



The Buzz

The Monthly Newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association

Volume I **January 2013**

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the re-birth of **The Buzz**, the monthly newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association. We have exciting plans which we hope will make an interesting and useful letter for all of you. The key to success will be the input we receive from you, the members. Your ideas and contributions will be greatly appreciated. Every one of you is encouraged to be a guest columnist. If you have a topic dear to your heart, please submit an article.

This month we begin a member profile column. A very big thank you to Vicki Basham for taking on this task

In the February letter we will be starting a question and answer box similar to "Jerry Hayes Classroom" in the *American Bee Journal*. We will also start a Member Classifieds section. If you want to buy or sell, please feel free to submit your information. Please submit all articles, questions, and classifieds by the twentieth of the month prior to when they will appear. You can contact me at dave.stocks@yahoo.com.
Thank you, Dave

"The only time I ever believed that I knew all there was to know about beekeeping was the first year I was keeping them."
- Sue Hubble- *A Book of Bees*

Message from the President

Happy New Year Everyone,

This is the beginning of the best year of beekeeping in a long time!

The rains appear to be coming at the right intervals, with the right intensity. The rains will be good for the flowering plants that bees love so much. I hope all of you have stayed on top of the mites and have kept them at a manageable level, along with insuring your bees have enough pollen and carbs to help them through the cold snaps that will pop up between the rains.

This is an exciting year to be a member. This is our first newsletter in a long time. A thank you to Dave Stocks for volunteering to be the editor. Our website has been updated, www.uvasgold.com/gba. Over the next few months we have a number of exciting things happening. We will start our local queen rearing group in a couple of months. We need members to volunteer to staff our mentor cadre, A spring brunch/field day is planned. Our spring package order will happen. A beekeeping class will be taught. Let us know if you want a beginning or advanced level course.

Come along for the ride, it will be fun!
Wayne

Getting to Know Each Other!

The creators of your new newsletter thought it would be nice to feature one of your fellow beekeepers each month. For this issue, we've actually picked three; we're going to get to know the Parrish family - Sid, Lorrie, and their daughter Susanne.



Lorrie, Susanne and Sid Parrish

Sid and Lorrie have about 12 hives at their home in Morgan Hill, plus a handful more spread around the county in various friends' backyards. But they usually have around sixty hives in the mid summer months. That's because Sid and Lorrie are active swarm catchers. Sid, as a pest management technician, gets frequent calls from people who have unwelcome swarms of bees taking up residence in their yards. For Lorrie, catching swarms is particularly challenging because she is allergic to bee

stings. Last year, Lorrie drove all the way to Oakland for a massive swarm. When she finally found the swarm's location, she said, "I realized it wasn't the swarm I was afraid of. It was the neighborhood!" She said that this was the one time she clung to her EpiPen - passing out from a bee sting here was NOT an option!

Sid started his swarm catching habit in junior high school as a Boy Scout. He earned a whopping sum of \$10 catching a swarm using nothing more than his t-shirt! He kept the swarm on his porch to earn a merit badge for beekeeping. However, his beekeeping experience ended a bit soon when his father got stung and the hives had to go.

It would be another 30 years or so before Sid and Lorrie would be involved again with bees. This time, their daughter Susanne would be the catalyst for their renewed interest. About four years ago, Susanne was in her late teens and was a bit bored with her 4-H pig projects. She joined the Santa Clara bee guild, bought her first package of bees, and loved her new hobby. Susanne is now attending Cal Poly studying crop science, and bees are a big part of her class work. She's studying crop science and as part of those studies, she has taken classes in queen rearing and honey extraction. Next year, she'll be a teacher's aide and will oversee a queen rearing class. She loves educating people, especially little kids, about all things related to bees and beekeeping.

Sid and Lorrie's beekeeping goals? They'd like to have around a hundred hives so that they can get into crop pollination services. Sid already has a little experience - a cherry grower had an emergency need for pollination, so Sid and a fellow guild member combined their hives and helped out.

Lorrie advises that new beekeepers should consider having at least two hives when they start out. "Being able to compare hives with each other is invaluable," she says. She also favors a mostly sunny location, adding that their own hives are in the hot sun throughout the summer and seem to do just fine. When asked how they deal with the Varroa mite, Sid stated that he does not treat with any chemicals whatsoever. He did apply a powdered sugar treatment once this past season but hasn't done much of anything else. So far, both Sid and Lorrie are very pleased with the health of their hives.

News from the Beeyard

As January begins, subtle changes will begin in the hive. During the common cold days and nights, the bees will stay tightly clustered, rapidly consuming stored honey and pollen. However, on those rare sunny days (or frequent days if the last two years are any indication), they will be out foraging on early nectar and pollen sources. The most common source for us in the Gilroy and Morgan Hill areas will be eucalyptus.

As the month progresses, we should see the queen rapidly increase her egg laying rate and perhaps the rearing of the first drone brood.

The beekeeper should be monitoring the hive weight and feeding pollen and syrup as indicated. Avoid opening the hive while the bees are clustered during cold weather. However, when a warm day presents itself, begin checking for signs of disease, mites or stress. Remember, Nosema loves damp, cool weather. Check for and treat as necessary.

Guest Column

by Dave Stocks

Our autumnal chores are done, the holidays have passed, and we are dreaming of spring in the bee yard. Perhaps our thoughts are turning to new packages or splits, or perhaps re-queening? But on what do we base these decisions? The answer is simple; we look back at our records of the past year. How did that package do? Was the queen strong? Did my bee yard offer what the bees need to excel? Whether we keep one hive or a hundred hives, the importance of record keeping cannot be over emphasized. The following is not all inclusive, but merely some thoughts on what good hive records should include. Remember, when evaluating your bees, it's always best to have at least two hives, so you have a point of comparison.

Let's start with the bee yard. If you keep bees in more than one location, obviously a notation of the location of each yard is important. Perhaps of more importance is what that yard offered your bees. Did the success of the location warrant bringing your bees back for another year?

Observations you might want to record include: how did the bees perform? Did colony strength increase or decrease while they were there? What were the pollen and nectar sources? How was honey production? Was the honey a varietal that was worth the effort, or did the effort in moving to that location outweigh any benefits? Any other notations, such as the reaction of neighbors, pesticide use, or weather features such as excessive wind, are important facts to include.

Regardless of how many bees or locations, what goes on in the individual hive is of the utmost importance. The records you keep on the individual hive may very well

determine the course of your beekeeping philosophies for both the coming year and years to come. Let's start with the queen. She is the heart of the hive! How she performs will determine the success of the hive. As you know, queens can be of several ancestries. Make a notation of her ancestry and where you got her. For example, did you purchase an Italian queen from a breeder in the Sacramento Valley? If the queen isn't performing, you may want to consider another queen source in the future. Also record the date the queen was installed, especially if she is an unmarked queen. I used to think that a queen was good for three years. Now I'm finding that I'm lucky if she lasts two years. By recording the source I can begin to draw parallels with queen origin and longevity. This also applies to the quality of the queen. We need to record our observations regarding the quality of the brood pattern. Are there eggs, larvae and capped brood present and in what proportion? As a rule of thumb, about 60 percent of the brood should be capped, a little less than 20 percent should be larvae and the rest eggs. All should be in a tight pattern, with the oldest being in the middle and progressing out to the youngest. Other characteristics that relate back to the queen, and should be noted, include the number of drone cells, the hygienic behavior of the bees and their temperament. Some observations need to be made regardless of the origin of the queen. As you look through your hives, note the presence of swarm cells. The pros and cons of swarming are for a different discussion. However, the presence of swarm cells may indicate overcrowding. It's certainly something you want to address. The health of the hive is perhaps the most important observation you can make. The presence of

mites or disease are cause for immediate concern and perhaps treatment. Their presence, how you tested for them, the control method used and date(s) of treatment should be noted, especially if you're using a restricted material that must be reported to the agricultural commissioner's office.

Recent studies have shown that pesticide residues and disease can build up in wax foundation, particularly brood foundation. Good management practices indicate foundation should be replaced on a regular cycle, be it two, three or four years. Within your record system, note the date that the foundation was placed in the hive and the date you expect to cycle it out.

Good management of our bees requires we often need to supplement the hive with syrup and pollen substitute. With syrup, note the ratio (2:1 versus 1:1) ,plus any additives like apple cider or Honey B Healthy, the date you started feeding and the frequency. With pollen substitutes, note the type, form in which it is fed, the date started and the frequency.

Finally, the reason most of us are keeping bees is we love honey. Keep track of your production. How much are we getting? If we're lucky enough to sell a little, what was the price? If you're like me, you'll never remember next year! Record keeping can be a burden, but it is a key component of successful beekeeping no matter how many hives we have. It is our responsibility to take the best possible care of our hives. Good records are just one tool that can help us achieve that.

Happy Beekeeping

Calendar of Events

Jan. 2, 2013

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild - 6:30 pm
El Rio Mobile Home Park
N. Pacific Ave
Santa Cruz
<http://santacruzbees.com>

TOPICS:

- The bee yard in 2013
- Winter stores
- Planning ahead - splits, new queens, nucs, etc.

Jan. 3, 2012

Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo County - 7pm
Congregational Church of Belmont
751 Alameda de Pulgas
Belmont, Ca
www.sanmateobee.org

Jan. 5, 2012

Monterey Bay Beekeepers - 8am
Black Bear Diner
2450 N. Fremont St.
Monterey, CA 93940
www.montereybaybeekeepers.org

Jan. 7, 2013

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild - 6:15
Dwell Christian Church, 1292 Minnesota Ave
San Jose, CA 951256:15- 6:45
Questions and Answers with Dr. Bee
7:00 Presentation:
Setting up a bee hive with Carolyn Cheney
about Top Bar Hives and Tom Vercoutare on
Langsdorf Hives

Jan. 8, 2013

Gilroy Beekeepers Association - 7pm
Grange Hall
8191 Swanston Lane
Gilroy
www.uvasgold.com/gba
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Jan. 8, 2013

Alameda County Beekeepers Association
7:30 pm
Rotary Native Center
600 Bellevue Ave.
Oakland, Ca 94610