



The Buzzzz

The Monthly Newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association

Volume3

March 2013

Member Profile

Getting to Know Each Other!

by Vicki Basham

For the month of March, we'll get acquainted with KC Mullaney. He and his wife and two children live in Aromas. KC has been keeping bees for over three years.



KC Mullaney and one of his 4-H club members, Mark Kragh

KC wanted to learn about beekeeping because of his involvement as a project leader in the local 4-H club. KC and his 13-year-old daughter Julaine have always been very active in 4-H - KC as a project leader for the kids. A few of the club members showed an interest in bees, so KC decided to learn as much as he could about

See Members, Page 2

Drippings From The Extractor

(Notes from the Editor)

Regardless of how we keep our bees, whether it be as a pollinator or a back yard hobbyist, young people are our future and need our support. The Aromas 4-H has an active bee project. The 4-H group as a whole is sponsoring a St. Patrick's Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner to raise funds to support all projects. The dinner will be held on Sunday, March 10th, from 4-6:30 pm at the Aromas Grange Hall. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$7 for children under 10. They can be purchased from any Aromas 4-H member, at Marshall's Market, and at any Grange event. I hope to see everyone there!

This month's issue has taken a Varroa theme. As beekeepers, we are beset with many issues, ranging from Colony Collapse Disorder to

See Drippings, Page 3

Bee Packages:

Final date to order is 12 March at the meeting. Cost is \$75 for members or \$80 for non-members per 3 pound package. Checks are accepted made out to either the **Gilroy Beekeepers Association** or **Wayne Pitts**.

Mail Checks to
Wayne Pitts
110 Bella Vista Lane
Watsonville, CA 95076

INCLUDE: a preferred phone number and a preferred email address, so you can be promptly notified when they are arriving.

Members continued from page 1

beekeeping. He then used his new found expertise to start 4-H beekeeping projects with kids in Aromas and other nearby neighborhoods.

One of those members, 11-year-old Mark Kragh, is now the happy caretaker of one of KC's hives. "They're fun! And I love seeing how the bees move," Mark says. "It looks like a synchronized dance!" KC says that one of his favorite moments in beekeeping is when a 4-H member gets into a hive and holds a frame of bees for the first time.

The bees serve more than an educational purpose for the club. "We have sold quite a bit of honey at the local Aromas Days festival, bringing in a nice amount of funds for our kids!" KC says. "And this year, we're hoping to use the wax to make candles and other things to sell."

KC attributes a lot of his learning to the Gilroy Guild. KC, his daughter, and Mark absorbed lots of information at the meetings, and spent time with a couple of folks from the club, helping them with their bee yards and soaking up even more information. KC also likes a book and video produced by Keith Delaplane, a professor in the University of Georgia's entomology department, and author of several beekeeping books.

KC doesn't concern himself too much with mites. "Mostly just because I don't have time!", he says. He adds that he doesn't really see a lot of mites in his hives.

Varroa Control

by Wayne Pitts

Our biggest problem with beekeeping is control of the varroa mite. This month we are looking at chemical control methods. The table below lists, hopefully all, of the current crop of control for varroa. In all cases, you should read the attached label and only use the control per the label instructions. Most CANNOT be used during the honey flow, or the honey will be contaminated. Even if the miticide can be used per the label, you should refrain. We don't need a chemical scare attached to honey. More information can be found at Randy Oliver's site

in this article:

<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/miticides-2011/>

Wayne

Note: In order to print Wayne's chart in a format we can read, it appears on the last page.

Guest Column

This month's "Guest Column" is taking a slightly different direction. It is a reprint of an article which appeared in the most recent issue of the Western Apicultural Society Journal. Many of us use HopGuard as part of our varroa mite control program. This article provides an update on the timing and effectiveness of HopGuard.

Update on HopGuard for controlling varroa mites

Gloria DeGrandi-Hoffman, Fabiana Ahumada, Gene Probasco and Lloyd Schantz

There are many products available to control Varroa mites. One of the newer products is HopGuard. HopGuard was developed at the USDA-ARS Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tuscon, AZ under a cooperative Research and Development Agreement with J.J. Haas Inc. The active ingredient in HopGuard is beta plant acids that are by products of hop processing for the brewing industry. Previous studies testing HopGuard in mite infested colonies indicated that the product killed phoretic mites in about 7-10 days after application. With this in mind, we applied HopGuard to colonies under different sets of conditions to determine the effects on mite population levels. We assessed the effects using alcohol washes with adult bees before and after treatment.

The first test we conducted were applications of HopGuard strips in package bees. We inserted 2, 3 and 4 half strips of HopGuard (i.e. 4 strips in the package = 2 full strips in the colony) in 2 and 3 lb. packages. With 2 strips, more than 90% of the mites in the package were killed. Mortality increased to more than 95% when 3 or 4 strips were used. The results indicate that colonies can be established with few if any mites when HopGuard is used in the packages.

See **HopGuard**, Page 3

HopGuard continued from page 2

The second set of studies was to test the effects of HopGuard treatments to control mites throughout the year. We established 25 colonies from packages with the following treatments: package treatment only; package and June treatment; package and June, August and September treatments; August and September treatments; and no treatments. We found that mite levels in colonies treated in packages and then in the fall were not different from those with an additional treatment in June. By October, mite levels in colonies either treated in the package or in June were similar to those that did not receive any treatments. We ended the study by treating colonies in January. Mite levels in the colonies were significantly lower in all instances after the single HopGuard treatment in January.

The next set of studies evaluated HopGuard treatments throughout the year beginning with treatments in January. Colonies had few mites at the time of treatment and we did not detect a significant treatment effect following the HopGuard application. In August though, mite levels were lower in colonies previously treated in January compared with hives that did not receive any treatment.

The final study we conducted tested the effects of HopGuard on mite populations in colonies made from splits. There is a window of time when colonies are split where there is little or no capped brood. Since HopGuard kills only phoretic mites, it is most effective when there is no sealed brood in the colony. In splits made with open brood and a virgin queen, the broodless period is about 21 days after the split is made. If a mated queen is introduced, the time when there is the lowest amount of sealed brood is about 14 days after making the split. We treated a set of colonies 21 days after they were split in April. The splits had a queen cell inserted after the split was established. Mite levels after treatment were significantly lower than in pre-treatment counts. In September, mite counts in treated splits colonies were lower than those that were not treated. In a second set of colonies established from splits in July, we treated 14 days after the colonies were established because a mated queen was introduced. Mite numbers after treatment were

significantly lower than in pre-treatment counts. Follow up measurements will be made in November to determine if rate numbers differ between treated and untreated colonies.

There are several conclusions that we can draw from the studies we conducted. HopGuard can effectively reduce mite populations in package bees. If HopGuard strips are not included in the package, beekeepers should put them in the newly established colony within 9 days (i.e. prior to the first appearance of sealed brood) to eliminate the mites that were present in the package. Even with package treatments, we detected mites in colonies that we sampled in June. A single HopGuard in the summer does not reduce mite numbers to levels that differ from colonies that are not treated. Single treatments in August and October reduce mite populations, but whether mite numbers can be reduced further by two additional treatments is under investigation. HopGuard also effectively reduces mite populations in colonies made from splits. An unexpected observation in all the studies conducted in colonies was how quickly mite populations increased throughout the year. Though mite levels were very low in March or June, by fall the numbers were high enough to need further miticide treatment. The observations suggest that the mite reproductive rate might be higher than previously reported and thus cause mite populations to increase at greater rates than expected.

Editor's Note: The use of HopGuard requires an Applicators Permit from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Permits can be obtained from the County Agriculture Commissioner's Office. As a side note, most other products used for mite control also need the same permit. If the product has an EPA number, it needs a permit. Depending on the quantity purchase, the dealer may ask for a copy of your permit.

Drippings *Continued from Page 1*
exorbitant fees in the new Cottage Food Bill. (That's a story for another time!) Perhaps the greatest of those is the Varroa mite. This month, Wayne Pitts has provided an excellent chart on the toxicity of different mite treatments. We

*See **Drippings**, page 4*

Drippings *continued from page 3*

have also reproduced an article from The Western Apiculture Society Journal on the effects of HopGaurd. I hope you find them useful and interesting.

One of my favorite football announcers was Keith Jackson. Whenever he saw a play which was a little out of the ordinary, he would exclaim, "Whoa Nelly." That pretty much explains how February ended and March is beginning in the beeyard. Single deep hives that had a second brood box added in the middle of February are already screaming for supers. That being said, as we talk about March in the beeyard, we should also be thinking of things we do in April and May.

A recent article in *The Bakersfield Californian* and repeated in other newspapers describes bee losses as the worst in 30 years. Some growers report losses of 40 percent or more. As a result, the price paid per hive for almond pollination has increased to amounts up to \$225 per hive. This is up from the mid 100's of last year. How does this equate to us small beekeepers who want to sell a little honey? According to the most recent issue of *Bee Culture* magazine, the current average price for a one pound jar of honey is \$5.77. This is up from \$5.67 a year ago. I know we all sell honey for more than this amount. However, if it's another poor honey year, we may want to raise our prices a little more.

I will again make my plea to the members to make writing contributions to this newsletter. We have a wealth of knowledge in the GBA, and this is an excellent place to share it.

March in the Beeyard

March has arrived and our winter rest is over! Chores this month can be divided into two categories. First, now is the time to complete our winter maintenance chores and get our equipment ready for spring. Equipment repairs and painting should be completed as soon as possible. Whether we are buying packages, doing splits or catching swarms, we need to have our equipment ready. Any repairs to boxes should be made. A coat of paint to repaired boxes, as well as new boxes, will greatly extend their life. Frames should be assembled with new

foundation. Nothing is worse than catching a swarm and having no equipment ready.

March is also a very busy time in the beeyard. If hives haven't been checked yet this year, **NOW** is the time. The bees should be very active on warm, sunny days. If your hives are not already in double brood boxes, they will need to be very soon. Remember, overcrowding leads to swarming. If you find queen cells along the bottoms of the brood frames, swarming is probably imminent. You might be able to delay this, or possibly prevent it, by removing the cells and splitting the hive. Remember that early detection of overcrowding is the only sure means of preventing swarms.

If your hives are already in double brood boxes, you have some options. They begin with closely monitoring the population of the hive. If by the middle of the month, both boxes are nearing capacity, you may either add supers or split the hive. Some feel that splitting is the best option, thinking that a nearly full box will swarm regardless of the added super. If you decide to split, you can either order a new queen or allow the bees to raise their own.

If your hives are lagging, you need to attempt to identify why. Hives with a spotty brood pattern or high concentration of drone comb may indicate a weak or failing queen. If this is the case, re-queen as soon as possible.. The old queen will not get better!

A lagging hive may also indicate a high Varroa mite population. There are several methods to determine mite populations, and treat if the concentrations are high. Choose the ones which best meet your philosophies of beekeeping.

Nosema (both strains) may also be the problem with poorly performing hives. Nosema can be very common in cool, damp conditions (i.e. a normal March) There are treatments. Again, pick the one that best suits your philosophies.

March begins the busiest time of the year in beekeeping. It also begins the most exciting. Enjoy it!

Don't forget your package orders!

Calendar of Events

Meetings

March 2, 2013

Monterey Bay Beekeepers - 8am

Black Bear Diner

2450 N. Fremont St.

Monterey, CA 93940

www.montereybaybeekeepers.org

March 4, 2013

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild
1292 Minnesota Ave San Jose, CA 95125

Topic:

Installing Bee Packages

March 6, 2013

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild - 6:30 pm

El Rio Mobile Home Park

N. Pacific Ave

Santa Cruz

<http://santacruzbees.com>

Topic:

Swarm Management, Bait Hives
and Hive Splits

March 7, 2013

Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo County - 7pm

751 Alameda de Pulgas

Belmont, Ca

<http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/>

Topics:

Swarm Management and Package Installation

March 12, 2013

Alameda County Beekeepers Association

7:30 pm

Rotary Native Center

600 Bellevue Ave.

Oakland, Ca 94610

March 12, 2013

Gilroy Beekeepers Association - 7pm

Grange Hall

8191 Swanston Lane

Gilroy

<http://uvasgold.com/>

Topics: TBD

Classes

San Mateo County

Beginning Beekeeping Class

March 9, 2013

A beginning beekeeping class will be offered March 9, 2013, from 9 am to 3 pm (please arrive at 8:30 am for registration). The class covers a wide range of topics including bee biology and life cycle, working with bees and beehives, managing pests and diseases, harvesting honey, and more!

There is no fee for the class but attendees must register. For more information, contact learnaboutbees@sanmateobeeguild.org.

Low Intermediate Beekeeping Class

May 4, 2013

Serge Labesque will lead this day-long class. Check back soon for more details and online registration!

Advanced Beekeeping Class

June 22, 2013

Randy Oliver will lead this day-long class. Check back soon for more details and online registration!

Santa Clara Valley

March 2, 2013

Adult Beekeeping workshop with Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

The Buzz of Beekeeping with Alan and Nella Henniger

10:00am to 12:00pm

Fee: \$10/members, \$15/non-members

Location: Guadalupe River Park & Gardens

Visitor & Education Center

438 Coleman Ave, San Jose.

Visit <http://www.grpg.org/calendar> or call 408-298-7657 to register

March 9, 2013

Beginner's Beekeeping

To Register visit

<http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org>

Santa Clara Valley *continued*
March 23, 2013

Natural beekeeping with Serge Labesque
All day class, hands-on; Craft residence. Bring your bee suit. \$ 50.00 class fee. Send your check or sign up at the next meeting and give your check to Rick Keller. Limited space.

Gilroy

Beginning Beekeeping

TBD in April

Queen Rearing

TBD in June

On Line Courses

Penn State Beekeeping 101 is a beekeeping training course for potential beekeepers, beginning beekeepers, or for experienced beekeepers who wish to update their knowledge and techniques. This (up to 12 months) course allows participants to learn from nationally recognized experts; take the course sessions anytime, anywhere, and at your own pace; and trade questions, successes and stories with other program participants. The instructors are Tom Butzler, Penn State Extension horticulture expert, who has been teaching beekeeping to youth and adults for 15 years and Maryann Tomasko Frazier, Penn State Entomology expert, senior extension associate, who teaches courses in beekeeping, general entomology and teacher education. The cost of the course is \$189. For more information, or to register, please go to <http://beekeeping101.psu.edu/>.

Apiology and Apiculture (ENWC 214) is the name of an online bee biology and beekeeping course that can be taken for university credit or for personal enjoyment. All that is required is a computer and the ability to connect with the Internet (however the textbook, "Honey Bee Biology and Bee-keeping" is suggested reading). This is an introductory-level, college course covering basic bee biology with an emphasis on bee colony management. This scientific approach to studying the life of honey bees includes bee biology, anatomy, physiology, behavior, bee botany, and communication. In addition, it offers an introduction to beekeeping, including techniques for practical bee care, bee

culturing, and managing honey bees for honey production and crop pollinations services. The course is overseen by retired professor of apiculture, Dr. Dewey Caron. To view the course syllabus and sign up for the \$295 non-credit approach, please go to: - <http://www2.pcs.udel.edu/udonline/search/> and look for ENWC214, or call Melanie Rehberg at 1-800-597-1444 (press 5 and ask for Melanie). For course credits: <http://www.pcs.udel.edu/info/tuition.html>

Meetings

PACIFIC NORTHWEST TREATMENT-FREE BEEKEEPING CONFERENCE

Portland ,Oregon
July 26-28, 2013

Western Apicultural Society (WAS)

WAS 2013 Annual Conference
Santa Fe, New Mexico
October16-19, 2013

California State Beekeepers Association

2013 CSBA Annual Convention
Harrah's, South Lake Tahoe, CA
November 18-22, 2013

Don't forget to order your packages!