



Wake County Beekeepers Association

April 2007

Editor's Notes

James Howard said "The bees are busy. You better be."

As a new beekeeper, I just haven't quite figured it out. I didn't want to buy any more equipment so I figured some of my bees would die over the winter, freeing up some of the equipment for the others. But they did not follow my thinking and lived. Now I am scrambling to put together frames and paint boxes to keep the bees from swarming.

Perhaps it is just good luck but the bees are thriving in spite of no treatments except a few cups of powder sugar in the fall which I stopped doing because of the low numbers of mites falling off.

Two years ago I had thousands of mites falling off when sugaring the hives and most of my colonies died. Last year I switched to the small cell foundation and the mite load was so much less and they lived. Coincidence? Maybe....

Send articles, information, and classified ads to barrycary@aol.com by the 25th of the month.

Michelle Barry, secretary WCBA

March Announcements

T-Shirts

T-shirts had not come in as of the March meeting

Beginning Bee Workshop

A one day workshop for beginning beekeepers will be held April 28th from 8am – 4pm at the Raleigh Police Club. See the attached registration form for more details.

Swarm List

A swarm list was passed around at the last meeting and the names were given to the regional contacts to call members. Remember you need to have your equipment ready when you are called as the bees do not always stay put for long. The callers are Larry Hall – Raleigh and Northern Wake (612-4499), Jerry Brantley – Easter Wake (269-9333), James Howard – Southern Wake (772-8321), and Charles Heatherly – Western Wake (859-6995).

Taking Bees Out of Buildings

The following members are willing to take bees out of buildings for a fee. Some of these members may be willing to do repairs also. Stan Bolden (Eagle Rock 365-7980), Michael Childers (Raleigh 368-5865), Terry Self (Raleigh 831-0900, 801-6334), Ham Morton (Cary 362-4698), and Denton Bell (Raleigh 859-6734).

Door Prizes

Thank you to Steve Brown for fresh eggs, and Jerry Brantley for inner covers. Remember to contact Steve at sbrown@trianglerentacar.com before the meeting to purchase farm-fresh eggs that he will bring to the meeting. Also bring empty egg cartons that he can re-use.

Summer Meeting

The summer will be held on July 12,13,14 in Kinston, NC. Information will be posted soon: www.ncbeekeepers.org/meetings.htm.

Refreshments

The club supplied refreshment in March. In April the following people have signed up: Mitchell and Austin Wrenn 269-9781, Richard Warren 851-4897, and Jerry Short Brantley 269-9333.

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subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:wakecountybeekeepers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)
Back copies of newsletters and
the bylaws are available on this
yahoo group.

Club Extractors:

The club owns extractors that are
available for members to borrow.
Electric extractor: Ricky Barbour
(in Zebulon 269-0108)
Hand extractor: Raleigh Myers (in
Raleigh 787-0058)

March Meeting Summary

Dr. Larry Williams, from Duke Children's Hospital & Health Center, spoke to us about insect venom allergies, the risks, and what can be done to treat serious and potentially deadly anaphylactic reactions.

Some highlights follow: (editor's note: I am concerned about getting some of this wrong. If you have questions, please talk to your doctor.)

A systemic or anaphylactic reaction is immediate and generalized. Some symptoms are skin: flushing, hives, itching, and swelling; respiratory: wheezing and feeling of obstruction in throat; GI: vomiting, diarrhea, swelling in mouth and throat; heart: low blood pressure and collapse.

Benedril can help with mild allergic reactions but will not help with the serious lung and heart problems.

Every beekeeper should have an epi-pen on hand. When you buy an epi-pen make sure that the expiration date is at least a year away. When the epi-pen has expired, you need to discard it. You can stab an old epi-pen into an orange to get used to how to work it. Do not leave your epi-pen outside or in the glove compartment.

The epi-pen control of a systemic reaction will only be for 20 – 30 minutes so you need to call 911 or get to an emergency room for further treatment.

If you have developed an allergy to bee stings and have had systemic reactions, you can be desensitized with small doses of bee venom. Contact an allergist for more details.

More information can be obtained from: www.nih.gov or www.aaaai.org.

April Meeting Topic

The April meeting will be held the regular time and place (April 10, 2007, 7:30 at the Wake County Commons Building, Cary Drive, Raleigh (see <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wake/directions.pdf> for directions)).

What to Do Now

According to the experts from the last meeting, "Give them plenty of room." The NCSBA calendar says that the dandelion bloom started March 15th, the blackberry starts April 10th, and the tulip poplar starts April 25th. This whole winter/spring has been crazy so plan for nectar starting earlier than advertised.

Also watch out for swarms. Jerry Short Brantley, Stan Bolden, and Mitchell Wrenn have already captured swarms. Short did it the easy way – the bees came and set up residence in an empty hive.

Publicity from the Spring Meeting

Our own Dr. Tarpy was on TV in Charlotte talking about bees and CCD. Here is the news story with video link near bottom of page:

<http://www.wcnc.com/news/topstories/stories/wcnc-030307-cls-bees.156e3e93.html>

Apitherapy Conference

April 26 – 29, 2007 in RTP

For details: <http://www.apitherapy.org/news.html>

SWARM PREVENTION

By Michael Bush (www.bushfarms.com) used with permission

Swarming is when the old queen and part of the bees leave to start a new colony. Afterswarms are after the old queen has left and there are still too many bees so some of the swarm queens (which are unmated queens) leave with more swarms. Sometimes a hive has a several afterswarms.

Generally swarming is considered a bad thing because you usually lose those bees. But if you catch them it's a bonus because swarms are notorious for building up quickly. The bees are focused on it already and it's in the natural order of things. Back in the days of skeps and box hives it was always considered a good thing. It was a chance to make increases.

Causes of swarming

It's good to realize that swarming is the normal response of a hive to success. It means they are doing well enough to reproduce the hive. It is the natural order of things. However, it is inconvenient for the beekeeper to have them swarm, so let's think about what causes them to want to swarm.

First there are two main types of swarms. There are reproductive swarms and there are overcrowding swarms. There are a variety of pressures that push them toward swarming.

Overcrowding swarm

Since it's the simplest and can happen anytime, let's briefly look at the overcrowding swarm. The factors that seem to contribute are:

No place to put nectar so it gets stored in the brood nest. Prevention: add supers.

Honey or pollen clogging the brood nest so that the queen has no where to lay. Prevention: remove combs of honey and add empty frames so that the bees will be occupied drawing wax and the queen will have somewhere to lay and the bees will have more room to cluster in the brood nest.

No place to cluster near the brood nest. The bees like to cluster near the queen (who is in the brood nest) and this clogs the brood nest making it crowded. Prevention: Slatted racks give room to cluster under the brood nest. Follower boards on the outside give room to cluster on the sides of the brood nest. These are a ¾" wide top bar with a sheet of plywood or Masonite or similar material in the middle the size of a frame. One on each end replaces one frame in the brood nest.

Too much traffic congesting the brood nest. Prevention: a top entrance will give foragers a way in without going through the brood nest.

So basically, if you keep supers on and provide ventilation you can prevent an overcrowding swarm.

Reproductive swarm

The bees have been working toward this goal since last winter when they tried to go into winter with enough excess stores to build up in the spring before the flow enough to cause a swarm that will then have the optimum chance to build up enough to survive the following winter.

The first mistake people make about preventing swarms is they think you can just throw on some supers and they won't swarm. But they will. Yes, it's nice to have room for them to store the honey, so the supers are helpful, but the bees intend to swarm and the supers will not deter them from the plan to do a reproductive swarm.

Back to the sequence in the spring, the bees, during winter, rear little spurts of brood. The queen lays a little and they start rearing that batch, but they don't start any new brood until that brood emerges and they take a break. Then they rear another little batch. When pollen starts coming in they start to rear more brood to build up. They also start using up the honey

they have stored. This is used to feed brood and also it makes room for more brood.

When the bees think they have enough bees they start filling all of that back in with honey, both to stop the queen from laying, and to have adequate stores in case the main flow doesn't pan out. As the brood nest gets backfilled it makes more and more unemployed nurse bees. These nurse bees start doing a keening buzz that is quite different from the typical harmonious buzz you usually hear. More of a warble. Once the brood nest is mostly full of honey they start swarm cells. About the time they get capped the old queen leaves with a large number of bees. Even if you catch the swarm, the hive has still stopped brood production and has lost (to the swarm) a lot of bees. It's doubtful it will make honey. If there are still enough bees, the hive will throw afterswarms with virgin queens heading them.

If I don't catch them in time, once they make up their mind I always make [splits](#) because not much will dissuade them. Destroying queen cells only postpones the inevitable and most likely leaves them queenless. My guess is that most people destroy the queen cells AFTER the hive has swarmed without realizing it.

If you catch them trying to swarm between about two weeks and just before the main flow, a cut down split with the old queen and all but one frame of the open brood in a new location is a nice swarm prevention method. Leave the old hive with all the capped brood, one frame of eggs/open brood, no queen and empty supers. Usually, the old hive won't swarm because they have no queen and hardly any open brood. Usually the new hive won't swarm because they have no foragers. This is best done just before the main honey flow.

I often just put every frame that has some queen cells on it with a frame of honey in a two frame nuc to get good queens.

But, of course, the real object is to avoid the swarm and the split (unless you want to do the cutdown split) so you'll have a bigger stronger hive that will make more honey.

Preventing swarming

I do love to catch swarms but who has time to watch the hives all the time to catch them? And if you have that much time, then you have the time to prevent them.

This, of course is what we want to do. What we need to do is interrupt the chain of events. The easiest way is to keep the brood nest open. If you keep the brood nest from backfilling and if you occupy all those unemployed nurse bees then you can change their mind. If you catch it before they start queen cells, you can put some empty frames in the brood nest. Yes, empty. No foundation. Nothing. Just an empty frame. Just one here and there with two frames of brood between. In other words, you can do something like: BBEBBEBBEB where B is brood comb and E is an empty frame. How many you insert depends on how strong the cluster is. They have to fill all those gaps with bees. The gaps fill with the unemployed nurse bees who begin festooning and building comb. The queen will find the new comb and about the time they get about 1/4" deep, the queen will lay in them. You have now "opened up the brood nest". In one step you have occupied the bees that were preparing to swarm with wax production followed by nursing, you've expanded the brood nest, and you've given the queen a place to lay. If you don't have room to put the empty combs in, then add another brood box. The other upside is I get good natural sized brood comb.

A hive that doesn't swarm will produce a LOT more honey than a hive that swarms.

Checkerboarding

If you'd like to know about this technique and a LOT more detail about swarm preparation and what goes on in a hive at any given time in the buildup, I would contact Walt Wright. This is a method that also fools the bees into believing that the time has not yet come to swarm. It works without disturbing the brood nest. Basically it's putting alternating frames of empty drawn comb and capped honey directly ABOVE the brood nest. If you would like to purchase a copy of Walt's manuscript, it's about 60 pages long and last I heard was \$8 in a pdf by email or \$10 on paper. You can contact him at this address: Walt Wright; Box 10; Elkton, TN 38455-0010; or WaltWright_ at hotmail dot com (Encoded to avoid the spambots. Don't forget the underscore).

Registration Form

2007 Beginners Beekeeping Workshop

Saturday, April 28th
8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location: Raleigh Police Club
3500 Leonard Rd. Knightdale

Sponsored by the Wake County Beekeepers Association

Both the check and the registration form must be mailed together.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email (print clearly) _____

Registration fee is \$25 per person (non-refundable). The deadline for registration is April 21st. There is a limit on the number of participants, so register early.

This fee includes the book First Lessons in Beekeeping by C.P. Dadant, handouts, and a hotdog lunch.

Please make checks payable to Wake County Beekeepers Association.

Mail check and registration form to:

Ricky Barbour
3440 Neuma Dr.
Zebulon, NC 27597

For questions, please call Ricky Barbour: (919) 269-0108