



# *SWEET STUFF*

NIBA NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2024

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Hello,

It's hard to believe that we're already into the month of September! Beekeeping this year has been like other years for some and unlike others have seen before. Being able to change by what you see in your hives will help you do what's best for your bees and yourself. If you're on track, many of you will have extracted the honey in your supers and have done a mite check and if warranted be treating your hives.

The month of August was a very busy month for NIBA. We started the month out by having a booth at the McHenry County Fair. The following week we had our Illinois State Bee Inspector Brittany Buckles go through the mentor hives and give us a presentation at our meeting. Our hives looked pretty good overall, we were concerned that the hive that had EFB earlier in the summer was behind but it was full of bees and seemed very strong. It was nice to have lots of members there to watch her do inspections, Brittany allowed us to go through the hives and talk about what we saw as we went through the hives. I felt it was a good learning experience.

On Saturday August 24<sup>th</sup> NIBA did an extraction session in the farm garage to extract the honey from the mentor hives. I was unable to be there so a big THANK YOU to Ralph, Ryan, Al, Jamie and Jerry for your help!

We're coming up to the busy time of year for us as NIBA members. We will be voting for the NIBA member of the year soon, think of someone who has helped you this past year and submit a nomination for that person. We've had a low number of nominations in years past so please start thinking about someone who has helped you personally or someone who does a lot for NIBA.

We will be holding the NIBA elections in November. If you're interested in running for office or in being a director, please let one of the officers know. If you're curious about being on the Board and have questions about the time commitment or what is required, please reach out to a Board member so you can get those answers. I'm trying to appoint a small group of people that will talk to people about the election and who members who are interested in running for office can contact. Directors are appointed by the Board so that will happen after the new Board is in place.

Have a prosperous September!

Tom



## Pictures from the Extraction Day Mentor Session.



## Chores of the Month – September 2024

*Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.*

John Leibinger

### ***What's happening in the hive?***

**You will observe that the colony population will start to decline noticeably this month.** There will, however, still be significant brood rearing going on as the nurse bees work to raise the 'winter bees' (diutinus bees) that will carry the colony through the winter. Though they appear the same on the outside, winter bees are physiologically different from the worker bees raised in spring and summer. They have more fat bodies which produce the vitellogenin that is crucial to their long lives. These bees are very important bees for the survival of the colony, so do all you can to assist them through their wintery journey. That means leaving or providing them with sufficient stores to overwinter, providing them protection against robbing, providing protection against mouse infiltration, providing protection against wind infiltration in the hive, and helping prevent disease by controlling the ever present Varroa mite.

**You are likely observing the Fall 'Ousting of the Drones'.** Don't confuse this with robbing. A small group of workers will be ganging up on a drone, dragging him to the edge of the bottom board and dumping his lazy, freeloading carcass over the abyss (drama added for the smiles of our ever increasing female beekeeper population).

**You may notice a significant change in the odor (not a pleasant change) of your hives (second or third week of Sept, historically)** This is very common, and is a result of goldenrod nectar foraging. FYI, I was just out observing my hives (Sept 1) and pollen is coming in quite frequently. Great food for the winter bees being raised. Life is good in the beehive!

**You may well be seeing robbing occur.** With continued good weather, we may experience a Fall nectar flow primarily from goldenrod and asters, but as the month progresses, food sources will become more lean and opportunistic robbing may occur. Weak hives are most susceptible, so consider combining a weak hive with a stronger one to help the combined colony make it through winter. If successful, you can split the hive in early Spring to increase your colony count.

A robbing event can not only kill a colony, but can destroy drawn out comb which is, arguably, the most valuable resource you have in the hive.

**Expect to find your bees have developed some 'attitude' as we get into the month.** Reduced resources not only lead to robbing behaviors but also defensive behaviors. Dress accordingly.

### ***For All Beekeepers, it is time to:***

**Finalize your annual harvest if you haven't already.** Let the bees collect and store some natural fall food after your harvest by returning a wet super to the hive. If you have sufficient stores already you can return wet supers to the hives to allow the bees to clean them up. Place the wet super above the inner cover and below the outer cover.\*

Some beekeepers recommend putting an empty super between the inner cover and the wet super to add additional space. Either way works. This has a twofold benefit. First, the bees can pull the remaining honey from the wet super and store it in the boxes below. Second, it gets the super frames cleaned and dried and in most cases repaired and ready for winter storage. You may be surprised at what a nice job they do.

Alternately, you can store your supers wet (directly from the extractor). Pros: Bees are quick to utilize these supers the following year. Cons: Can be messy to store. Must take steps to mitigate problems from pests.

\*Beware the possibility of promoting robbing when doing this. Seal off any outside entrance from the inner cover. Don't use a ventilated inner cover when doing this.

**A tip from member Carl Christiansen:** If you have supers with frames that are partially filled, consider placing them under the brood boxes. The bees will remove the honey/nectar from that lower super and bring it up into the upper box(es).

**Bottle and label your harvest.** Sell some, give some to friends and family, prepare some Holiday gifts, **donate some to your favorite bee club** for fund raising.

**Monitor Varroa Mite levels and take action if needed** (See Honey Bee Health Coalition link in General Info section for guidance on treatment. Also see links for references to mite checking procedures).

It is very important to get the mite loads under control now. Actually, it is a bit late, but better a bit late than never. The brood that will be raised as winter bees are in process. Help them out. Pay attention to labeling instructions when using treatments and be mindful of temperature ranges for various types of treatments.

There is a new varroa mite treatment that has just come to market. It is approved in Illinois and Wisconsin among a number of other states. It is Varroxsan and is manufactured by Vita Bee. It is an oxalic acid extended release(OAE) product that comes in cardboard(ish) strips saturated in a glycerin/oxalic acid solution. Application is 1 strip for every 2.5 frames of bees. It is relatively safe and easy to apply. It has a two year shelf life. It is a 42-56 day treatment and does not require immediate removal of the strips after treatment. Testing has shown a 95-97% efficacy.

I am enthused about getting them installed in the first or second week of September. A benefit I envision for this time of year is protection throughout the robbing season. This product will NOT prevent or reduce robbing but it does offer another benefit of protection. This time of year bees are looking for resources and if your bees have an opportunity to rob a weak, varroa infested hive within their foraging range they will enthusiastically take it. Mites from those weak hives will want to latch on to your bees for the chance to leave a dying host colony to go to a stronger host colony. It's a matter of their survival. Won't those phoretic mites be in for a surprise when they enter your 'hive in treatment' to find out they have just been given a free ride to MITE HELL. Since this treatment can last 42- 56 days that will take your colony protection into mid to late October, by which time robbing activity has generally ceased. Sounds like a decent plan. We'll have to wait and see how it plays out.

Anyway, that's my plan. Your specific approach will be influenced by your personal goals and philosophy, but, if you have a mite problem, doing nothing is not an acceptable answer if you want your colonies to survive and thrive and come out of winter as healthy bees raring to go for 2025. This is a great step towards sustainable beekeeping.

**Be very aware of robbing.** It happens quickly and can be devastating. Reduce entrance openings to the smallest size on your entrance reducers, or alternately, install robbing screens. There are many types of robbing screens, some very simple and some a bit more 'inventive'. Check the internet for robbing screens and you will get an abundance of ideas. You will have to use your judgement on the direction you take. Be aware that robbing is not just honey bee to honey bee, but oftentimes involves wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets. If you are inclined to use a yellow jacket trap, do not place it immediately adjacent or on top of your hives as it may tend to draw more yellow jackets to your hives and cause greater problems.

**Add mouse guards (probably late in the month).** Nights will start to cool off soon and mice will be looking for warm, dry spaces to make fall and winter nests. Don't let that be your hives.

**Check your hives for honey stores.** Consider moving existing full frames of honey to outer edges and partially filled towards the center to allow bees easier access to filling them. Do not break up/ separate the brood nest to accomplish this.

**Start feeding and don't stop until they stop taking it.\*\*** Use a 2:1 sugar to water syrup mix. Check your feeders often enough to keep them filled. Avoid using Boardman type feeders this time of year to reduce inducing robbing.

\*\* If they still seem to be consuming by late October (yes, I know I am forward projecting) you may want to stop. They will need time to reduce the moisture content of the syrup before winter sets in.

## General Info

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)

[The Honeybee Health Coalition Varroa Decision Tool](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Hive Inspection Checklist](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Sugar Roll Method: [varroa mite monitoring - The Sand Hill](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Alcohol Wash Method: [Alcohol Wash for Mite Control - YouTube](#) (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.

## ROBBING SCREENS



## MOUSE DAMAGE



## MOUSE GUARDS



## 2024 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Robin Tibbits

## Website and Newsletter Submissions

[www.nibainfo.org](http://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!

[reevesthere@gmail.com](mailto:reevesthere@gmail.com)

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](mailto: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](mailto:adfhone@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.**

