.

Many thanks to all participants who made this show a success.

You should consider entering a jar of your special homegrown honey next year.



Photo of the winners of the Clay County Fair Honey Show.

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And Finally

National Pollinator Day

This year's National Pollinator Day is set for Sat, June 21st, 2014 at the **GTM Research Reserve (Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve)** from 10a to 2p. This event coordinates with Pollinator Partnership's National Pollinator Week. There will be lots of fun educational activities for children and adults, including a live honey extraction demonstration by members of the St Johns County Beekeepers Association. Everyone is invited to this special event, so plan to attend. For more information, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/national-pollinator-day-tickets-3318276053>.

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If you have a subject you would like to see in a future issue

If you have something going on in your bee yard or club you would like us to consider

If you have questions that you would like answered, let us know.

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Online at www.unklerays.com

Dates to Remember

JaxBees Beekeepers Short Course

Saturday, June 7th, the Jacksonville Beekeepers Association will host a Beekeepers Short Course. Cost will be \$15.00 per person.

For Details, contact Marilyn Young at jaxbees@jaxbees.com

Nassau County Beekeeping Club

It is our understanding that a new club is forming in Nassau County, Florida. We have no details other than to contact Amanda

Burnett at 904- 879-1019 or at

mandab@ufl.edu

Our web page, www.unklerays.com will have the current issue of the Gazette as well as back issues beginning with issue 2. (Issue 1 has been retired)

The Editor

Ray Claxton

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