



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

April is here already, I'm not sure when that happened? For beekeepers this is a month we look forward to because oftentimes our bees didn't overwinter and we get our new bees soon. If our bees did overwinter we are so happy, we did everything correctly last year, we treated them with the right products and at the right time, we made sure the bees had enough food to get through the winter and supplemented them if they got low. The feeling of knowing that you have beekeeping figured out is short lived. You've never been here, never had bees overwinter so you're entering new territory again. This is how beekeeping goes, new challenges, new obstacles and new learning. Your next challenge is to decide how you want to make a split, do you let the half of the colony without a queen make one or do you buy a queen? Keep learning and trying different ways to challenge yourself so you grow as a beekeeper, keeping in mind that your goals will change as the years go on. Some years you might want honey production to be your main goal and other years you might want to raise queens or add colonies to your apiary and your tactics will change accordingly.

We had the NIBA swap meet and the Board will go over our thoughts on how it went to see if we hold one in the future. There were 4-5 sellers that had a wide variety of items for sale and we enjoyed coffee and donuts from Country Donuts in Crystal Lake (the honey dipped were really great). Those buying would pop in to see if someone was selling something they were looking for, talk with the NIBA members in the room, share a coffee and head out again. The potential buyers had been in the club for varying amounts of years but no real newbees were looking for new equipment.

For the April meeting we'll have several segments, the first will begin at 6:30, we say this is for newbees but anyone can participate. Larry will show a short video of a package installation and answer questions afterwards. At 7 we will begin our regular monthly meeting, our presenter will be Marcin and he's talking about how different hive materials and thicknesses affect the colony. We will talk about timely things to look for and deal with in the hive and answer questions.

If you have some built out frames to spare, please consider bringing a couple to the meeting or to the package delivery to share with newbees. Please make sure the colony you take the frames from is healthy so we don't get any diseases being

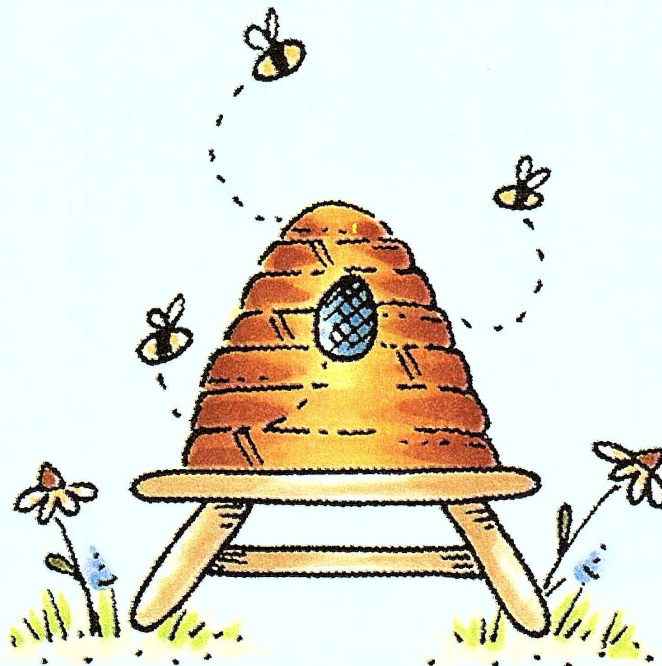
spread through the club. This will help the newbees colony get a jump because the queen can begin laying eggs much sooner.

We might still need a couple of people to volunteer in the afternoon of April 12th for Gardenfest. I'll have more information about this at the meeting.

We're looking for a few people to help clean up the hives before we get our bees on April 12th, if you have some time to spare please contact me and we'll get a day figured out to get this done.

If when you joined you didn't include a cellphone number and email address on the membership form please see Sue to update your form. We need an email address to send you our monthly newsletter Sweet Stuff and we need a cell phone number to contact you the week and day of the package and nuc deliveries and if you volunteer to work at an event like the McHenry County Fair.

Tom



What is so good about NIBA?

Larry Krengel

Let me tell you.

The Illinois State Beekeepers Association has 25 affiliate associations that organize most of the beekeeper activities in the state. The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association is one of those affiliates. ISBA provides support for these activities including liability insurance for local activities.

The membership of ISBA is about 1700. (Recent figures show 5434 beekeepers registered with the Department of Agriculture in the state. One in three are ISBA members.) The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association, the biggest local association in the state, has a membership of 218 (as of last week) and is far ahead of number two. NIBA's membership is largely from McHenry, Lake, Kane and Boone counties in Illinois and southern Wisconsin, but members are from well beyond. NIBA represents about 13% of the ISBA membership. That is impressive. What is so good about NIBA?

NIBA has a very active board that is supported by a membership that is passionate about beekeeping and who enjoy joining in on many activities. Yearly, that included the McHenry County Fair where members talk bees with the "man on the street" and where last year we had a record number of submissions in the honey competition.

NIBA supports the Farm Bureau's Ag Days and the Master Gardeners' spring Garden Fest. NIBA helped the Master Gardeners at Sherman Hospital establish honeybee colonies in their community garden. Mentoring sessions for members are held at McHenry County College where the association maintains a beeyard. The income from selling the beeyard honey is invested in the promotion of the honeybee including offering a scholarship to a student in the agriculture program at MCC.

Experienced NIBA members are available for consultations with beginners and the association rents (for a minimal fee) extractors saving members a significant expense. Each spring NIBA organizes a group buy of packages and nucs negotiating lowest prices in the area. Again, saving the members money. Over 400 colonies were ordered this year.

The Sweet Stuff – NIBA's excellent newsletter – arrives monthly in members inboxes with timely info.

Monthly meetings are held in excellent facilities at McHenry County College. It is hard to resist buying a chance at the monthly raffle. During the pandemic break, board learned to Zoom the meetings!

Each monthly meeting begins with a "nubee session" followed by an impressive list of presentations by local talent as well as distant experts.

So what is so good about NIBA? A lot... thanks to the support of its members.

Chores of the Month – April – and so it begins.....

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Overwintered colonies are well into raising brood for the coming year. On warm days the bees will be out foraging pollen from some early flowering plants and trees. Very early in the month, expect to see assorted colors arriving at the hive entrance depending on the flora in your area. You will likely see a lot of yellows from maples and willows and maybe even some blue from squill/scilla. About mid-month, likely earlier this year, the dandelions will start blooming and you will see a lot of their tell-tale tangerine-orange pollen being brought in. Though temperatures may be a bit low to do a prolonged deep dive inspection early in the month, the influx of pollen is a good sign that the colony is raising brood. Brood rearing requires significant protein which is sourced from the incoming pollen. If weather conditions are preventing foraging, use pollen patties and/or pollen substitutes as supplemental feed. The brood will require warmth so the bees will be consuming more carbohydrates (honey, fondant, sugar syrup, etc.) for the energy they will require to produce the heat needed to raise their brood. You may well see bee poop or signs of dysentery at the exit points for bees. My guess is that you won't see as much as you might have seen in prior years since there have been many warm days allowing for cleansing flights. If you do see some, don't panic and jump to the conclusion that your bees have Nosema. This is more likely an accumulation of feces the bees are finally getting to void. It could be dysentery, but dysentery is not Nosema. Nosema can only be determined by inspection of bee guts via microscopy. If it is dysentery, it will likely clear up fairly quickly as the bees get foraging and consuming fresh nectar. If it is Nosema, the only approved product on the market right now is Fumidil-B (Fumagillin) but its efficacy on the most prevalent type of Nosema (*N. Ceranae*) is marginal. There are other mechanical means for treating colonies with Nosema (i.e. shook swarm, Bailey comb exchange), but that's a lesson for a different day.

For Beekeepers with live overwintered colonies, it is time to:

Feed. Sugar syrup at 1:1 ratio (2 lbs. sugar/1 qt. water) is conventional this time of year. A small amount of heat will dissolve the sugar quickly. Allow to cool before feeding to bees.

Pollen, pollen substitute, pollen patties. These supplemental protein sources may help the colony raise brood until natural pollen sources become more abundant. My personal observation is that there seems to be a fair amount of natural pollen being brought in, but it won't hurt to add a little insurance.

Rotate Hive Bodies. If your bees have moved into the top box consider rotating the top box to the bottom. The upside to this is that it provides space for the colony to expand upwards and may reduce or delay the swarming urge. The downside is that you may be dividing the brood nest if it spans both boxes. If this situation exists, addition of a third box (with frames) above or simply the addition of super(s) may be a better alternative. There are other manipulations that you can also do to mitigate swarming such as the Demaree method or creating splits. There is a plethora of info on these processes available on the internet or even at your local bee club meeting.

Frame Rotation. As temps warm up, consider removing some old frames (w/o brood) and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program. This time of year, place new foundation frames just outside of the brood nest. This will also help to reduce the swarming urge.

Remove Winter Wrappings as the weather warms. No need to hurry on this though.

For Beekeepers with dead overwintered colonies, it is time to:

Breakdown and clean out the dead-outs. It can be a dirty job as well as a disheartening one. Don't procrastinate. Depending on the cause of death of your colony, you may want/need to replace all your frames/combs. Viruses die with your colony for the most part. Mites do also, so you have minimal worry that either of these will carry forward. *If you had a bacterial foulbrood disease that killed your colony, the problem could carry forward.* This would not be typical so don't rush to this conclusion. Seek an experienced beekeeper or apiary inspector for some advice.

Frame Rotation. Consider removing some older and/or 'condition challenged' frames and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program (assuming that you will be reusing this hive this season).

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Bees will be arriving soon so make sure all equipment is ready to go.

Finish assembling and painting your equipment. If you have not done this already, ***Get On It!*** Don't procrastinate, the bees will not wait! 😊

Set up your Equipment in your Apiary. Have everything in place. This means your equipment, your tools needed for installation, and feed. Mix your sugar syrup the day before picking up your bees. Try to minimize your last minute scrambling. The process will go smoother.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. Hands-on assistance would be great but verbal or written communication is always a great help too.

Ready or not here it comes! No worries. Chill. You have done your homework. You have Read, Studied, and Learned. A little nervous anticipation is all part of the excitement of becoming a beekeeper and right about now it is reaching an apex. Take a breath. A few more seasons under your belt and you will look back on this time with a knowing smile. If you have not received hands on instruction on package installation, review several YouTube videos, or use a lifeline and 'Phone a Friend' (or mentor) on package installation.

Have a checklist for your package or nuc installation. It helps keep you organized and focused.

Have all your tools and supplies ready ahead of time. It bears repeating. Avoid the nervous scramble.

Again, No worries, coaching and virtual help is available.

Download the forms to register your bees with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekeep.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Review package installation procedures if you are getting new bee packages.

Review nuc installation procedures if you opted for nucs instead of packages.

Prepare your feed.

Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2025 and act accordingly. See earlier month's chores list.

Wash your beekeeping suit or jacket to remove general dirt and specifically to remove lingering essence of alarm pheromone from previous 'suit stings'. Tip: Use an unscented laundry detergent.

General Info:

A couple of ways to install packages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZknUirgbQk> Randy Oliver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lt7BWolTbw> Penn State

Are you seeing pollen coming in?

[Nice Seasonal Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

It is April. Welcome to the 2025 Beekeeping Season!



It's an old joke

Larry Krengel

We have all heard (and likely passed it on to non beekeeper friends) the well-worn story about asking ten beekeepers a question and getting... ok you know how it goes. There are many ways to keep bees but few pat answers.

Not only a humorous story, this enduring joke is challengingly true of beekeeping and never more true than when asking about a successful varroa treatment. Varroa have been a factor in American beekeeping for more than 30 years. Amazingly, even with 125,000 beekeepers in the US, all awaiting a dependable method mitigating the varroa threat, no universal varroa controlling technique has arrived.

Early in the varroa wars we employed two synthetic chemicals – Apistan and Checkmite. Both had a short-lived effectiveness. Beekeepers then went through a powdered sugar period, screened bottom boards and drone trapping hoping to find the silver bullet. Not so.

We moved on to thymol treatments then to organic acid treatments. (Interestingly there is no total agreement on why either of these works in controlling varroa). Let us not forget the “treatment free” approach that theorizes the bees will ultimately develop a resistance to varroa if left to their own or the attempts to selectively breed bees that are tolerant of or resistant to varroa... or how about breeding bees that will tear the legs off the varroa (Purdue’s “ankle biters”).

After a great investment of time and money, the varroa challenge still remains unanswered.

It is accepted that 80% of colony losses are related to the presence of varroa. Ouch. This is no joke.

The only – and likely fatal – mistake a beekeeper can make is to ignore the threat of varroa. Whoops, I said there are no pat answers in keeping bees. This is one, the only one that comes to mind. The beekeeper that ignores varroa will have bees die. Action makes the difference.

It is wise to know the enemy. Knowledge is power... realizing there is no perfect defense. The last bee class of the season at McHenry County College will be on April 9, an evening devoted to getting to know the varroa and its control. Check it out, an evening dedicated to our enemy, **varroa destructor**. It can be attended in person or online.

-V-V-V-V-V-V-

Varroa Mite: Know Your Enemy



Enemy #1 in the honeybee world is Varroa Destructor – the varroa mite. Understanding how the biology of the honeybee and that of the varroa mite intersect is important to successful beekeeping in today's world. This mite attaches to honeybees and their larva weakening them and passing on deadly viruses. A successful strategy for control of these mites is critical to the survival of a honeybee colony. This class will discuss the history, the biology and the control of Varroa Destructor.

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=9910



NIBA is looking for an outdoor bench that could go in the MCC apiary for people who might need to sit or take a break while working or visiting with the hives. If you have a bench that you would like to donate, please contact any board member.

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Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

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Website and Newsletter Submissions

www.nibainfo.org – The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association website. A wealth of information is available.

Contact board members via email, download the membership form, access copies of the newsletter. Terri is asking for your pictures, stories, etc. to have them highlighted on the web page!

reevestherese@att.net

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. spinkawa@gmail.com

Honey Extractor

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent one of the clubs 3 honey extractors?

Two of the extractors are manual, a 4 frame a 3 frame. The third is motorized and is capable of extracting both sides of 9 frames at a time.

Rental fee for either of the manual extractor is \$10.00 for 3 days with a \$10.00 security deposit. The electric (motorized) 9 frame extractor costs \$25.00 to rent for 2 days with a \$75.00 security deposit. Deposits will be returned if equipment is returned on time, clean, and undamaged.

The extractors come with most equipment needed to make the uncapping and extraction experiences go smoothly, except of course, the honey frames and buckets.

To reserve a date contact Al Fullerton by phone or text at 815-382-7139 or email adfhone@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

The queen marking color for 2025 is Blue

