

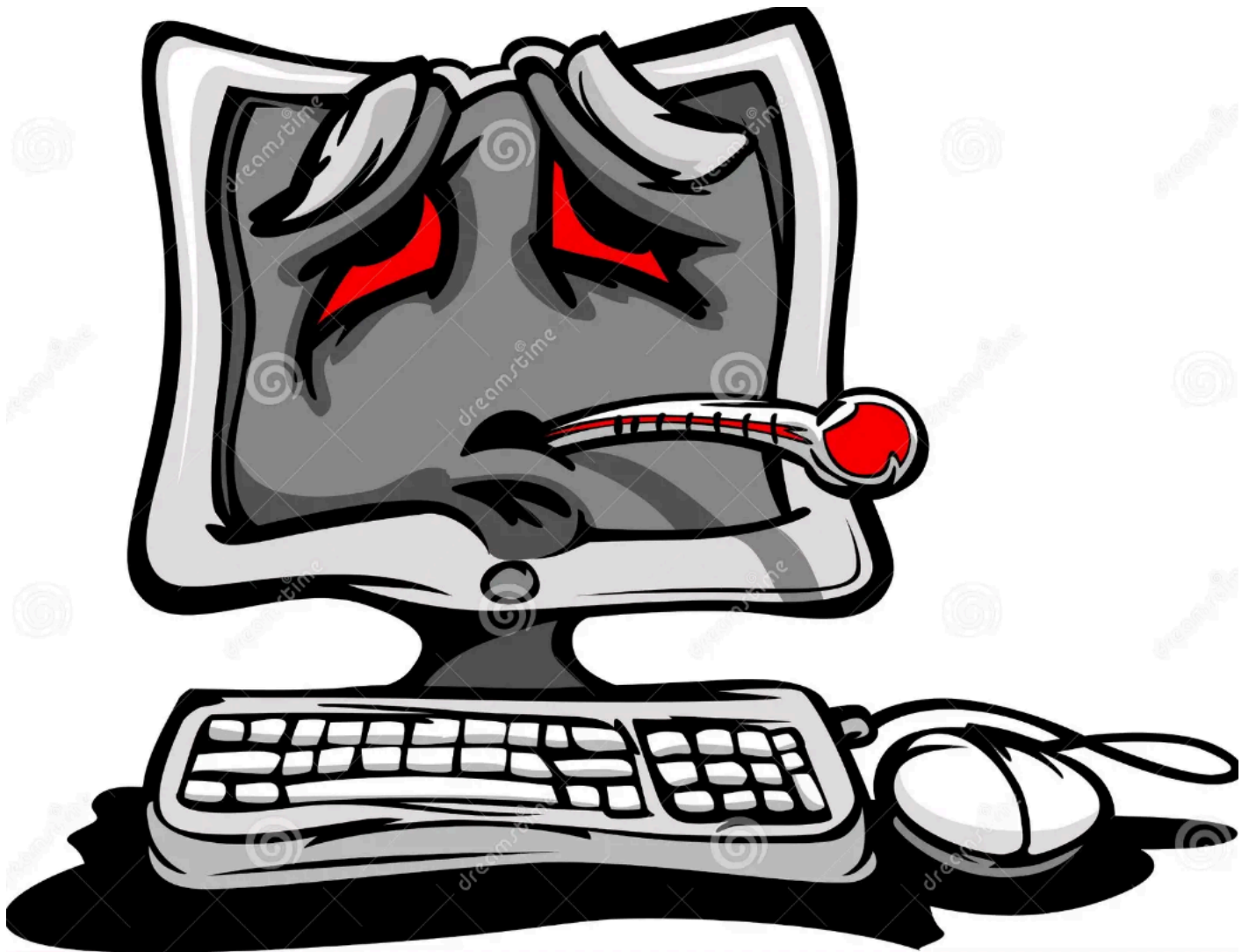


SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen



Having computer issues.
I hope to see you at the February meeting.

Tom



Buzz into Spring:

Community Bee Swap Meet

Whether you are a seasoned commercial beekeeper or just starting your first hive, come join us for a day of networking, trading and all things bees! *You don't need to be a member to attend!*



Event Details:

When: Saturday, February 28, 2026

Time: 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM

Where: McHenry County Farm Bureau

1102 McConnell Road

Woodstock, IL 60098



What to expect:

Buy, sell, and trade any beekeeping equipment

"The hum of the bees is the voice of the garden."

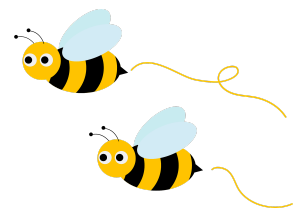
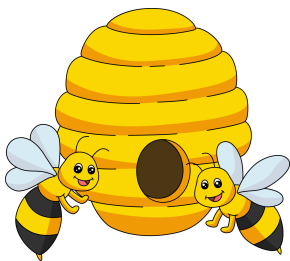
Prepare your apiary for a successful 2026 season!

Hosted by Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association



NIBA Beekeeper of the Year 2025

Congratulations to Al Fullerton who is the recipient of this year's NIBA Beekeeper of the Year Award. Al always goes above and beyond to help out the club. All of his talents are greatly appreciated





A New Season with Old Challenges

Greeting Beekeepers

We will be revving up for varroa mite control shortly. There have been a couple of new additions to our varroa armory.

Recently the extended release oxalic acid strips – VarroXSan – which provides a multiweek slow oxalic application as compared to the “shock” treatment of vaporizing or dribbling. Easier on the bees and easier application for the keeper. Directions from the manufacturer can be found at [VarroXSan: Varroa Control - Vita Bee Health](#). Thoughts on its use -

- 4 strips per 10 brood frames (1 strip per 2.5 frames of bees).
- Fold each strip and drape over a brood frame.
- Remove after 42–56 days.
- Best used summer–autumn and permitted with supers on.
- Works best when bees are active and temps are above ~60°F.

Best to read the real product label carefully before use.

A second varroa mite treatment just coming on the scene is Norroa – “the varroa birth control”. There is still much we do not understand, but it has just been approved by the USDA and Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Researchers developed this hormone-based reproduction inhibitor that prevents female Varroa mites from producing viable offspring. Instead of killing mites directly, it disrupts their fertility, breaking the reproductive cycle inside capped brood. There is still much to be learned about this varroa treatment, but it seems appealing. Here are some of the pluses in this new treatment –

- No vaporization
- No temperature restrictions
- No brood break required
- No residues in honey or wax (?)
- No known cross-resistance with current miticides
- Compatible with IPM programs
- **Potentially** safe with supers on

Stay tuned. There is still much to be learned.

So... how to deal with varroa? There is a long menu. The best guide is available online for free from the Honey Bee Health Coalition - [HBHC-Guide_Varroa-Mgmt_8thEd-082422.pdf](#).



The current guide is the 8th edition. The ninth is available soon.

In the 1990's when varroa became a factor in American beekeeping some beekeepers refused to deal with the varroa mite infestation because they wanted to preserve their hives as a pure sanctuary for their bees. The intent was noble, but the results were devastating. If you ignore varroa infestation your bees will die. Today, we have an ever-increasing toolbox for mite control. Our matured understanding of the varroa has given us an edge. Don't ignore the danger. We have synthetic chemical treatments (e.g. Apistan), natural treatments (e.g. thymol and organic acids), management treatments (e. g. brood breaks and splits), and now the birth control pill. The choices are many and can fit the beeyard philosophy of most. Time to get ready for the upcoming varroa battle.

Larry

P. S. On April 8 I will be offering a one-evening class at McHenry County College, in person or online, entitled *The Varroa Mite -Know Your Enemy*. Check it out, the [Varroa Mite - Know Your Enemy - McHenry County College](#). LK

P. P. S. Not on the Beeline (my once-in-a-while blog) and would like to join in? Use this QR code to join up. Happy to have you on board. LK



COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER SPRING 2026

McHenry
County College

BEEKEEPING

Beekeeping 101

Keeping honeybees is fascinating. Bees will pollinate your garden and provide a sweet crop of honey. In this class, you will learn where to start as a keeper of bees. We'll cover bee biology, modern beekeeping techniques, construction of hives, and how to acquire bees. Keep bees for the fun of it, as a sideline job, or to help your garden and orchard.

Fee: \$75

Larry Kregel

In person

[12873](#) W 2/4-2/25 6:30-9 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[12874](#) W 2/4-2/25 6:30-9 p.m. Remote

7 Ways To Raise A Queen

The number of small-scale beekeepers is increasing, and the demand for locally raised queen bees is growing. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized honeybees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. Gain information and learn seven simple methods of raising healthy honeybee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production.

Fee: \$25

Larry Kregel

In person

[12889](#) W 3/4 6:30-9 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[12890](#) W 3/4 6:30-9 p.m. Remote

Comb Honey

Comb honey is old fashioned honey harvested in the bees own wax case. A hundred years ago honey was removed from the hive and eaten in the comb. Today, extracted honey (honey in the jar) is the norm. This course is an opportunity to return to the old (and some contend the healthiest) way of harvesting honey. Producing honey in the comb is a beekeeping challenge, an old fashioned challenge explored in this class.

Fee: \$25

Larry Kregel

In person

[12891](#) W 3/11 6:30-9 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[12892](#) W 3/11 6:30-9 p.m. Remote

Beekeeping Field Study

This short course will provide practical, hands-on instruction for installing, manipulating, and inspecting colonies of bees. The class will meet in a bee yard, so appropriate clothing and bee equipment will be necessary. Spring is the time to start with bees, and this course will walk you through it step by step. Learn what you need to know to start out right with your bees.

Fee: \$59

Larry Kregel

[12906](#)

Sa 4/11, 4/18 10 a.m.-Noon

MCC

[12907](#)

Sa 4/11, 4/18 1-3 p.m.

MCC



To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact the Community Enrichment Center at personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu or (815) 455-8758

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER SPRING 2026

McHenry
County College

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.

Fee: \$25

Larry Krengel

In person

12893

W 4/8

6:30–9 p.m.

Catalyst Campus

Remote

12894

W 4/8

6:30–9 p.m.

Remote

The Sweet Life: A Buzz-Worthy Look into the World of the Honey Bees

Join us for a delightful journey into the fascinating world of honey bees! We'll explore the secret lives of these industrious little creatures, uncovering how they create the delicious honey we all love. From the Queen Bee's royal duties to the amazing teamwork of the worker bees, we'll learn about their incredible communication, their vital role in our ecosystem, and simple ways we can help them thrive. This presentation is full of fun facts and amazing stories about bees.

Fee: \$15

Larry Krengel

13501

F 1/16

10–11:30 a.m.

Remote

Buzzing Beauty: DIY Beeswax Lip Balm Workshop

Join us for a hands-on workshop where you'll learn to create your own natural lip balms using beeswax. Discover the benefits of beeswax and explore a variety of essential oils and natural ingredients to customize your balms. This workshop will cover the entire process, from melting and mixing to pouring and packaging, ensuring you leave with your own personalized lip balm to take home. Perfect for beginners and anyone interested in natural skincare, this fun and informative session will have you crafting your own lip care products in no time. All materials will be provided.

Coming soon.

Stephanie Slater

Honey Tasting: A Sensory Analysis of Honey

Honey takes a long journey before it lands in your jar. The final product can be affected by many variables, including the local climate, botanical sources and the honeybees who visit them, and the activity of beekeepers. In this class, we will study varietal honeys using our senses of sight, smell, taste, and touch to fully appreciate the selection of these honeys. We will approach honey tasting as a sensory journey as we review at least five varietal honeys and compare their flavors and profile differences. We will also review and discuss: a Honey Sensory Wheel and how that impacts fragrances within the honey; how to more finely tune our senses to appreciate our local varietals of honey; how honeys acquire certain aromas that often differ from what we would expect; methods of tasting the full balance of flavors of these honeys; how to appreciate the different textures of honey and their impact on our taste buds; and sample 20+ varieties of handcrafted local honeys (creamed, infused, raw, and barrel-aged) and other honey-based products (honey sauces, mustards, and honey hot sauces). Students will receive their own Honey Sensory Booklet for future tastings.

Coming soon.

Frank Moriarty



To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact the Community Enrichment Center at personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu or (815) 455-8758



NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

2026 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

- Check one: ☐ Renewal Individual Membership - \$20 ☐ Renewal Family Membership - \$30
- Check one: ☐ **NEW** Individual Membership - \$25 ☐ **NEW** Family Membership - \$35
- (Includes Single Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, additional ISBA memberships, \$10 each)

If applying after February 28, 2026, and you are a renewing member, please add \$5.00.

| | | |
|--|--------|------|
| Name(s): | | |
| Address: | | |
| City: | State: | Zip: |
| Phone: | | |
| Email address (if family membership, include all emails. Newsletter will be sent to all emails): | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

- ☐ Yes, I would like to order a NIBA name tag(s), add \$16.95 per order (which includes postage).

Name tag(s) should read as follows (please print clearly):

Please tell us more about yourself:

I sell honey ___ willing to Coach/Mentor ___ Swarm Catcher ___ willing to remove Bees from buildings ___

Personal skills I would be willing to donate to NIBA (i.e. Beekeeping experience, accounting, webmaster, event planning, community education, carpentry, legal, business management, retail knowledge, other)

Complete this form and mail with **check payable to: NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NIBA)**

TO: NIBA Membership, c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050



NIBA 2026 PACKAGED BEE ORDER FORM

ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 15, 2026



| | | | |
|-----------|--|---------|--|
| *Name(s): | | *Phone: | |
| *Email: | | | |

***Required Fields**

Please read and initial below – checks will be returned if not initialed.

The undersigned acknowledges that NIBA will transport bee packages from the supplier in Wisconsin to a drop-off point in Illinois. The undersigned agrees that NIBA is not responsible for any damage to the bees or cages during the transport and distribution of the same. The undersigned understands that he/she remains at all times, free to order and pick-up bees from alternate suppliers of their choice.

I agree with the above statement regarding NIBA's Packaged Bee delivery: _____ INITIAL HERE

NIBA is pleased to offer this group bee order as one of the benefits of membership. Therefore, your 2026 NIBA dues must be paid prior to your order being processed, **please use separate checks for bee orders and membership**. Mail your membership forms to the designated address. We will return orders received from non-members. We will order 250 packages of bees and 100 nucleus colonies (NUCs). **Orders will be taken on a first-come first-served basis until all 350 units are sold.**

- Package Price: \$150 each- package contains approximately 3 pounds of bees and a queen.
- 5-Frame NUC Price: \$ 177 each
- Queens \$40 each

Order Information:

My package order preference is given below. I understand the actual delivery timing is determined by many factors including weather and producer availability.

| Order Type | Quantity | Queen Preference/Quantity | Price per unit | Total |
|---|----------|--|------------------------|-----------|
| 3 LB Package Pick Up (Targeting early/mid-April) | | Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____ | \$150.00 | \$ |
| Nucleus Colony Pick Up (Targeting Mid/late April) | | Italian Only _____ | \$177.00 | |
| Mated Queens | | Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____ | \$40.00 | \$ |
| | | | Grand Total Due | \$ |

Make checks payable to Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association (NIBA)

Queen selection provides club direction only; the club will receive queens as provided by producers. I understand queens are available on a first-come first-served basis and I may not receive the queen of my preference indicated above: _____ **INITIAL HERE**. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, but queen availability is determined by package suppliers. You may mix and match your queens.

The exact date and time for delivery and pickup will be communicated via the email address above. If you do not have email, you will be contacted at the phone number you provided above. **Orders must be picked up on day of delivery, NO EXCEPTIONS. You must designate someone else to pick them up if you are unavailable.**

Complete and mail order form and check (**NO CASH PLEASE!!!**) payable to: **NIBA** c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050. Contact Sue at spinkawa@gmail.com or (815-355-4630) - with any questions.



Chores of the Month – February 2026

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in and around the hive?

There has been pretty light snow again this year and the only snow in the forecast is around two weeks out as we near Valentine's Day. Very similar to last year. The temperature trend seems to be normalizing for now, which is a welcome relief after the extended freeze we experienced in January. Our winter, so far, has been a bit tough on the bees with the long period of single digits/sub zero temps. Healthy overwintering colonies have likely started raising small quantities of brood for the coming year. Checking on their stores via hefting the hives or should we get a warm day (50 degrees+) later in the month, a quick peak inside may be warranted. Their consumption of stores will ramp up SIGNIFICANTLY as they work to keep brood warm. Late in the month, *if we are blessed with some warmer weather*, some early pollen from willows and maples may be available for early foragers. This fresh pollen along with pollen and bee bread stored in combs will lead to greater ramping up of brood production. The brood will require warmth so the bees will be consuming even more stores (carbohydrates) for the energy they will require to produce the needed heat.

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

Monitor the food stores available to your colonies. Hefting the back of the hive may give you an idea of the amount of stores still available. A peek inside on a warm day may provide additional insight. A sign that the bees may be in need of feed is their location in the hive. If they have worked their way to the top box, just under the inner cover, they may have consumed all the honey in their pathway and may need assistance. On a warmer day, you can check for honey on frames adjacent to the outer edges of the cluster. You may be able to do this visually or you can carefully run your hive tool down this seam scraping against the adjacent comb. If the hive tool comes out with honey on it, there is food the bees should be able to access. If not supplement with sucrose based feed, e.g. dry sugar, sugar bricks, winter patties, fondant, candy board, etc., to help them through the remaining winter. It won't hurt to err on the side of adding too much feed. **Don't let your bees starve! It is preventable.** Later in the month, providing pollen/pollen sub or pollen patties may provide supplemental needed protein for brood development.

Check for activity at the hive on warmer days. Have they been taking cleansing flights? Don't be alarmed at seeing some dead bees on the snow outside the hive. These are bees that likely left the hive for a cleansing flight and were too weak (or they chose a day that was a bit too cold for them) to make it back. This is not necessarily a bad sign. It is a sign that there are likely live bees inside still. If your entrance is plugged up with dead bees, scrape them out to clear the opening so that others can get out for cleansing flights (put back reducers and mouse guards afterwards). Though you may scrape out a lot of dead, don't panic, it doesn't necessarily mean the colony is dead. Someone pushed them to the front in an effort to clean out the hive, so there is/was life inside. If we have a day in the 50s you should see some flying activity. This is not always true, but if you don't see anything, it warrants further investigation, particularly if you are needing to get an order for Spring bees put together.

Consider spending some winter downtime setting up a spare hive with new equipment or some you have recently cleaned up.

Then, when you have a reasonably warm day in late April or early May to do your first complete inspection, you can position this spare equipment next to one of your overwintered colonies and methodically transfer the frames from old to 'new'. While doing your inspection, this gives you an opportunity to evaluate all the frames and replace some as you see fit. It also provides the opportunity to rotate frames from top box to bottom if that is part of your management process. Maybe the colony strength is such that you will downsize to a single box while the colony develops (or continue the season under a single brood box management approach). Anyway, after making the transfer of the first colony to the fresh 'new' box(s), clean up their last year's equipment and repeat the process with your next overwintered colony.

NOTE 1: Be very observant for any signs of disease before making the woodenware transfers.

NOTE 2: Be sure to transfer the frames with brood in the same order/positions that they were positioned in original hive.

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:



Read, Study, and Learn....Books, Periodicals, Classes, Club Meetings, Podcasts, Internet videos (yes, that also means YouTube videos, they range from poor to great....reading, attending classes and club meetings and asking questions will help you learn which are good and which are not). All of these resources will help.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. You may want to start with mentoring via email, text, phone calls, or for the more tech savvy, video calls before the season starts. Just be aware that there are beekeepers interested in helping other beekeepers. As my beekeeping therapist says...the first step is to ask for help.

Order your equipment, tools, and protective clothing. Try to start with a minimum of two hives. It allows for comparisons. Understanding what 'Normal' behavior is in a colony of bees is an important skill to acquire. Multiple colonies allow you to learn this faster. Multiple colonies also allow you to share resources between colonies if needed (potentially very important)more on this as the year progresses.

Order your Bees. Try to start with a minimum of two hives...see above. Don't get too hung up on bee race/stock, i.e., Italian, Carniolan, Russian, Buckfast, etc., they are likely mutts anyway (forgive the sarcasm). Packages or nucs (nucleus colonies)? There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Ask questions and listen to the reasoning provided. For new beekeepers, a nuc provides you with a developed working colony (albeit small) along with some drawn comb which greatly enhances early spring survival. On the other hand, packages offer the opportunity to observe the process of a hive and colony development from ground zero. Keep in mind there are lots of ways to keep bees and whoever you ask will likely have a bias, so it is just an opinion**here is mine:** since you should start with multiple colonies, get at least one of each and learn something. You will get to experience installing both types. You will get to see the development of each type. If circumstances dictate only getting one colony, it will be safer to get a nuc with the drawn comb. It will allow for the greatest chance of success and higher likelihood of getting a first year honey crop. Next year you can pass on your experience/bias and learnings to the next 'Newbee'.

Assemble and paint your equipment. It's fun and can be creative....on the painting side at least. Don't get too creative on the assembly of equipment. Follow the instructions. The bees will appreciate it.

Start thinking about the location of your apiary.

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

Breakdown the dead-outs. Pick a pleasant day and start the cleanup process...Doing it early, before much warmth and moisture occurs, will make an unpleasant job less unpleasant and much less smelly.

Don't just clean things up. **TRY TO LEARN SOMETHING** from your loss. See if you can determine what caused the problem so you can avoid repeating the problem in the coming year. Are there no bees at all? Did they abscond late in the Fall? Why? Possibly a failed queen? Mite overload? There is a high likelihood of a mite related problem if you did not rigorously pursue mite load reduction in a timely fashion last year. Starvation? Look for signs. Take some pictures at several different angles. Consider sharing pictures of a frame or two (brood frames) at your next club meeting. Another beekeeper with different experiences may be able to offer some insight.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Take an inventory.

A) Equipment/Supplies inventory

Make a list of what your equipment, tools, and supplies.

- Do you need to replace frames or foundation (a comb replacement program should be part of your annual routine)?
- Is your equipment in good order?
 - *Is your wooden-ware due for a paint job?
 - *Are your tools in good shape?
 - *How about your protective clothing? Have you laundered your bee wear to be ready for a new season?
- Do you have sufficient (and not expired) supplies, e.g., feed/nutrition supplements, pest/parasite controls, etc.?
- Is your current equipment sufficient to help you achieve your goals for this year (see **B.** below)?

B) Goals inventory – Very Important

What do you want to accomplish this year in beekeeping? You may have multiple goals. What are your priorities of these goals? Here are some thoughts:

- Do better than the state average honey yield per colony? More simply, increase my honey yield over last year.
- Successfully over-winter my bees.
- Successfully make a split.



- Move closer to achieving sustainable beekeeping (not having to buy new bees every year).
- Learn to create and use nucleus colonies to over-winter more colonies and increase the colonies in my apiary.
- Learn to raise my own queens.
- Learn to produce comb honey, e.g., Ross Rounds, cut comb honey, chunk honey, or section boxes.
- Learn to produce Creamed Honey.
- Learn to make Mead.
- Learn how to process and use beeswax. Make candles, lip balms, hand creams, soaps.
- Learn how to collect/process/use propolis.
- Are you interested in encaustic painting? Are you interested in creating wax art?

If you have some of these interests, raise the issue at a club meeting and propose having a sub-group session to explore the subject.

Do you need to re-evaluate your equipment to be sure you have what you need to achieve your goals (see A. above)?

C. Bee Inventory

-How many colonies do you want to start this year with? How many do you have that will overwinter? Are you sure?? A live hive in early February is a 🍌 live hive in April....we still have a couple tough months to go....don't be caught bee-less in April.

-Order as early as possible to reserve your bees. Packages or Nucs? Decisions, decisions.....

I'll leave you with this:

It is February. Get ahead of your season. Read, Study, Learn, Set Goals. Your pre-season preparation will set the tone for your success for the year. Now is the time!

Can't wait to go from this.....To this!



....and I don't mean having a colony die and go from 4 to 3!



2026 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen
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 Vice President – Ralph Brindise
rbrindise@att.net
 Secretary – Jackie Tassar
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Program Chair – Larry Krengel
 Webmaster – Terri Reeves
 Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa
 Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton
 Club Raffle Coordinator – Jim Jellissen
 Snack Coordinator – Julianne Anderson

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 2026 is White

