



Illinois State Beekeepers Association Bulletin

November/December 2014 Volume 97 Number 6

Letter from the President

Mike Mason

If weather predictions held true, it looks like this winter could be tough for some colonies here in central Illinois. Although lately it has been pretty mild. Many of my colonies were light going into fall and just did not seem to keep up as I was trying to feed them. So, I am now putting on sugar boards already and getting ready for a second round. I normally don't start putting sugar boards on till after Christmas. Most my hives were strong going into winter. High populations always concern me in late fall, especially when they are light. They can burn through stores fast and starve before you know it. So, sugar boards are taking much of my free time. Many people are switching to "Krabby Patties" rather than sugar boards due to concerns with condensation dripping on the cluster, thus killing bees. Many experienced that so they are looking at alternative winter feeding methods. I am always slow to change. Not due to resistance but to my perceived lack of time to make the necessary adjustments for the switch. Not sure of the recipe other than it is a mixture of water and granulated sugar in a bag with an area cut out for the bees to access. I believe a little protein thrown in is helpful.

We had a great Fall Meeting and I have personally received a lot of great feedback. Steve Chard, as always did a great job providing the status and challenges of beekeeping here in Illinois. Steve has been a great representative for us at the Illinois Department of Agriculture and we are fortunate to have him. Dr. Jeff Harris from Mississippi State did a great job as always and provided a lot of useful information for us to take back and apply in our apiaries. Dr. Robert Jean from St Mary of the Woods College turned out to be a refreshing speaker that spoke on native bees and habitat. We have had many requests for speakers that could address pollinators other than honey bees and Dr. Jean did a great job of meeting that demand. Our Central Region Director, Dr. Dale Hill did an excellent job of addressing nutrition for honey bees and his work on the

development of pollen substitutes and supplemental feeds. He was able to explain a lot about nutritional needs and judging by the questions he received, his



topic was of great interest. We also had Rick Graden from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office to speak on the new Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Not sure how they got ELAP out of that but they did. Rick was able to discuss the challenges they faced in trying to implement this new program and answer many questions to eliminate confusion that arose early in the implementation process. We will be in touch with Rick to share any modifications to this program and provide feedback to his office as well.

Several ISBA members will be in California for the American Bee Federation Meeting and I am looking forward to attending and reporting back all the new research and development that is taking place in our industry. I also look forward to getting speaker commitments to our Summer and Fall Meetings so you can hear from these leaders first hand. Our Summer Meeting will be hosted in Southern Illinois next year and we will be working on getting those commitments set up soon.

Now that the Christmas Season is upon us and everyone is busy preparing for the holidays, keep the bees in mind. Make sure they get their sugar boards or Krabby Patties to help them make it through till spring. Get your spring feeders ready, plan your splits, treatments, re-queening. If you get these plans on paper, you are more likely to get it done in a timely manner and timing is very important.



Wintering Honey Bees In Alaska

by Dr. Joe Carson, Southcentral Alaska Beekeepers Association, 2007

Ed. note: This article is slightly abridged. The full document can be found on the internet.

What is more detrimental, moisture or cold temperatures? There are beekeepers who say that it is not the cold temperatures, but moisture that kills bees during the winter. Like so many other theories, this is a half truth. Yes, moisture is a greater threat to the bees while they are in the winter cluster than low temperatures are. But cold temperatures can be killers, too! Over a long stretch of severely low temperatures, the stamina of the individual bee can be lowered.

Also, the effort to maintain tolerable cluster temperatures, plus the wear and tear of consuming abnormally high quantities of food, the conversion of that food into energy, tend to sap the strength and resistance of every bee in the cluster. Repeated research shows that at approximately 57 degrees F the winter cluster in the hive becomes well defined. As the temperature drops, the bees in the center of the cluster generate heat while the bees on the exterior of the cluster serve as insulators. From the time the queen begins to lay in early spring, the internal temperature of the cluster must be approximately 93 degrees F in order to protect the brood there. But there is a limit to the temperature which the bees on the surface of the cluster can endure.

Accordingly, as the temperature drops, the cluster consumes food (if it is available) and generates enough heat to maintain cluster surface temperature of between 43-46 degrees F.

Beekeepers who subscribe to the theory that it is not low temperatures which destroy colonies and keep them from wintering successfully, forget the tremendous burden imposed on the members of the winter cluster in trying to maintain their cluster surface temperature during a period of severe weather that drops the thermometer to sub-zero figures.

The honey bee winter cluster often faces circumstances which make it difficult, or even impossible, for it to move to food sources during extreme cold periods. Under such circumstances the cluster members die. Many a beekeeper in the spring has found dead clusters of bees with more than adequate stores in the nest which the bees

could not reach. In many cases, colonies will survive the winter adversity but become so weakened as to contract EFB or one of the other brood diseases usually caused by stress. Such colonies seldom renew their strength fast enough to be able to produce a surplus even if they do, indeed, survive the debilitating effect of a brood disease.

Experienced beekeepers that operate in the North like we do have come to recognize the importance of a natural windbreak around an apiary. Winds that beat upon a hive over extended periods make the maintenance of normal cluster temperatures difficult, particularly after brood rearing begins on a fairly large scale in the late winter months. The fact that a windbreak proves of value likewise demonstrates the value of packing against the ravages of low temperatures and winds.

The Upper Exit

There are many ways of providing escape holes above the cluster. One is to bore a hole in the upper front part of the second hive body. Personally, I prefer not to do so, though it is an easy procedure. Such holes can be stoppered in the following spring until needed for an extra entrance during the main honey flow. A better way, I believe, is to notch a side of the inner cover. Or, better still, install an Imirie shim above the inner cover. Some have done something so simple as to place a sliver of wood 3/8" under one corner of the inner cover. This last method works well especially if one wraps his hives with 15# roofing paper, and cuts an escape hole in the wrapping paper over the corner hole, or space, under the inner cover and just above the top of the hive body rim. When cold weather arrives, the regular entrance on the bottom board may be entirely closed off when packing is provided and the upper exit is assured; for those that prefer, it may be restricted in size. That an upper entrance for the escape of moisture is essential (other than merely into some top packing), is evidenced by the fact that the colony produces about one gallon of water for every 10 pounds of honey consumed. No packing will absorb and hold six or more gallons of water over the winter period.

Wintering Honey Bees In Alaska

continued

Upward Ventilation

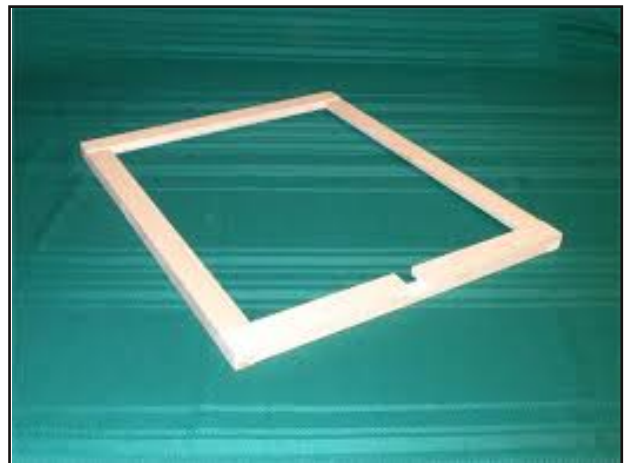
In many areas of the United States, wintering honey bees is a constant problem. In the attempt to successfully winter their bees, beekeepers have tried a variety of techniques from wrapping colonies in hay, straw, tar paper or foam insulation to wintering indoors in cellars or especially constructed buildings. For a long time collective wisdom deemed that it was of utmost importance to insulate the beehive against cold. This was probably influenced by those who thought bees were attempting to warm the interior of their hive as human beings did their houses. This is not the case. The bees only attempt to warm a discrete cluster of individuals within the hive. Insulating practices often bring on other problems; especially vexing is that warm air trapped inside a colony by insulation is full of moisture. Experience and research now indicate that moisture-laden air is often more detrimental to honey bee colonies in winter than cold temperatures. In colder reaches of the colony, the moisture can condense and may even fall back onto the insulating layer of bees surrounding the cluster, producing an icy ball of bees. Therefore, conventional wisdom now dictates that insulation is not as important as venting excess moisture.

Upward ventilation through use of an upper entrance was reviewed by Mr. G. W. Hayes, "Queen Excluder or Honey Excluder?," American Bee Journal, Vol. 125, August, 1985. Although the title suggests that queen excluder use is emphasized, Mr. Hayes also develops a case for upper entrances. He concludes with: "We as beekeepers are constantly barraged with information about how beneficial ventilation and moisture removal is in over-wintered colonies. The upper entrance is always suggested as a method to accomplish this in winter and in very warm humid conditions during the summer. There have been many, many articles and whole sections of books written on the upper entrance theme...Perhaps we as beekeepers should be more flexible and look more closely at the upper entrance as a more efficient year-around option." The need for adequate ventilation is also well documented during nectar flows. Some beekeepers routinely provide upper entrances for bees by propping up covers or even providing elevation blocks at four corners between supers.

The practices expose the surfaces of the combs to the large volume of air needed to reduce excess moisture in nectar.

Care in ventilating hives is always tempered by the possibility of robbing; careful observation and judgment by the beekeeper must always be exercised to provide for maximum ventilation with minimum exposure to robbers. The stronger a colony of bees, the less possibility robbing will take place.

Perhaps the time has come for the Alaska beekeeper, like his/her Midwestern counterpart, to pay greater attention to the role of upward ventilation in a colony. If using tar paper, use only 15#. Candy boards can be used on the top of the hive for winter feeding as well as moisture absorption. Tipping the hive slightly forward helps to direct excess moisture out of the hive. A reduced hive entrance is often employed to keep out pests like shrews and mice. Blue Board insulation can be used as a "slip cover" if proper ventilation is provided. I have friends that have their thousands of hives in the fields for the winter and basically shovel snow over the hive and wait for spring to uncover them. One of the biggest of winter kill besides moisture, starvation, and wind is over inspection of the hive. Reports from Canada indicate that the hives thrive when left alone in the early spring. One report stated that the inspected hives had approximately 1/2 the brood build up of the "forgotten" or "un-inspected" hives.



An Imirie Shim

A Bee Lawn: How to Have an Insect Haven in Your Lawn

By Mary Meyer, University of Minnesota

As a grass researcher and lover of grass, I enjoy and appreciate a lawn. I also know there is great value in a lawn that allows and encourages a diversity of plant species that will benefit pollinators while looking neat and tidy for our neighbors to accept. First of all, let me state that I have had more questions on how to NOT attract bees to lawns, and how to eliminate bee plants (such as creeping Charlie) than on how to attract bees to lawns. When you have young children sitting on the lawn, rolling on the lawn and playing outside, bees can be a problem that you want to avoid. But for adults and taller folks, we can easily avoid bees in lawns. And knowing that bees are vital pollinators that need our help with increased habitat, I urge you to look at your lawn and consider where part of it may become a haven for bees and other important pollinators.

What is a bee lawn?

My definition of a bee lawn is a combination of traditional cool season lawn grasses and other low growing plants that support bees and native pollinators. This combination must tolerate some mowing and foot traffic. From a distance this combination will look like a lawn, but when you walk on it you see it is much more diverse.

Reasons to foster a bee lawn:

- Plant diversity is good for the environment, can improve soil health and supports a wide variety of insects, birds and wildlife.
- Flowering plants provide pollen and nectar for pollinators which will help increase and stabilize their numbers
- Legumes such as clover can increase soil nitrogen and reduce the need for supplemental fertilizer on lawns
- A diversity of plants in your lawn will make it less susceptible to disease, insect or drought damage

Where to grow a bee lawn

Plants that bees love need full sun more than water or fertilizer. If you have a sunny slope that is problematic for mowing, consider making the area a bee lawn and only mowing a few times a year. A few bee plants like Lamium tolerate shade, but are ground covers and are not lawns; most bee plants that will grow in a lawn are sun loving plants.

You may be uncomfortable with this look in your front lawn, especially if you are concerned about the neighbors wondering about your level of lawn maintenance. However, in your back yard it may be aesthetically easier for you to tolerate and allow clover and other legumes and short mint-type plants grow.

If you do need an area for children, decide on which section will best fit children's needs i.e. flat for running and sports, etc.

If you have a vegetable garden, you may want a bee lawn nearby to assist in squash pollination; if you have fruit trees, you may want the ground cover under the trees to become a bee lawn, encouraging pollination for increased fruit set.

Guidelines for Developing a Bee Lawn

Mow your lawn at 3-4", longer grass will withstand more drought and may allow some legumes to begin to grow. Consider mowing once a month, or as needed to maintain the appropriate appearance of a longer lawn.

Over seed your lawn with white and alsike clover. These two species of clover are excellent bee plants. Both are short, can be mowed and produce an abundance of small flowers that bees are fond of. For traditional lawn lovers, white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and alsike clover (*Trifolium hybridum*) are weeds. However, both species attract several kinds of bees, including honey bees, and the seeds of white clover are eaten by many birds and waterfowl. Both species grow easily on most soils, and tolerate some mowing and foot traffic. And both fix nitrogen, increasing the nitrogen available for grasses growing nearby.

Reduce or strictly limit the use of herbicides and insecticides. You can selectively kill any broadleaf weeds that you do not want with a spot treatment herbicide. Clover and all other bee friendly plants listed in this article are easily injured and usually killed with herbicides. Bees and insecticides do not co-exist. It is a trade off, so consider the risks each time you are thinking of using either an herbicide or insecticide. Plant bee's favorite plants: These plants are bee favorites, but are also short and tolerate some mowing and minimal foot traffic: most any of the mints, especially self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), and thyme (*Thymus spp.*). Squill (*Scilla siberica*) is an early blooming small bulb that can be naturalized in lawns, along with crocus (*Crocus spp.*) that attract bees early in the spring. Wait a few weeks until the foliage from these bulbs has yellowed before mowing in the spring.

Grasses for bee lawns

Fine fescues are the lowest maintenance grasses: sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*), chewing's fescue (*Festuca rubra ssp. Fallax*), creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), and hard fescue (*Festuca brevipila*) are all good low

Waxing Philosophical ~ the Beekeeping Puzzle

"Fall Swarming: When an Instinct Stinks"

Question: "Why do bees swarm in the fall? How can this be avoided?" ~ Merle Gerson, Grosbik, IL

Answers:

1) Don't avoid it! Like the song in the movie Frozen, "Let It Go"! Let the swarm go as they are replacing an old Queen.

~ Larry Quicksall, Effingham, IL ~ 3 votes

2) Many beekeepers talk about the need and benefits of requeening a hive in late summer. It provides for a young queen early the following spring, and has the benefits of breaking the brood cycle. Not only does this potentially help reduce mite loads, but it reduces the number of bees born at a time of year where they provide little value to the hive (too late in the year to gather nectar, but too early to survive through the winter months).

Bees have been evolving over millions of years. This late season swarm is their method of accomplishing what beekeepers view as *their* idea – requeen late in the summer. They obviously won't survive the winter, so they did not evolve with that trait in mind. The goal of the swarm is not the new hive, but the new queen left behind.

Or –

Bees cross-bred with lemmings long ago.....
~Greg Hevron, Flat Rock, IL ~ 6 votes

3) It is Darwin's way of explaining stupid destructive non adaptive genetics :)

~Jerry Hayes, St. Louis, MO ~ 3 votes

4) It's my understanding that this usually is a response to disease or other disastrous conditions at home – a last-gasp attempt for the colony to reproduce before dying out. The fall swarm has little to no chance of survival in the wild, which shows just how desperate they must be.

The way to avoid it would be similar to how we avoid spring swarms – by keeping close watch on the condition of the colony, and heading things off before they get that far.

~ Eugene Makovec, Foley, MO ~ 5 votes

5) There are two possible causes for fall swarms. First is the common cause for swarming, a crowded brood nest. When we "under-super" in the fall, then stumble

into a fair honey flow from goldenrod or aster...or some lesser known source...the possibility of a colony becoming honey bound (a condition where the bees store honey where the queen should be laying eggs) and feeling as if the brood nest is congested becomes greater. A "part B" to the honey bound/crowded condition is the possibility that the honey flow kicks the queen into gear and she produces brood in excess of the comb-area available - since we have "under-supered." The result is the same, the stimulus of overcrowding triggering the instinctual response of swarming.

The second possible cause also has roots in the basic survival instincts built into the honeybee colony. In fall, when the daylight hours begin to be noticeably shorter, the temperatures are lower, and food sources less available, queens are likely to either slow drastically in egg production or stop entirely. If there is a resumption in honey/pollen flow, the queen may or may not respond accordingly by laying eggs again. In the case of a queen that is not producing brood when there is an ample supply of freshly foraged food coming into the hive, the supercedure instinct is sometimes triggered. The result will either be a true supercedure where the old queen is killed and several new queens are allowed to develop, or a supercedure swarm where the old queen becomes part of a swarm rather than being killed. The "part B" to this possible answer is the situation of a queen being superceded and multiple virgins emerging and taking a swarm - or swarms - from the hive.

Fall swarms are essentially a confirmation that bees are not "smart." Rather than ordering their existence by reason (less daylight = "winter is coming" = time to cut losses and postpone major colony decisions until spring) they order their existence by instinct triggered by stimulus. Honeybees can learn; however, the learning is almost always a derivative - sometimes abstract - of a particular instinctual drive.

So...the smart-alec answer to the fall-swarm question is condensed to the conclusion that bees swarm in fall because they are - in some ways – stupid.

~ Kent Williams, Wingo, KY ~ 7 votes

6) They just want to go to Florida? I know that's where I want to be this winter...

~ Barbara Beal, Glen Carbon, IL ~ 4 votes

Bee Lawns, continued

maintenance grasses. These grasses all tolerate low fertility soils, are drought resistant and tend to mound or fall over, providing a cover for bees that nest in the ground. Shady lawn seed mixes are usually fine fescues.

Mow high and just see what grows? This is the 'least work' option and may or may not result in bee plants. You may get a very weedy and unsuitable look with plantain, knotweed and crabgrass, none of which are bee favorites. Bees, however do not discriminate and have no idea what weeds are, they love dandelions and creeping Charlie.

A last word on ground ivy, creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederaceae*): bees love this plant and will benefit from your leaving it in your lawn. Most of us know, however, that this aggressive mint can become the lawn if left to grow in low fertility, especially shady, areas. I love it in my backyard bee lawn along with violets (not so good

for bees, but larvae food for some butterflies), but in my front yard I prefer grasses and flowering bulbs and keep the ground ivy at bay. Consider where a bee lawn can fit into your landscape. As conscientious gardeners, we need to support bees and pollinators.



Waxing Philosophical ...Continued

7) I believe swarming to be related to the amount of queen pheromone that gets to the workers. The queen produces a pheromone that assures the workers that she is present. This pheromone gets transferred from worker to worker. During summer when the population soars, the queen pheromone gets diluted and the swarm instinct get triggered. Two queen colonies allow for enormous colonies without swarming because the queen pheromone is doubled.

With fall swarming my theory is that the queen pheromone has been diluted due to a weak queen. This might be caused by an old queen or by a queen that is being attacked by mites. Mite control would help if mites are the concern. Early fall requeening could help with the weak queen cause.

~ David Bergman, Grayslake, IL ~ **5 votes**

8) Bees swarm in the fall for the same reasons that they swarm in the spring, overcrowding, overheated brood chambers, queen pheromone issues, and a new nectar flow that excites them.

To prevent this, give them a little extra room until the fall honey flow is over, provide a little extra ventilation, and keep a good young queen in your hive!

~ Dennis Inboden, Robinson, IL ~ **5 votes**

9) If a colony swarms in the fall in Illinois, then let them go.... It is mother nature's way of culling the weak and the stupid from the gene pool.

Also, if you have a colony swarming in the fall and late fall, it could be due to AHB genetics in that particular colony. Fall swarming is a noted trait of AHB. Perhaps it is best you just let the swarm die off.

~ Steve Petrilli, Springfield, IL ~ **5 votes**

10) It could be due in part to Africanized genetics. They are known for fall swarming..... Another possibility: rather than fall swarming, bees are fall absconding.

~ Charlie Linder, Flora, IL ~ **5 votes**

11) The hive has been heavily invaded by predators such as ants or small hive beetles.

~ Coram Davis, Hoyleton, IL ~ **2 votes**

12) Not enough room or hive beetles.

~ Ted Bradford, Casey, IL ~ **2 votes**

Next Issue's Question: "What is your biggest bee yard mistake?" ~ Larry Krengel, Marengo, IL

Local News

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ISBA Bulletin is accepting your article submissions from now through March 1st.

Hoping to bring you your Bulletins on time, and to publish articles written by our own Association Members, your ISBA Bulletin Editor asks for your creative contributions over these winter months.

Do you have an idea for an article? Is there a topic you would like to read about? Please contact Eleanor Schumacher and submit your contributions or ideas. Thank you.

Southern Illinois Beekeepers sadly say goodbye to **John C. Michl**, 65, of Ste. Marie, Illinois, who passed away on Thursday, October 30, 2014 at his home.

John Charles was born on September 4, 1949 in Crawford County, Illinois. John married Rose Marie Boehl on August 9, 1969 at St. Valentine's Church in the Bend in Jasper County, Illinois. John worked for Rich-Law FS and later Wabash Valley FS in Newton and retired after 38 years of service.

John was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Ste. Marie, Illinois. He was a Charter member of the Ste. Marie Sons of the American Legion squadron #932 having served in the past as commander. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus #1704 and the Ambraw River Eagles.

John enjoyed woodworking and being outdoors riding his side by side, gardening, fishing and working with his beloved honey bees. He was a member of the Crossroads Beekeepers and the Illinois Bee Keepers Association. He was recognized as the Crossroads Beekeepers Association 2013 Beekeeper of the Year and received the award for Best Tasting honey. John dearly loved his family and watching his grandchildren grow, teaching them how to keep bees.



John Charles Michl



Gay Elaine Andrew

The ISBA expresses sympathy for the family of Bernie Andrew (Western Illinois Beekeepers Association) on the passing of his wife, **Gay Elaine Andrew**, 67, who passed away on Wednesday (Nov. 19, 2014) in her home. Gay was born on Dec. 23, 1946, in Quincy. She married Bernie Andrew on Dec. 28, 1966, in Fowler.

She was a life member of the Geronteers and a member of the Loraine United Methodist Church, American Legion Auxiliary, Spoon River Activity Association and the Silver Dollar Square Dance Club.

She enjoyed crafting, scrapbooking, playing cards, crocheting, playing bunco, square dancing, singing, collecting clowns and bee memorabilia.

She especially enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and enjoyed Sunday dinners with her family, which was a tradition started long ago in their family.

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Make checks for membership payable to: Illinois State Beekeepers Association and mail to: Illinois State Beekeepers Association, Membership, P.O. Box 21094, Springfield, IL 62708.

Address Changes: Send old and new address six weeks prior to date of change when practical to the Association Secretary. At large members can send the changes to the ISBA Membership Director via email.

Reduced Journal Rates for 2014 (members only)

	<u>1 yr</u>	<u>2 yr</u>	<u>3 yr</u>
American Bee Journal	21.00	39.75	56.25



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