



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2024

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Happy October although it feels more like early September. For beekeepers we are treating for mites, maybe pulling the honey supers off and extracting the last of the honey or planning for the upcoming winter. The October meeting will include the honey tasting that has become a favorite thing to participate in. Bring a jar or bottle of your honey and see how it compares to the honey of others based only on taste. This meeting will not be sent out via zoom because the honey tasting doesn't transmit over the internet so please attend in person.

We will be discussing the upcoming election that will be held at the November meeting. This year our Secretary and Treasurer positions will both be open. If you are interested in running for either position please reach out to Jackie Tesser at hairdresser9@yahoo.com who will be coordinating the election. Of course if you want to run for President please let Jackie know that too. Nominations can be made by yourself or someone can nominate you with your permission, nominations can also be made from the floor during the November meeting. The Directors will be appointed by the new Board after the Board is seated. If you have questions about any of the Board positions please reach out to a Board member or director to get answers.

This has been a busy year for NIBA, we've been asked to attend more events to promote bees and beekeeping than previous years and without our volunteers we wouldn't be able to do this. Please consider volunteering for an event or two when we get asked to participate in something. Even if you're a new beekeeper you will know more than the people asking questions and you can always be honest and tell the person I'm not sure but I can look it up or ask someone volunteering with you to help you answer the question. To those who have helped I thank you, oftentimes when we don't get volunteers one or more Board members go to the event to talk bees and sell honey. I hope to see lots of you at the meeting on the 10th, bring some honey for the taste test and enjoy the camaraderie.

See you soon,
Tom



The View from the Catbird Seat*

Larry Krengel

Greetings Beekeepers –

I pulled three full supers from one of my colonies recently. A very acceptable crop from a colony. While there, I said hello to the red-dotted queen, thanking her for engineering a colony that produced 100+ pounds of surplus honey for their beekeeper.

Yep... a red dot. She was a 2023 queen who had provided a honey crop last year and did it again this year. Nice work, your majesty. I am glad I did not yield to replacing you simply because you got old.

I listened to a lecture by Dr. Clarence Collisen at a conference a few years ago. He is an academic expert on honeybee queens. Dr. Collisen graphed the fertility of queens as they aged. His research documents the diminishment of a queen's egg-laying as she ages. It drops quickly. With that thinking in mind, some commercial beekeepers replace queens yearly, either in the fall or the spring, on all colonies contending that a greater honey crop pays for the new queens. Maybe so, but that is not my style. As I get older, I have greater commiseration for the aging queens.

As we wander into winter this year, I do not intend to replace any queens, even the ones who produced a light honey crop. If the queen fails to satisfy the colony's needs in the spring, the bees will put it to a vote (the Honeybee Democracy) and all will support the results... keep the queen or kill the queen. An orderly move into the coming season will result and work in the best interest of the colony.

As my red-dot queen clusters with her offspring for her second winter I wonder what season three will bring. Time will tell. I would not count her out.

In the beekeeping world I am in the catbird seat, the enviable position where I can enjoy the comradery of the bees, rise to the challenge of managing wild animals, and not be driven by a profit motive. Ah, the life of the backyard beekeeper.

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*According to Wikipedia, ""The catbird seat" is an idiomatic phrase used to describe an enviable position, often in terms of having the upper hand or greater advantage in any type of dealing among parties. It derives from the secluded perch on which the gray catbird makes mocking calls."

Chores of the Month – October 2024

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Hive activity will be markedly reduced this 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).

There are still some winter bees being raised though the numbers will be fewer than last month as the days cool down. We have already had a few cool nights that would lead to clustering at night. The bees will recognize the need for establishing appropriate space 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 : 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 could opt to use the new product, Varroxxan, which is an oxalic acid extended treatment. (See September 'Chores' for additional info on Varroxxan). If you opt for the Varroxxan treatment, 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 November.

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 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 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.

****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.

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.

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	1/2 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



I remember when I used to see a
bee and go, YIKES a bee! And
now I'm all, Oh wow a bee, hi! You
ok there? Need anything? Can I
get you a drink? A cushion?
Wanna borrow the car?





It's October, and you know what that means? It's time for the NIBA honey tasting contest!

Please bring a jar of your own honey to our October meeting this week, Oct. 10th @ 7pm, to be shared and tasted by all. Members will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite honey.

Club Activities

Upcoming:

To be Determined...

Past Activities:

Oct 6th – McHenry County Historical Society 10 am – 2 pm

Oct 6th – The Far Field Nature Preserve in Barrington 1 pm – 4 pm

Sept 8th – History Day and Antique & Artisan Market in Lake Zurich 12 pm – 6 pm



2024 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen

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Vice President – Ryan Harrison

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Secretary – Kristen Mueller

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Program Chair – Larry Krengel

Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Robin Tibbits

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 adfhoneymail@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

**The queen marking color for
2024 is Green.**

