

March 2025

THE BEE HERDER

Published by the Medina County Beekeepers Association



MCBA Monthly Meeting March 17th, 2025

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: Queen Rearing
Speaker: Greg Burns, Natures Image Farm

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March Speaker

Join us for an engaging session on queen rearing, a crucial aspect of successful beekeeping. Greg Burns will lead us through the methods and techniques for raising healthy, productive queens, including grafting, using queen cells, and managing mating nucs. Whether you're a seasoned beekeeper or just starting out, this meeting will provide valuable insights and practical tips to enhance your apiary's health and productivity. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about this important beekeeping subject!

Upcoming Events

March 2025

Beginner Class - Tuesday Class

Tuesday Evenings - March 18th and 25th, March 4th, 11th, and 18th. Time 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

April 2025

Earth Day, Tuesday April 22nd, 2025

MCBA April Meeting

Monday, April 21st, 2025

Topic: Extended Release Formic Acid Treatments using Veroxan

Speaker: Announcement coming soon

VarroXSan is a highly effective varroa control treatment, based on oxalic acid dihydrate in slow-release strips, ensuring correct dosage that covers at least three live cycles of the varroa mite.

Q & A 6:30 to 7:00 pm

General Session 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Location: Medina County Library
210 S. Broadway, Medina OH 44256

Rooms A and B

Mission 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

March is looking good for the bees... many members had a successful overwintering and their hives are strong. Now if we can only keep our night temps out of the teens.

Swarming will be an issue soon this spring so please get your bait hives ready and be a responsible beekeeper – don't let the swarms land at your neighbors!

The meeting this month is queen rearing – so be sure to attend. Greg Burns is awesome and very informative.

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

Ten Minutes with the Bees – The bee yard in March

By Paul Kosmos

March is all about keeping a close eye on your bees and making sure they have enough to eat till Spring. Many of you have found your bees flying on the nice days, for cleansing flights, gathering water, occasionally a little pollen., and just orienting.

One of the most important things we can do is check to see if they have enough food. That is not easy until the temps rise to more than 60 degrees... and that only gives you a few minutes inside the hive. At least you can pop the inner cover and see if the bees are gathered at the top of the frames (very normal for this time of year). This is where sugar cakes and fondant, among other things,

come into play. Even if you think they have plenty of food, putting a few sugar cakes is cheap insurance against late cold weather or an ugly start to April.

When we talk about feeding your bees in March, we often recommend NOT putting pollen patties on your hive. Why? It can stimulate brood production and result in early swarms. But there are exceptions. One of my hives is a good example. I popped the inner cover briefly last week (temp 50). I found the bees at the top and in a rather small cluster. I could not keep them open to examine between the frames. I decided to add some pollen patties because they appeared weak and could benefit from a protein source. But this is the only situation in spring in which I feed pollen sources to my bees. I did not even remove the inner cover, just lifted one end and slipped the food in. Note how much easier when you use a shim to provide a bit more space for the food.



Sugar Cake and Pollen Patty

One more point about feeding your bees. Over wintered hives may benefit from Cakes or Fondant as insurance. However, you should not feed SS or protein patties to

your over wintered bees. Why? They rarely need it and the SS can fill up cells (lead to honey bound). And PP can lead to early brood production which can result in early swarms.

Why spend so much time on feeding techniques? It's simple.... We get asked about this often, EVERY year.

I mentioned the possibility of doing an inspection. It must be above 70 and even then, you must work fast as brood can get chilled easily at those temps. Another point is that this early there is not much you can do in the hive. Too cold to move frames or keep brood frames out of the hive.

Tempting, yes. But the bees know what they are doing, so help them safely. There will be plenty of time in April or early May to do inspections and determine which hives might be strong for future splits, etc.

In the meantime, enjoy the bees on flight days. Watch for pollen when the Maple trees bloom. I'm happy to have bees hauling pollen for several days already from the Skunk Cabbage!

Gentle Africanized Bees of Puerto Rico

Whenever we travel somewhere new, my husband Dave and I try to seek out fellow beekeepers and apiaries, though we are rarely successful.

Still, this explains why we were recently traveling down the rutted backroads of Yauco, Puerto Rico searching for Apiarios Caraballo.

As Dave drove, striving to avoid the many potholes, I searched for any evidence of the business we were looking for. I also began to think about the island's bees. Specifically, I began to wonder if they were a particular race, or if they varied according to beekeeper preference as they do here.

When we eventually found our destination, .3 km from the km marker given as its address, its gate was closed and locked despite the welcoming invitation on its website to visit their business.

Disappointed once more, our letdown was made worse by the fact that our initial plan to visit the bee sanctuary at Hacienda La Esperanza had already been scuttled. The sanctuary wasn't open either, although at least we discovered that before driving for miles to find it.



At this time of year, many businesses are only open Wednesday to Sunday, which made our Sunday to Wednesday visit timing less than optimal.

Note to self and others: If you visit Puerto Rico, double-check the days and hours of the sights you want to see and arrange your travels accordingly.

Still, by the time we headed back to our lodging, I'd discovered something new (at least to me).

I learned two things.

Fact 1: According to the Puerto Rican Department of Agriculture, Hurricane Maria in 2017 wiped out about 80% of the island's bees.

Fact 2: This loss was even more devastating because Puerto Rican bees are unique, having descended from Africanized honeybees which invaded the island in 1994. They are unique because Africanized honeybees in Puerto Rico did what researchers thus far have been unable to do. They are self-adapted, becoming gentle and easy to handle within a few generations, and they did so without losing the African bee's productivity and mite resistance.

I'm sure most of you know the history of the Africanized bee, how in 1956 African queens were imported to tropical Brazil to crossbreed with the European honeybee.

The hope was to develop a new strain of bee with the productivity of the African bee and the gentleness of the European.

Unfortunately, that's not what happened. A year later, 26 swarms with African queens were accidentally released and the resulting hybrids have been heading north ever since.

Although the venom of these "Africanized Honeybees" (AHB) is no more potent than European bees, they are more defensive and will follow anything they view as a threat much farther than the bees most of us are accustomed to tending. Mass stinging events involving these (and any) bees are rare but can be life-threatening.

So, what does all this mean to those of us who keep bees in Ohio? My guess is probably not a whole lot, at least at this point. Africanized bees of all types tend to prefer and thrive in warmer climates than ours.

Still, I can't help but draw a little hope from learning that bees can self-adapt to new circumstances and do so within a few generations. As researchers have begun to

identify the differences between the gentle AHB (gAHB) and the AHB, perhaps they will find a way to develop a bee with the mite resistance and gentleness of the gAHB and the ability to survive our cold winters.

A dream? Perhaps, but possible. Puerto Rico's wondrous bees have taught me that.

As for Apiarios Caraballo, at least I managed to find some of their honey. :-)

Survey Says!?

In January, we told you that we were developing a survey for our members to better understand our clubs winter losses. To that end, linked [here](#), is that survey. If you know if you've lost any hives and are comfortable doing so, please let us know! We plan on sharing the results in an upcoming newsletter. So far, we have 12 responses from club members, with 50% of them seeing some amount of hive losses. Additionally, Varroa and cold weather are being listed as the most common cause of hive loss.

The Beekeepers Calendar – March

Below is a list of tasks, all weather dependent, that you should consider doing to ensure your colonies are prepared for spring.

- Inspect hives on warm days (above 50°F)
- Check for signs of disease or pests
- Assess food stores and feed bees if necessary
- Remove any dead bees from the hive entrance
- Ensure proper ventilation in hives
- Prepare equipment for the upcoming season
- Order new bees or queens if needed
- Clean and repair beekeeping tools and equipment
- Monitor for early spring blooms and pollen sources

- Reverse upper and lower brood chambers
- Clean bottom boards
- Treat for Nosema (if suspected)

Member Spotlight

Steve Moysan



1. **Where do you live?** I live near Grafton, in Lorain County
2. **What got you interested in beekeeping?** I've been interested in beekeeping for a long time, but travelling a lot for work prevented me from getting started until several years ago.
3. **How long have you been keeping bees?** 5 years.
4. **How many hives do you have?** I have two dozen permanent colonies and a number of nucs. I don't want to expand my colonies any further, so am planning to begin selling nucs this year.
5. **Do you share your beekeeping hobby with anybody else?** My wife Dawn (my better and smarter half, as she reminds me. 😊) helps me a lot and she is also our CBO. (Chief Bottling Officer)

6. What is your most memorable beekeeping moment? Making my first split as a beginning beekeeper, only 8 weeks after installing the package of bees in our first hive.

7. What is the best and worst part of beekeeping? The best part of beekeeping for me is all the new learnings. Whenever I learn something, I realize that the bees have two more things that I have yet to figure out. It never gets boring. I also enjoy helping others with their learning curve. The worst part of beekeeping is...wait, there is a worst part???

8. What is your favorite food to add honey to? I often drizzle honey over my morning oatmeal. Red Pepper infused honey has also added a nice change to broccoli and other vegetables.

9. Do you have any tips for beginner beekeepers? Move slowly and methodically when working your bees, don't rush. Enjoy the simple pleasures of being outside and watching the colonies grow and change with the seasons.

10. Other than beekeeping, do you have any other hobbies? I enjoy a few things...so many things to experience, so little time. But one of my most passionate would have to be Cave Diving, a totally different world where all outside concerns are put aside and you become totally focused on what you are doing.

Honey Salted Carmel Recipe

Ingredients: 1/2 cup butter (1 stick) plus extra for pan if not using cooking spray

1 cup pure Ohio honey

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 cup heavy cream

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract (I pour with a heavy hand)

Sea salt (I used Pink Himalayan, but any will do)

Supplies: measuring spoons and cups, 8x8 square pan, parchment paper, cooking spray, heavy pan, whisk, silicone spatula, candy thermometer (or other cooking thermometer)

Helpful hints: Measure all ingredients ahead of time. Spray your 1 cup measuring cup with cooking spray or lightly butter before measuring honey so you can get every delicious drop!

Instructions:

1. Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper, enough to hang over the sides. Lightly butter or spray with cooking spray.
2. Melt butter in pan. (If you use a flimsy lightweight pan, you risk scorching.)
3. Add honey, brown sugar, and cream.
4. Stir with a silicone spatula or whisk until boiling.
5. Reduce heat so mixture simmers but doesn't boil over.
6. Hang candy thermometer on side of pan but don't let it touch the bottom of the
1. pan. Since my cooking thermometer doesn't have a bracket to do this, I just keep checking the temperature as I'm stirring.
7. Stir constantly with silicone spatula, keeping an eye on the temperature.
8. When the mixture reaches 250F, remove from heat. The amount of time this will take can vary from 20-40 minutes.
9. Add vanilla and stir.
10. Carefully pour into prepared pan.
11. Cool to room temperature, then sprinkle with sea salt. The original recipe called for 1/2 tsp., but I used more.
12. Refrigerate until hard enough to cut (3 hours or so). This is a good time to cut wax paper to wrap your candy.
13. Use parchment paper to lift from pan. Cut into whatever size you prefer. Wrap

2. small pieces of wax paper by rolling in paper and twisting ends. This is a little time-consuming!
14. Store in fridge to avoid candy getting too soft.

These caramels make an excellent homemade gift for holidays or other occasions!

Recipe based on: "Salted Honey Caramels" from <https://pinchandswirl.com/saltedhoney-caramels/> and "Honey Salted Caramels" from <https://beeyondthehive.com/recipes/honey-salted-caramels/>

Identifying and Treating Nosema in Honeybee Colonies

By Clint Allen

Nosema disease, caused by microsporidian parasites, is one of the most common and damaging diseases affecting honeybee colonies. There are two primary species of Nosema that impact honeybees: *Nosema apis* and *Nosema ceranae*. Understanding how to identify and treat this disease is crucial for maintaining healthy and productive hives.

Identifying Nosema

Nosema apis has traditionally been the most common type of Nosema in honeybee colonies, particularly in the United States. It tends to cause problems in early spring or late fall. Symptoms include diarrhea (dysentery), where infected bees may defecate inside the hive, leading to brown streaks on the comb and hive entrance. Infected bees may appear weak and sluggish, and there may be a noticeable reduction in foraging activity. *Nosema ceranae*, originally a parasite of the Asian honeybee, has spread globally and is more aggressive. Unlike *Nosema apis*, it does not have easily observable symptoms, making it harder to detect. Infected colonies may decline rapidly without obvious signs. To accurately

diagnose Nosema, a microscopic examination of bee samples is necessary. This involves crushing a sample of bees and examining the gut contents under a microscope to identify Nosema spores. Collecting samples involves taking 10 to 25 bees from the hive entrance or from under the top lid or the outside of the cluster in poor weather. It is important that the bees collected are older as bees less than 8 days old will not have had time to become infected. To estimate the overall level of Nosema *apis* infection for a yard, it is recommended that a few bees from the hive entrance of a number of colonies in the yard be collected, with a total sample size of about 100 bees. Although live bees are preferable, dead bees can also be collected and examined for spores. If samples are to be mailed away to a lab for diagnosis, live bees should be soaked in alcohol for at least 5 minutes and dead bees for 10 minutes. The alcohol will prevent the bees from decomposing prior to examination.

Methods to Treat Nosema

Treating Nosema involves a combination of chemical treatments and management practices. Chemical treatment primarily involves the use of Fumagillin (vet prescription required), an antibiotic that targets the active stage of the disease but does not kill spores. Fumagillin is mixed with sugar syrup and fed to the bees. However, some field studies have found Fumagillin to be ineffective at controlling *Nosema ceranae* infections in the long term. Though spore levels decrease immediately after treatment, within 2 to 3 months they return to levels as high, or higher than, those of untreated colonies and no improvement in colony strength or productivity is observed. This discrepancy likely results from the way Fumagillin is applied in the field and highlights the need to explore more effective ways to administer the treatment. Promising research is currently being conducted to discover novel treatments that meet the need for effective *Nosema ceranae* control. In the meantime, the best defense against *Nosema ceranae* infection is to reduce the spore load in the hive by replacing 2 to 3 old brood frames per year with

foundation or newly drawn comb. Other commercial products like HoneyBHealthy, ApiHerb, Vita Feed Gold, and Nozevit are also used, with varying degrees of reported success. Natural treatments are gaining interest for their potential to control Nosema without the risk of the parasites developing resistance. Thymol, an essential oil, has shown promise in trials, and a recipe for thymolated syrup is provided for beekeepers to use as a treatment. Tea tree oil is another natural option, though care must be taken to avoid toxic concentrations.

Management practices include maintaining hive hygiene by regularly cleaning and disinfecting hive equipment to reduce spore contamination. Replacing old combs with new ones can minimize the presence of spores. Ensuring bees have access to clean food and water sources is crucial, and beekeepers should avoid feeding bees honey or pollen from unknown sources, as these can be contaminated with Nosema spores. Improving hive ventilation to reduce moisture levels is important, as Nosema spores thrive in damp conditions. Regularly inspecting hives for signs of Nosema and other diseases is essential, as early detection and treatment are key to preventing severe outbreaks.

Preventive measures include considering the use of bee strains that show resistance to Nosema. Some bee breeders are selecting for traits that enhance resistance to this disease. Probiotics can help improve gut health in bees and reduce the impact of Nosema, though more research is needed in this area.

Nosema disease poses a significant threat to honeybee colonies, but with proper identification and treatment, beekeepers can manage and mitigate its impact. Regular hive inspections, good hygiene practices, and the use of appropriate treatments are essential for maintaining healthy and productive colonies. By staying vigilant and proactive, beekeepers can help ensure the well-being of their bees and the success of their apiaries.

From Around the Web

EXPERT TALKS WEBINAR Tropilaelaps mites

<https://www.apimondia.org/mites-webinar.html>

Common Types of Beehives

https://carolinahoneybees.com/types-of-beehives/?adt_ei=%Email%?adt_ei=%Email%&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=spring+is+coming+is+your+apiary+ready+for+brood+expansion&utm_term=2025-02-16

Survey Reveals Over 1.1 million Honey Bee Colonies Lost, Raising Alarm for Pollination and Agriculture

<https://mailchi.mp/keystone.org/colonylosssurvey?e=b9d1b87084>

Ohio Apiary Inspection Summary – 2024

<https://agri.ohio.gov/divisions/plant-health/apiary-program/inspection/inspection-summary>

BGSU study reveals nationwide risks to bees from rising temperatures

<https://www.bgsu.edu/news/2025/01/bgsu-study-reveals-nationwide-risks-to-bees-from-rising-temperatures.html>

This Common Pantry Staple Lasts Forever — Yes, Really

<https://www.foodandwine.com/does-honey-go-bad-11692878>

Looking for help!

The club is looking to have a member assist or back up our current webmaster. If you are interested in helping, please let one of the Board Members or Directors know.

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.

References & Citations

Apiaro Caraballo website (in Spanish):
<https://mielelcafetal.com/pages/about>

"Puerto Rico May Hold the Answer to Saving the Bees," Sonde, Kari in Mother Jones,
<https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2018/12/bees-puerto-rico-varroa-mite-colony-collapse-disorder-africanized-honeybee/>

"A Soft Selective Sweep During Rapid Evolution of Gentle Behaviour in an Africanized Honeybee," Avalos, Arian, et.al., 16 November 2017, Nature.com, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-017-01800-0#Sec2>

"How the Fierce A.m.scutellata Became Gentle in Puerto Rico," McNeil, M.E.A., August 2020, Beesource Beekeeping Forums, <https://www.beesource.com/attachments/puerto-rican-bees-pdf.61120/>

"The Uniqueness of Puerto Rican Bees," 6 May 2019, The Puerto Rican Report, <https://puertoricoreport.com/tthe-uniqueness-of-puerto-ricos-bees/>

"Africanized Honey Bee in the United States," Hood, Wm. Michael, Clemson University,
<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/beekeepers/fact-sheets-publications/africanized-honey-bee-usa.html>

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2025 MCBA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

MCBA offers webinars and lectures, a monthly newsletter, the opportunity to sell honey at the county fair, and email updates. \$20 for emailed or \$25 for a printed, mailed newsletter. Membership includes one family member in activities other than voting.

Renew your membership online [here](#), or complete the form below, make a check payable to **Medina County Beekeepers Association**, and mail to Medina Beekeepers, PO BOX 1353, Medina, Ohio 44258.

Membership Form – Please complete so that we have current roster information for the newsletters!

Member Name: _____

Email Address (Please Print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Optional # of Colonies: _____