



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Well the calendar says October but the temperatures felt like July or August. As beekeepers we often talk about how the weather might affect our colonies and this will be another season to wonder if the warmer weather late in the year was a benefit or a detriment to the bees. This weather has me getting more calls about bees in the ground (this gives me time to educate the people) being a nuisance to the homeowner and some are genuinely worried about someone's health because they're allergic to bees.

Thank you to everyone that helped extract MCC honey, I hope those there to learn were able to see how to get the frames, open the cells in different ways and then spin the frames. We were able to get about 141 pounds of honey and we'll get a bit more from the cappings. Thank you Al for your service, thank you Ralph for bottling honey up right away because MCC was totally out of honey!

In November we will hold our election, the elected positions are President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. Each term is a one year term so each position is open in November. There isn't really a succession plan or order, if you're interested in a position you just throw your name in the ring. The President is the only position with a term limit on it, the President can only hold that position for 3 consecutive years. He or she can take 1 year off (while holding a different position) before being President again.

If you are interested in running for office please contact Jackie Tesser via text at 815-790-6999 to let her know who you are and what position you would like to run for. If you have questions about what you do for each position please ask any Board member or Director. Some positions you can kinda tell what you do like the treasurer position. I'm not good with numbers etc so I wouldn't make a good treasurer. Having new leadership with new ideas or different ways of looking at things can help an organization grow so if you'd like to see things run differently run for office.

This month's presentation will be about winterizing your hives and what you can do to help get the colony through the winter so please be there.

Tom



Ron Fischer has been presented with a plaque of gratitude for everything that he has done for NIBA



Pictures from the Bee Yard





Chores of the Month – October 2025

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in and around the hive?

Hive activity will be markedly reduced after the first week or so of this month. The weather continues to be quite warm and that certainly shows up in the bee activity. I am observing lots of pollen being brought in for raising winter bees (diutinus bees) now and for storing away for the raising of the new bees for the 2026 season. The Fall cool down is inevitable though, and we will see it slowly progress as we move further into the month. Winter is just around the corner and the bees know it. The “Ousting of the Drones” has started and should be winding down as the month progresses. On warmer days, the foragers are still scouting for natural nectar and pollen sources or other sources to pillage. Beware of robbing....from both ends of the process. If your hives are **getting robbed**, the result is obviously disastrous. If your hives are **doing the robbing**, though it may seem less obvious, the results can be equally as disastrous. The weak hive that they may be robbing could be weak as a result of varroa mite infestation. When your bees are in the weak, infested hive, the parasitic varroa will be looking for a way out so they can find a healthier host. They will hitch a ride on your bees and find their new home in your apiary. **Now you have the mite problem!**

Difficult to prevent, but you can mitigate the likelihood by making sure that you are providing plenty of sugar syrup at 2 parts sugar to one part water (four pounds of sugar to each quart of water). If your bees have plenty of access to food, their need to rob other hives will be lessened (but not necessarily eliminated).

Based on what I see in my own hives, there are still a lot of winter bees being raised though the numbers will be fewer than last month as the days cool down. Though we haven't yet had a significant string of cool nights, we will as the month progresses and the bees will start clustering at night. The bees will recognize the need for establishing appropriate space and location for clustering and the need for food stores nearby. They will move and store their provisions accordingly.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Get the Bees ready for winter.

Get the *Environment* ready for winter [two options (in the Langstroth world) : Ventilation Hives- hives that utilize top ventilation (currently the most common method utilized)and Condensing Hives-hives that do not utilize top ventilation].

Bees:

Feed, Feed, Feed! 2:1sugar syrup (4 pounds of sugar for each quart of water) to maximize the concentration of carbohydrates and minimize the excess water they need to remove from the solution. It's getting cooler and it is harder to evaporate that excess moisture.

Consider an Oxalic Acid sublimation or dribble treatment in later October to eliminate any remaining varroa mites that may have been in the colony or brought in by a late season robbing episode. One advantage of an OA sublimation this time of year (besides the obvious effectiveness it has when treating a broodless colony) is that you will not need to crack open the hive bodies and ruin the hive's propolis seal that was created to keep out the imminent winter winds. Alternately, you may have opted to use the relatively new product, Varroxsan, which is an oxalic acid extended treatment. (See September 'Chores' for additional info on Varroxsan). If you opted for the Varroxsan treatment (and started it earlier in September), be aware that the label specifies removal after the 42-56 day treatment, so consider using some sort of hive wrap after breaking propolis seals in October.

Consider a Direct Feed Microbial treatment to improve the gut microbiome of the bees.

Environment: For those who utilize Ventilation Hives

Remove queen excluders if present.

Tilt hive forward a little bit to assist winter moisture drainage.

Rake up leaves and debris from around the hive to lessen the opportunity for mouse and pygmy shrew problems.

Add mouse guards. Don't forget....mice can climb, so protect upper entrances also. If you use entrance reducers as your mouse guard, make sure that the egress slot is at the top not the bottom. It seems counter intuitive, but if the slot is at the bottom it is easily plugged up with dead bees thus rendering it useless. When placed 'upside down' it allows the live bees to climb over the dead bodies to exit. A little inconsiderate and heartless of the bees if you lean towards anthropomorphism.

Make sure you have an upper entrance/exit. It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees.

Add an appropriate feeding shim/spacer and maybe some solid feed in the form of winter patties, a candy board, sugar bricks or cakes, or dry sugar above the top hive body. You may want to add emergency feed in later winter and having a spacer already in place will make that effort possible. Prepare ahead of time.

Make sure there is adequate ventilation to remove moisture from the hive. Bees breathe and metabolize the carbohydrates they consume to produce heat. A by-product of that metabolism is moisture, and for ventilated hives, it must find its way out of the hive to reduce dripping from condensation. **Cold wet bees are dead bees. It is preventable.**

Consider adding a moisture board or quilt box or some other method of capturing the moisture and preventing it from condensing and dripping on the bees.

Consider (very strongly) adding insulation at the top of the hive to further reduce the opportunity for condensation.

Consider wrapping your hive to insulate or at least to eliminate infiltration of cold winter winds. Wraps are often done in black with the thought of providing a little solar heat gain on sunny winter days. The value of the black coloring is questionable.

A quick search on the internet will provide you with a plethora of information on many approaches to hive insulation. In any case, add insulation to the top of the hive as a minimum approach.

Consider creating a wind block with snow fencing, straw bales, large lawn bags filled with leaves (word of caution: straw bales and to a lesser extent, bags of leaves may be attractive to mice, so use them with that warning in mind), or basically anything that you can position to break the force of the direct wind against your hive.

Consider strapping down your hive for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling the hive.

Environment: For those who utilize Condensing Hives (see General info for link to info on Condensing Hives)
Mostly the same as above (Differences italicized and marked with *):

Remove queen excluders if present.

Tilt hive forward a little bit to assist winter moisture drainage.

Rake up leaves and debris from around the hive to lessen the opportunity for mouse and pygmy shrew problems.

Add mouse guards. **No upper entrance or ventilation hole in a condensing hive.* If you use entrance reducers as your mouse guard, make sure that the egress slot is at the top not the bottom. It seems counter intuitive, but if the slot is at the bottom in is easily plugged up with dead bees thus rendering it useless. When place 'upside down' it allows the live bees to climb over the dead bodies to exit. A little inconsiderate and heartless of the bees if you lean towards anthropomorphism.

***No Upper Entrance** . *Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees. Since there is no upper entrance, you should check your hives periodically and specifically after a snow to see that the bees have egress to make cleansing flights.*

Add an appropriate feeding shim/spacer and maybe some solid feed in the form of winter patties, a candy board, sugar bricks or cakes, or dry sugar above the top hive body. You may want to add emergency feed in later winter and having a spacer already in place will make that effort possible. Prepare ahead of time. Alternately, you may want to put this emergency feed in place prior to closing out your hives for the winter.

***Add extra insulation at the top of the hive** to reduce the opportunity for condensation on the lid.

***Wrap your hive with insulation** to insulate and to eliminate infiltration of cold winter winds. Side wrap insulation should be of a lesser 'R' factor than the top insulation.

Consider creating a wind block with snow fencing, straw bales, large lawn bags filled with leaves (word of caution: straw bales and to a lesser extent, bags of leaves may be attractive to mice, so use them with that warning in mind), or basically anything that you can position to break the force of the direct wind against your hive.

Consider strapping down your hive for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling the hive.

Let's get through this winter with live bees and come out strong in Spring 2026!

VIVA SUSTAINABILITY!!!

General Info

[More on Condensing Hives](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

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)

Formulas for making 2:1 syrup for fall feeding:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|--------|---------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Sugar (lb) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 32 |
| Water | 1 cup | 1 pint | 1 quart | 1 1/2 gal | 1 gal | 2 gal |

Note 1: Do not boil sugar syrup (its OK to boil the water prior to adding sugar but not after). Boiling can lead to the creation of HMF (Hydroxymethylfurfural) which is toxic to honeybees.

Note 2: Some people are concerned about using sugar from beets. There is no difference in the sugar (sucrose) from beets vs cane sugar (sucrose). Sucrose is sucrose. Genetic modification (GM) in beets modify the proteins in the plants, not the sucrose.

Note 3: Use white table sugar (sucrose) only. Do not use brown sugar or molasses. Do not use organic sugar.

[How to make one type of candy board.](#) (CTRL + Click)

ROBBING SCREENS



MOUSE DAMAGE



MOUSE GUARDS



VENTILATION



WIND BREAKS



HIVE WRAPS



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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**

