

November 2024

THE BEE HERDER

Published by the Medina County Beekeepers Association



MCBA Monthly Meeting November 18th, 2024

Medina County Library
210 S. Broadway, Medina OH 44256
Rooms A and B

Questions & Answers 6:30-7:00
General Meeting 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Topic: Building your own equipment and woodware.
Come and learn how to build frames and equipment
common in beekeeping.
Speaker: Panel of Club Members

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Brad Deering
<https://agri.ohio.gov/divisions/plant-health/apiary-program>

November Speaker(s)

Our November meeting will consist of a DIY tutorial led by multiple club members. The topic will be building your own equipment and woodware. For some of us, building equipment may seem like a big task and have spent a little extra money on preassembled equipment. We'll show you how easy it is to do a lot of the assembly yourself with just a few hand tools. One of the most positive aspects of unassembled equipment is it takes up a lot less space in your equipment storage area. We'll also be showing you how some members utilize polystyrene to insulate parts of their hives. This is a don't miss hands on meeting!

Upcoming Events

Club Officer Nominations / Elections

Election of officers and one director will be held at the November meeting.

December – Christmas Party

MCBA December Meeting

Monday, December 10th, 2024 @5:30 PM

Club Christmas Party, 100 people max (50 members plus guest)

Location: Medina County Career Center

1101 W Liberty St, Medina, OH 44256

RSVP here or used the URL Below: [SIGNUP GENIUS](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0F45ADAB28A5FB6-52601327-mcba#/)

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0F45ADAB28A5FB6-52601327-mcba#/>

For members that would like to attend our annual Christmas Party, we would kindly ask that you consider donating an item(s) or a monetary donation to Care Closet. Care Closet, opened during the 2019-2020 school year, supports students needing food, household, and personal care items. A detailed list can be found link

[here](#), and includes items such as canned food, mouthwash, shampoo to honey and other baking items. To learn more about Care Closet please follow this [link](#). Care Closet is a great program that allows for Medina County residents to give back to our community in an intentional, meaningful way. This program is also supported by many great local businesses here in Medina County.

Statement

To promote beekeeping, broaden the knowledge and understanding of honeybees (and all pollinators) and the challenges they face in today's world, and educate by teaching best practices and techniques in apiary management.

President's Corner

By Peggy Garnes

So much to be thankful for this month!

Our club has had a great year of giving back to our community, our members have enjoyed great speakers and meeting topics, our bee yard has thrived, the county fair, bee festival, and ag day were a huge success, and now our bees are gently ready for the winter to come.

November is election month, and the club will have voting at the meeting. Please attend, vote, and let your voice be heard. MCBA is always looking forward to and truly appreciates those that volunteer their time for our club.

November meeting is building equipment round table. Come and have fun!

Stay healthy, hug your family, and enjoy your bees!

Ten Minutes with the Bees — The bee yard in November?

By Paul Kosmos

Now that most of you have your hives prepped for winter, the question becomes what to do now (other than enjoy the beautiful weather)? There are still a few things you can do to keep an eye on your bees as we go through the winter.



Hive ready for winter!

Assuming you have varroa under control, you can give some thought to what type of supplemental feeding you might use, if necessary. Candy bricks (sugar cakes), fondant, and dry sugar on a mat on the top frames are a few of the most popular. Avoid feeding pollen patties in the winter. There are very good instructions and videos on the net to help.

Use of a 3/4" shim under the inner cover makes it much easier and faster to apply food.



Shim Provides Room for Added Food

Remember to place the inner cover with the upper entrance facing down. That way the bees have a way to get out if snowbound or if insulation is on top the inner cover.

One other thing is worth mentioning. After a period of very cold weather or after a heavy snow, occasionally the entrance can get blocked by dead bees since the bees can't get out to remove them. Occasionally take a peek in the entrance to make sure it is clear. If it is blocked, remove the mouse guard and take a long stick to carefully pull the dead bees out of the hive.



Occasionally Dead Bees Can Block Entrances

The remainder of winter gives you an excellent time to learn more about your bees. Good time to read some books, talk to other beekeepers.

It is also a great time to plan for next year. How many hives do you want? First year beekeepers will find swarms and splits make it easy to expand your bee yard. If you plan to add hives, winter is the perfect time to purchase supplies, assemble your equipment, paint the woodenware, and make hive stands.

Of Mites and Me: Or Why Beekeepers Should Do Mite Counts Even If They Treat

By Kym Lucas (previously published on The Byrd and the Bees blog)

We try to be good beekeepers, and while we often feel we've failed on that front, we work hard to be responsible about beekeeping duties.

One of these duties is treating our hives for Varroa. Every year, in late winter or early spring, we do an Oxalic Acid vapor treatment, followed by Formic Pro in summer and another Oxalic treatment before going into winter.

I won't explain why we treat as we do because that's not the point of this post, but I've listed resources that may be helpful for beekeepers who want to develop a similar yearly plan. (And, please, on behalf of your beekeeping neighbors, I beg you to not only develop a plan, but follow it.)

There are generally two main parts to an Integrated Pest Management plan, treating and performing varroa counts. You can also help control mites mechanically by using drone comb and splitting hives, which causes a break in the brood cycle of the bee, and therefore a break in the reproductive cycle of the mites as well.

We made a single attempt at using drone comb, and also tried counting mites using a sugar roll in our second year of beekeeping.

Neither was remarkably successful - an alcohol wash is more accurate for counting anyway, and though the queen laid in the drone comb, and the Varroa followed suit, I seem to recall the bees ultimately put more honey than brood in the drone frames.

We got in the habit of treating regularly with Oxalic Acid and Formic Pro and never bothered trying to count mites again.

We knew we'd treat all the hives even if we counted only a single mite in one of them. Why bother doing a count?

(Does it help if I admit I always felt a squirm of guilt whenever I thought about it? And that I'm writing this so you won't make the same mistake?)

Then, a few things happened.

First, late last summer, we arranged to be inspected by the county bee inspector, which included an alcohol wash count of each of our hives.

He used one of these (<https://www.varroa-easycheck.com>), and I was amazed by how much it simplified the task.

At that time, all our hives but one had very low counts – some were zero – and the one that was higher than we'd like, but still at a reasonable number for the time of year.



Reader, you know I purchased an Easy Check. Just seeing how easy it was – and discovering one of our hives was borderline high – was enough to convince me.

The second thing that happened was we used the Easy Check after our Formic Pro treatment (having previously treated with Oxalic in early spring as usual).

The results were petrifying (Previous Page, Inset Picture)

That picture is from the alcohol wash on the second hive we inspected. (The first had been high-ish, but nothing like this!)

We didn't even bother to test the remaining four hives, just began a series of three Oxalic Vapor treatments on all of them before testing again.

If anything, the situation was worse -- for most of the hives. Our strongest remained high-ish, but nothing like the picture below.



I know any beekeeper who sees those photos is now shuddering. The number of mites is horrifyingly high.

How could this have happened? What would cause a treated hive to have such a huge number of mites?

Our first thought was our recent move. Maybe there was a beekeeper somewhere in our new neighborhood that didn't treat their hives -- a mite bomb, waiting to explode into other beekeepers' hives.

I quickly discounted that possibility. We had done the first round of alcohol washes a week after moving the hives, and since Varroa develop under the brood cap, any mites from our new location would have likely still been in a covered cell.

Ultimately, where the mites came from didn't matter near as much as getting them under control. To that end, we treated all but the strongest hive (which was within the realm of normality) again with Formic Pro.

Earlier this week, we tested that hive: still good. Then, yesterday, and today, we tested two of the hives that had previously been scarily high. One had seven mites -- high for this time of year, but much better than the previous test; and one had four -- much, much better.

This doesn't mean we are in the clear. The high counts happened just when we wanted our hives to be their strongest, when they are producing winter bees, which must survive for months, rather than weeks as the bees do the rest of the year.

We won't know until spring if we've managed to fend off disaster.

Our theory now is someone started keeping bees near our old house and didn't treat. You may or may not know it, but bees will drift to other hives (especially drones), which means a mite-infested hive within the fly zone of our hives is a danger to them, no matter how much we treat and test.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-agricultural-science/article/abs/drifting-of-honeybees/88DA09239D5DC14BFA09A6F2BD99DF2F>

It's possible we'll never figure out what happened, but what we know for sure is we will be performing regular mite checks from now on.

I hope any beekeeper out there reading this will learn from our experience and do the same.

Resources

Tools for Varroa Management

https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/HBHC-Guide_Varroa-Mgmt_8thEd-082422.pdf

A Guide to Effective Varroa Sampling and Control - From the Honeybee Health Coalition, this publication is updated regularly (the most recent being 2022). If you only read one thing on Varroa mites and managing them, it should be this.

Unrelated to Varroa, but useful as well, is their recent publication on honeybee nutrition

<https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/nutritionguide/>

Methods to Control Varroa Mites: An Integrated Pest Management Approach

<https://extension.psu.edu/methods-to-control-varroa-mites-an-integrated-pest-management-approach>

An excellent overview of what mites are and options for control from Penn State Extension Services.

Varroa Mites

<https://beelab.umn.edu/varroa-mites>

A brief overview of the pest and some thoughts on managing them from the University of Minnesota Bee Lab.

Varroa and Viruses

https://www.queenrightcolonies.com/2020/03/04/varroa-mite/?msclkid=cd36ae56481b13715fbac9799875d3d1&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=*LP%20DSA%20-%20All%20Pages&utm_term=queenrightcolonies&utm_content=All%20Pagesz

A post from Queen Right Colonies about why it's so important to treat your hives. Discusses so-called "acceptable threshold." More important to me, at least,

it has a picture of a mite test that looks as bad as the ones I've shared.

Scientific Beekeeping

<https://scientificbeekeeping.com/>

Blog of Randy Oliver, the "Scientific Beekeeper." A great resource, especially for bee nutrition and pest management.

Preparing for a Successful Spring

By Clint Allen

Winter can feel like a slow season for beekeepers, but it's an important time to set yourself up for success when spring arrives. In Northeast Ohio, winter can be harsh, but with some planning, you can keep your bees healthy and your equipment ready for the busy months ahead. Here's a list of tasks you can work on during the winter to prepare for the spring season.

Check on Your Hives

While your bees are mostly huddled together to stay warm, it's still a good idea to check on your hives during winter. Choose a mild day (above 40°F) to quickly inspect the outside of the hives. You don't want to open the hive and let cold air in, but you can check for a few things:

Snow and ice buildup: Make sure entrances are clear so bees can get fresh air.

Hive stability: Check that the hive hasn't been knocked over by strong winds or animals.

Listen to the bees: If you press your ear to the side of the hive, you might hear the hum of bees. This is a good sign that they're alive and staying warm.

Monitor Food Supplies

Even though the bees have stored honey, they might run low on food as winter drags on. On warm winter days, you can briefly lift the back of the hive to get a sense of its weight. If it feels light, the bees might be low on food. In this case, consider adding some emergency feed like sugar patties or fondant.

Repair and Clean Equipment

Winter is the perfect time to check your beekeeping equipment. When the spring rush hits, you'll want to have everything ready to go. Here are a few tasks to focus on:

Inspect your frames and boxes: Look for cracks, loose joints, or signs of rot. Repair or replace anything that looks worn out.

Clean tools and suits: Take time to clean your hive tools, smoker, and bee suits. This can help prevent the spread of diseases.

Organize your supplies: Check your inventory of gloves, feeders, and other supplies. Restock anything that's running low so you're ready for spring.

Plan for Spring Expansion

If you're thinking about adding more hives next season, winter is a great time to plan. Research the best locations in your yard or property where you could place new hives. Think about factors like sunlight, wind protection, and proximity to water sources.

You can also use this time to order new bees if you plan on expanding. Many suppliers start taking orders for packages and nucs in late winter, so it's best to secure your order early.

Educate Yourself and Connect with the Community

Winter is a great time to catch up on learning. There are plenty of online resources, books, and videos to help you improve your beekeeping skills. Some ideas include:

Attend webinars and workshops: Look for events hosted by beekeeping associations or universities. These often cover topics like pest management, hive health, and honey harvesting.

Read up on new techniques: This is also a great time to explore new methods, such as natural beekeeping or new treatments for pests like varroa mites.

Prepare for Swarm Season

Swarm season can catch you by surprise if you're not ready. Use the winter months to prepare for it by:

Building or buying swarm traps: These can help you catch swarms and either expand your apiary or prevent losing a hive.

Setting up spare hive boxes: If your bees swarm in early spring, you'll need a place to put them. Having extra equipment on hand is always helpful.

Order Seeds and Plan a Bee Garden

If you're interested in providing more food sources for your bees, winter is a good time to plan a bee-friendly garden. Order seeds for plants that bloom in early spring, such as crocuses, dandelions, and fruit trees. By planting these early bloomers, you can help your bees find food as soon as they start flying again in spring.

Stay Patient and Optimistic

Winter can feel like a long wait for beekeepers, but it's also a time to relax and prepare. By staying active with these tasks, you can ensure that your hives are healthy, and your equipment is ready for the busy season ahead.

Taking care of these things during the winter months will not only keep your bees in good shape but will also make spring beekeeping much more enjoyable. As temperatures start to warm up, you'll be able to focus on your bees without being bogged down by last-minute preparations.

Remember, a little preparation in the winter can lead to a successful, honey-filled spring!

Member Spotlight

John Vrtachnik



1. Where do you live? I live in North Ridgeville, but I own property in Litchfield Twp where hives kept.
2. What got you interested in beekeeping? Meet Chuck & Peggy Garnes at fall tour where we talked about beekeeping.
3. How long have you been keeping bees? Three years, with two years off due to medical issues
4. How many hives do you have? Started with two then five.
5. Are you looking to add to your apiary? Yes, health permitting.
6. Do you share your beekeeping hobby with anybody else? Yes, anyone that shows interest.
7. What is your most memorable beekeeping moment? When I caught my first swarm and the bees marched right in.

8. What is the best and worst part of beekeeping? The best is tasting the honey while extracting. The worst is dealing with varroa mites.
9. What is your favorite food to add honey to? Vanilla ice cream and habanero infused honey.
10. Do you have any tips for beginner beekeepers? Go to MCBA hives inspections.
11. Other than beekeeping, do you have any other hobbies? I'm a member of North Coast Community Woodshop

Club Bee Yard

Oct 20, 2024—winter prep in the yard

Hive 1: 5 mediums to start, consolidated down the 4 mediums, bottom 2 have some capped brood with honey, nectar, pollen. Did not see queen, no eggs, larva. Third medium has 10 frames capped honey; 4th medium is mostly empty. Bottom deep had 10 frames of bees. Top quilting box, shim with metal, paper and shavings. Shimmed inner cover. Small hive beetles seen.



Hive 2a: 3 deeps—top deep was brought from Hive 2 when dispersed. Combined with newspaper. Newspaper was not chewed through, removed newspaper. Top deep has resources, middle deep is all honey, bottom deep has honey on outer parts of frame, middles empty. Did not see queen, did not find eggs, larva. Top feeder with pine shavings added, shimmed inner cover. Oxalic dribble demo bottom deep.

Hive 3: 3 deeps, one medium. Did not check bottom deep, middle deep honey. Top deep was from hive 2, removed newspaper, some has been chewed through. Top medium has some capped honey. Only added shims under inner cover, no quilting box

Hive 3a: 2 deeps, 1 medium: Did not find queen, eggs, larva. Good number of bees, pollen coming in. Added top feeder quilting box, shimmed inner cover.

Great Christmas Gifts for Beekeepers

(Beyond the Basics)

By Clint Allen

Finding the perfect Christmas gift for the beekeeper in your life can be both fun and rewarding! While beekeepers are often stocked up on wooden hive parts and frames, there are plenty of other useful and thoughtful gifts they would love. Here are some ideas to inspire your holiday shopping:

Protective Gear Upgrades

Beekeepers can always use a little extra protection in the apiary. Consider gifting high-quality bee suits, gloves, or a ventilated jacket for added comfort on hot days. Even experienced beekeepers appreciate fresh gloves or a new suit if theirs is getting worn.

Hive Tools and Accessories

Hive tools are essential, but they can easily get lost or worn out. A premium stainless steel hive tool with an ergonomic grip makes a great gift. You could also consider specialty tools like a frame gripper or a frame perch, which can make inspections easier.

Beekeeping Books and Journals

Winter is a time when beekeepers often dive into learning. Look for books on advanced beekeeping techniques, honeybee behavior, or pollinator-friendly

gardening. A beekeeping journal is another great idea, allowing them to record hive observations, honey harvests, and seasonal notes.

Beeswax Processing Kits

If your beekeeper friend is interested in crafting, a beeswax candle-making kit or a set of molds for soap and lip balm is a thoughtful and creative gift. These kits make it easy to turn leftover beeswax into homemade products.

Quality Beekeeping Clothing

Beekeeping is a messy job, so why not gift a comfortable, moisture-wicking shirt or a bee-themed hat for those long summer days in the apiary? Consider items with UV protection to keep them cool and protected.

Honey Harvesting Equipment

If the beekeeper in your life is ready to up their honey game, consider gifting fine mesh strainers, a honey refractometer to measure moisture content, or a stainless-steel uncapping knife for easier honey extraction. These tools can make the harvesting process smoother and more enjoyable.

Personalized Gifts

For a special touch, consider something personalized, like a custom honey jar label set, engraved hive tool, or even a bee-themed coffee mug with their name on it. These thoughtful gifts show you've gone the extra mile.

Pollinator-Friendly Plant Seeds

Help your beekeeper support their bees by gifting them a selection of pollinator-friendly seeds. Choose varieties that bloom throughout the season, like sunflowers, wildflowers, and herbs like lavender and thyme. A ready-to-plant wildflower seed mix is also a great way to encourage healthy bee forage.

Subscription Services

For the beekeeper who has it all, consider a subscription box tailored to beekeeping. Some options deliver honey samples, specialty tools, or educational materials every month. Another idea is a membership to a beekeeping association, which often includes newsletters, resources, and event invitations.

Gift Cards for Beekeeping Suppliers

If you're unsure what they truly need, a gift card to a trusted beekeeping supplier lets them choose exactly what they want, whether it's for gear, books, or new equipment. These gifts are sure to bring joy to any beekeeper this holiday season. By focusing on practical, useful, and thoughtful items, you can help them enjoy their beekeeping journey even more in the year ahead!

MCBA Meeting Minutes

By Sharon Carpenter MCBA Secretary

Meeting Date: October 21, 2024

MCBA monthly meeting was held at the Medina County District Library. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Approximately 47 people were present including six board members.

1. The minutes from the September meeting were posted in the October newsletter for all members to read. A motion was made to accept the Minutes as written; all approved the motion carried.

2. Treasurer report: given by Kate Reusch.

3. Club bee yard: The hives have been made ready for the winter, a couple of weaker hives were joined with stronger ones. The group effort by club members to complete the winterization task was successful and appreciated.

4. Medina County Fair: Discussion and improvements for the 2025 fair have already begun and will continue to be discussed by the board to assess all the suggestions given during fair week.

5. The final two meetings of 2024 have been organized. In November, the meeting will be geared at teaching how to build frames for hives through hands-on experience. The frames built will be used in the club's bee yard. The December meeting will be our Christmas party and dinner which will be held on December 10th at the Medina Career Center. There will be a sign-up sheet available soon. The charitable collection this year will be aimed at helping students at the career center. A list of items needed will be made known to the club once we are given the list.

6. Another fantastic month of the Bee Herder was distributed, thank you Clint and all who contributed. Thank you to Neil Klabunde for his great work on the club's Facebook page.

7. A volunteer was asked for to assist Paul Kosmos with the Website, or to be trained. No interest was shown.


8. Beginner Classes: The rooms at the Medina Library have all been reserved and the MCBA website is being set up for registration. The club was reminded that everyone who is a member and has taken the class in the past is welcome to join the class again at no charge.

9. Events: The Honey Bee Festival went well. There were 94 vendors in attendance and MCBA was said to be the most informative vendor. OSU Ag Day was also successful. 650+ students attended.

10. Observation Hive: The library hive has been dismantled for the winter. It was a struggle this year to maintain due to hive beetles, possible contamination from outdoor cleaning solutions and the mystery of why the bees suddenly stopped using the exit tube.

New Business:

Election of Board members is coming up. All positions are open for re-election. The group was asked to either volunteer or nominate a candidate. Some nominations were made from the floor and will be posted when all nominations have been gathered.



A volunteer was needed to organize a wagon load of miscellaneous woodenware to be ready for the November “Make it” day. Steve Moysan volunteered to take on the task.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

From Around the Web

Bumblebee queens choose to hibernate in pesticide-contaminated soil, scientists discover

https://phys.org/news/2024-10-bumblebee-queens-hibernate-pesticide-contaminated.html#google_vignette

Ideas & Suggestions

This newsletter is for you, our members. If you have any ideas for content, format, corrections, or anything else, please, don’t hesitate to reach out to me, Clint Allen via email.