

"Promoting the Craft, Science, and Future of Beekeeping since 1947"

# THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association



## ISSUE: Winter 2020

Editor: Laura Miller

## A BETTER YEAR TO SURVIVE & THRIVE: CIBA WINTER BEEKEEPING SEMINAR

**Saturday, January 16 Noon to 4:30 p.m.**

**Join us via Zoom! Open to everyone!**

Hear from nationally known experts, learn about regional opportunities for beekeepers, talk to our state apiarist and connect with other beekeepers. No need to register. Details inside.

## UPCOMING MEMBER MEETING INFO

**Saturday, March 27 6:30 p.m. (NOTE NEW DATE)**

**Ellen Bell, Spring Management in Beekeeping**

This will be our annual election of officers and directors. Program to begin at 7:30 p.m. How to connect on Zoom in next BEELINE.

**Questions?** Call Program Chair Linn Wilbur,  
(515) 291-6204

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## DEADLINE TO SUBMIT ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: **February 10, 2021**

**Email:** [Beeline\\_editor@yahoo.com](mailto:Beeline_editor@yahoo.com)

### Mail Submissions to:

Laura Miller, 5920 North Swing, Ames, IA 50014

We encourage you to receive the newsletter via email; however, we understand if electronic delivery is not for you! You may make updates to your subscription by contacting Linn Wilbur, Acting Treasurer at: [lwilbur50201@gmail.com](mailto:lwilbur50201@gmail.com)

Find us on the web:

<https://centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org>

Find us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/CentrallowaBeekeepersAssociation/>

## FROM THE PRESIDENT, JAMIE BEYER

Your officers and directors met virtually on December 1 via Zoom. It really was our first meeting since the pandemic began oh-so-many months ago (eight months that felt like a lifetime!). However, we have been connecting via email and group phone conversations almost every week or two, just to keep things going.

What I can tell you is that CIBA has some VERY EXCITING things happening! I won't steal thunder from the three people who have been working hard on these special projects, but I will tell you to be sure to read this newsletter to see what Val Just and Susan Kelly have been up to. And don't overlook Linn Wilbur. He is so well organized and has super ideas when it comes to our programs. These three are dynamos when it comes to great ideas and then getting great things accomplished.

Of course, many other people work hard for our membership. I've found that it takes a team to run a successful organization, especially in these times when we cannot meet in person.

If I have not personally contacted you yet about how CIBA can better serve you, I will by the end of the year. Some of our members have not renewed their membership and I am determined to find out why. It has been a tough year, beginning with the horrific snowstorm that hindered our Winter Seminar last January. We still pulled it off but a lot of our members were not able to make it -- understandably.

Then the pandemic upset everything, especially how we connect with our members. I know that much of the value of this organization is to be able to meet and talk with other beekeepers, and a lot of that went on before, during and after our member gatherings. Doing the same thing virtually is much more difficult. But we are determined to do it better than anyone else.

Hopefully, your bees are ready for winter and this cold season will be as mild as the last one. In spite of all the bad things that 2020 brought us (derecho included), it was a good year for bees in Iowa. From all reports that I have read, the mild winter of 2019-2020 was thought to be one of the contributing factors for this success.

Wishing you much more success in 2021 – and most of all, good health and peace of mind!

Jamie

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## Editor's Document Navigation Tips

1. Table of Contents: Hover over any section of the Table of Contents, then hold the CTRL button down on your keyboard. This action will create a pointing finger image - press the left button on your mouse on any section of the Table of Contents to go directly to that section.
2. Document navigation: No matter where you are in this document, if you press the CTRL + Home buttons on your keyboard concurrently, the action will take you to the top of the Beeline. You can then scroll to page 2 to gain access to the Table of Contents to navigate the entire document using guidance in bullet number 1.



## A New Look for CIBA Website – Our Gift to You!

After hours of preparation, the new CIBA website is ready and online! If you're reading this newsletter, then we know you already have been to the site and downloaded the PDF. Consider this website CIBA's gift to you, our loyal members!



The worldwide pandemic changed life for all of us. Some of us have experienced great loss, and all of us have been cautious about gathering in groups of any size. We've had to do as much as we can in entirely different ways, and that includes involvement in organizations like CIBA.

The CIBA leadership team understands the importance of connections, especially during a pandemic, which makes us even more determined to serve our members. We decided to upgrade our website to be a better resource for our members and to the beekeeping community.

CIBA is lucky to have talented people on board and Val Just, our very capable treasurer, volunteered to take on the role of webmaster. With help from President Jamie Beyer, Vice-president Linn Wilbur and Newsletter editor Laura Miller, Val has reworked the website from the ground up.

The website uses a new platform, Wix, with many new capabilities. One new function is emailing our members with important information and links. That's how you received the email about this BEELINE issue. You will recognize information arriving from CIBA, as the email will indicate that the message is from Central Iowa Beekeepers Association at [centraliowabeekeepersassoc@pb07.ascendbywix.com](mailto:centraliowabeekeepersassoc@pb07.ascendbywix.com). We recommend adding this email address to your contact list so incoming emails do not go directly to your spam/junk folder.

If you respond to the incoming email, your response will be sent to [centraliowabeekeepersassoc@gmail.com](mailto:centraliowabeekeepersassoc@gmail.com), which is monitored by Val. Sometime in 2021, there also will be a "members-only" section where information is available exclusively for members of CIBA. More to come on this wonderful new feature!

We need information from you, our members, for two new sections of the website. We have a page for anyone requesting a speaker relative to beekeeping or honey bees. We have talented members who offer presentations, so please let us know who you are, what you present, type of audience and if you charge a fee. Another page features community engagement by CIBA members. We know many members give back to their community relative to bee-related activities. Please tell us so we can recognize your work!

We know that any project of this size is a "work in progress." We'll be revising and polishing and expanding the site over the next six to nine months, so please be patient with us! We invite you to spend some time and explore the new site. We want to hear from you with other ideas, changes or comments. Val can be reached at [centraliowabeekeepersassoc@gmail.com](mailto:centraliowabeekeepersassoc@gmail.com) or you can contact Jamie, [beyersbog@aol.com](mailto:beyersbog@aol.com), Linn at [lwilbur50201@gmail.com](mailto:lwilbur50201@gmail.com), or Laura at [lwmill0@gmail.com](mailto:lwmill0@gmail.com).

## CIBA Business

### Call to Action: Send Us Your 2021 Dues

Time really does fly, and it is that time of year again to decide whether you want a single or a family CIBA membership. Membership in CIBA runs on a calendar year, January 1 to December 31, so please renew your 2021 membership and pay dues as soon as possible!

As a reminder, you must be a current member to participate in the election of officers and directors which will take place at our **March 27** meeting (note change in date). Dues remain the same: \$10 for a single membership and \$15 for a family membership (members must reside at the same address).

Val Just, our hard-working treasurer since 2017, will be taking over CIBA website duties so dues now can be sent to CIBA Vice-President Linn Wilbur, who is acting secretary/treasurer.

Find the membership form in this *BEELINE* to print, complete and send via USPS to Linn Wilbur, Acting Sec/Treasurer, 64626 170th Street, Nevada, IA 50201-7653. Or download a PDF on our website that you can complete on your computer and send via email on our website's membership page, <https://www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/membership> and send the check to Linn. We are working on a way to make electronic payments but for now we only accept cash (*in-person only/do not mail*) or a check payable to CIBA.

## What You've Been Waiting For: Details for the CIBA Winter Beekeeping Seminar



### A Better Year to Survive and Thrive Winter Beekeeping Seminar



**Sponsored by  
Central Iowa Beekeepers Association  
and  
University of Nebraska Lincoln Bee Lab**

**January 16, 2021  
Zoom Meeting  
12:00 noon to 4:30 PM (Central time)**

Free of charge/Open to the Public

Zoom Meeting opens at 11:45 AM on January 16, 2021 and join at  
<https://unl.zoom.us/j/96429149069?pwd=Vm1MUlkyb2ZUU1N6b0krMjRmY1ptdz09>

Meeting ID: 964 2914 9069  
Passcode: CIBAwinter

#### **Speakers:**

**Dr. Larry Connor**, Wicwa Press, Kalamazoo, MI  
*Keeping Bees Alive – Sustainable Beekeeping Concepts*

**Ray Olivarez**, Olivarez Honey Bees, Inc., Orland, CA  
*Queens and Package bees by Olivarez Honey Bees: Selecting queens and problems and solutions in queen and package bee introduction*

**Dr. Judy Wu-Smart**, UNL Bee Lab  
*Winter Dead Outs and What Dead Bees Can Tell Us*

**Andrew Joseph**, Iowa Apiarist, IDALS  
*Iowa's Beekeeping Year in Review: State of the state*

**Sheldon Brummel**, UNL Bee Lab  
*Great Plains Master Beekeeping 2021*

This is the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association (CIBA) January meeting.  
CIBA meets every other month throughout the year.

Visit the CIBA website for additional Zoom connection options, speaker bios, agenda, and speaker times at  
<https://www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org>

Please join us for this virtual winter seminar during this difficult year to meet in person. CIBA hopes, as in the past, to have our next annual face-to-face Winter Seminar in March 2022.  
Until then, this has to do. Questions, call Linn Wilbur, (515) 382-4882

Thanks to the UNL Bee Lab for technical assistance and co-sponsoring this event.



## Something for Your Calendar: March Member Meeting

Submitted by CIBA Program Committee

### March CIBA Virtual Meeting, 6:30 PM Saturday, March 27, 2021

Note: This is the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday in March

6:30 PM Business meeting including election of 2021 Officers and Directors

(To vote requires being a CIBA member in good standing by meeting date; 2021 membership application is in this BEELINE).

7:30 PM Speaker: Ellen Bell, Bell Farms, Runnells, IA

Topic: **Spring Management in Beekeeping:** This one-hour presentation will include spring feeding practices, mite control, how to split a hive, re-queening an existing hive or providing queens to your queenless splits and managing for swarm prevention. Recommended for beekeepers of all skill levels, but especially for those with hives coming out of winter in their first several years of beekeeping.



We'll tell you how to connect in the next issue of the BEELINE.

## Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the CIBA Royalty Program

Submitted by Susan Kelly, CIBA Queen/Ambassador Committee Chair

March CIBA continues a time-honored tradition of providing ways for young people to participate in a local royalty program. We have developed our program to be a stepping-stone for competition at state and national levels by providing opportunities to gain presentation, public relations and leadership skills during his or her year of reign. Our program is open to both young men and women to participate as either a honey ambassador or a honey queen.



Here's a look at our program and how you can help!

### What is the CIBA Royalty Program?

CIBA has strongly supported honey queens who represent CIBA throughout central Iowa. Our honey queens have raised awareness about the importance of honey bees, encouraged youth and adults to become beekeepers, and shared CIBA's mission. We have had CIBA Honey Queens become the Iowa Honey Queen; a few have gone on to become the American Honey Queen and American Honey Princess.

In the last 18 months, the Queen/Ambassador Committee has worked hard to update the CIBA Royalty Program to help future queens and ambassadors succeed at educating the public through effective presentations and outreach. These updates have included written guidelines, an updated application, and an email account for the committee chair.

The committee, with the encouragement and support of the CIBA board, has actively sought candidates for a 2021 CIBA Honey Queen and CIBA Honey Ambassador. Thankfully, our current Iowa Honey Queen has a passion for local-level programs and has shared information and opportunities that exist throughout the state to become a queen or ambassador. And we'll have an **important announcement** at the CIBA Winter Seminar!

### What's ahead for this program?

COVID-19 has not stopped local, state and national honey queens from continuing to educate those around them. Those educational programs just look different this year than they have in the past. Many programs

happen online. If you have not liked and followed our Facebook page, please click the link below and follow this program. We have a lot of exciting things coming in 2021!

CIBA Royalty on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cibahoneyqueenambassador>

### How can you support this program?

Because our 2020 CIBA Auction in April was cancelled due to the pandemic, the Queen/Ambassador Committee was unable to host its Queen/Ambassador Cafe. The café, where food is sold during the day-long auction, is the primary fundraiser for the CIBA Royalty Program.

Our honey queens have been successful because they have had access to quality educational materials. The Queen/Ambassador Committee hopes to develop a library with more resources that the honey queen and honey ambassador can use in their presentations.



Maybe you have some of these materials around and don't know what to do with them? If so, our committee would gladly accept any gently used educational materials! Examples include teaching frames, easily transportable observation hives, posters, high-quality honey bee photos (maybe something you entered at the Iowa State Fair, or photos you are willing to share), or books to read during a children's story hour (information must be accurate!). A good-quality book about the care of honey bees would be a great resource to help a queen or ambassador increase her or his knowledge about honey bees.

If you're not sure whether your resource would be useful for a queen or ambassador, just ask! You can contact Susan Kelly at [CIBAQeenChair@gmail.com](mailto:CIBAQeenChair@gmail.com).

Maybe you don't have anything to donate, but still want to support this program that does so much to promote CIBA, honey bees and beekeeping. Financial donations are always accepted! Each queen or ambassador is reimbursed for expenses such as presentation supplies, teaching resources, and mileage when traveling to presentations.

Make checks payable to CIBA and mark that it is for the CIBA Royalty Program. Mail the check to Linn Wilbur, Acting CIBA Secretary/Treasurer, 64626 170 Street, Nevada, IA 50201.

Thank you for investing in the future of CIBA through this program. It has been rewarding to see young people grow through their time as CIBA Honey Queen! **You will not want to miss our big news in January!**



### Iowa Honey Bee Day

*Submitted by CIBA President Jamie Beyer*

You may be needed at the State Capitol during the upcoming legislative session to show your support for honey bees. Since 2018, the Iowa Honey Producers Association has hosted a reception for state legislators and celebration of Iowa Honey Bee Day. It is organized by our own CIBA president, Jamie Beyer.

The reception is accompanied by an Iowa Honey Bee Day Proclamation signed by the Governor each year. The proclamation highlights the importance of honey bees to Iowa agriculture and the environment. We have encouraged Iowa city and county governments to also sign proclamations about Iowa Honey Bee Day. Since 2018, more than 41 city and county governments have approved such proclamations.

Beekeepers from across the state also are encouraged to attend the reception as a time to meet their legislators and "talk bees." No one knows better the importance of honey bees and the many challenges faced by beekeepers in the state. Due to legislative scheduling conflicts, the event has not occurred on the same day each year. The pandemic also will dictate what kind of reception, if any, can occur. Stay tuned for more information as we learn about it! Contact Jamie if you want to help with this event, [beyersbog@aol.com](mailto:beyersbog@aol.com) or (515) 231-0215.



## Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship News

### News from our State Apiarist, Andy Joseph

Hello. Hello. Here's hoping this finds you all healthy. I'm writing on what would've typically been about time for the Iowa Honey Producers Association's annual meeting. I do miss seeing everyone.

It's the time of year that I am busy with apiary inspection work for those beekeepers sending their hives out west to the almonds. It's 8 p.m. and I'm writing with my jacket and hat on at our dining room table, still trying to get the chill out. It was a cold and windy one today, not the best weather for opening hives and pulling frames but I don't believe the quick checks hurt anything either. I've (not proudly) done worse to my own bees for sure.

#### **A couple late season positives**

When they look good, they've been looking really good. I have seen some nice, heavy hives recently, with big clusters through both boxes. Often enough a good amount of brood still remains, despite all the cold over, these last few weeks. Pollen sub patties and a shot of warm syrup now and then really seem to make all the difference.

For the state as a whole, we've made a good-sized honey crop. Some have produced huge crops, but it seems nearly everyone did at least better than average. Most areas of Iowa were dry to very dry this year and summertime temps were decently hot. These factors lend to productive bees bringing in the nectar. And the honey is excellent in quality. Personally, I'm convinced it's the best honey I've ever made – and I've come to believe that our Iowa honey is top notch in any year. This year, it's very dry which concentrates the sugars and gives it a good "gummyness;" it's pretty light in color and has a floral taste.

#### **A late season negative**

Can you guess it? ... Varroa. This has been a season to end a lot of "treatment-free beekeeping." And if you've been treatment-free for a couple years and your bees are all still alive and well come spring – I'd love to know about you. You're on to something good.

Dwindling/crashing hives has been a common experience this fall, even among beekeepers who had treated well this spring, got their honey off in a timely manner, and got right down to a solid late summer treatment. It seems our mite treatment products are still killing mites as a rule; it's just that the mite numbers refuse to lessen.

When we have good productive years, the mites do well, too, and sometimes it's those absolutely killer hives that go down the fastest. The bees have been continually heavily brooded, which is a good thing in and of itself, but all that capped brood makes for successful mite growth and hard for our mite treatments to be as successful as we'd hope – since the vast majority of mites in a hive are hidden and protected inside the capped pupal cells. It's been a season of repeated treatments, trying to rid those things.

This is also the season when I shift gears from being on the road daily, play some overdue catchup in the office, and then get to thinking about my beginner bee course, always a highlight of the year for me. I think I've taught a beginner class each winter for 16 years. This may be a year off from doing it... or I'll come up with something yet. Maybe if it can't happen in winter, we could do a couple beginner-aimed outdoor field days during the warm season. There's usually a way when there's a will, or something like that.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all sooner or later. Happy holidays, everyone! And take care.

#### **Mark Eimers 1952-2020**

We are sad to report the passing of Mark Eimers, rural Cambridge, on December 13 at Mary Greeley Medical Center in Ames. Mark was an enthusiastic and successful beekeeper and served as a CIBA Director from 2014 to 2017. He worked at all three of the federal veterinary labs in Ames during his career as a microbiology technician and safety officer. He is survived by his wife, Rosalie, and three adult children. He was 68 years old.



## Iowa State University Extension News

### A Word from our Extension Bee Specialist, Randall Paul Cass

This past year the ISU Bee Program worked closely with the Bee Lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to expand programming, enhance educational opportunities and overcome challenges related to social distancing that we all faced during the pandemic.

Starting in April, Dr. Judy Wu-Smart from the UNL Bee Lab and I kicked off a weekly “HapBee Hour” over Zoom to provide a virtual space for beekeeping extension and to give beekeepers across Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri bee management advice. Each week we discussed a different topic related to keeping honey bees and current research being conducted by our teams. Participants brought questions and shared photos and video from their hives to identify problems and request advice from the group. During winter, “HapBee Hour” meetings will be offered the first Friday of each month rather than weekly.

Our next meeting is January 8 from 5-6 p.m. with invited guest and UNL ag education undergraduate student Shelby Kittle who will talk about comb honey production. She also will discuss her UNL UCARE project conducted last summer that examines the role wax foundation plays in promoting efficient comb honey. (See connection information below.)

Iowa State offered a fall semester beekeeping course for undergraduates for the first time in five years. Dr. Amy Toth and I taught the class and adopted innovative ideas to provide students with hands-on learning while maintaining the social distancing restrictions posed by COVID-19. Learn more about the class:

<https://www.cals.iastate.edu/features/2020/hands-learning-bees>.

To integrate more dynamic learning and enhance coursework, educational modules from the Great Plains Master Beekeeper program offered through UNL were used in the class. Moreover, the coursework completed by students satisfy GPMB requirements, leaving each student well on the way to becoming a Certified Master Beekeeper.

The Great Plains Master Beekeeper program offers beekeepers a system of self-guided learning. Classes and educational modules are listed on the website and as beekeepers complete and report each module, they move their way through the program – from Apprentice to Journeyman, Master and Certified Master Beekeeper. Becoming a member is free and grants access to many beekeeping resources and educational videos.



*Iowa State students learn beekeeping. Photo by C.Gannon.*

The Great Plains Master Beekeeper program plans to expand its course offerings in 2021 to include more instruction about producing queens. The queen-rearing courses will cover how to select eggs, place them in queen cups, and create a finishing colony that can properly draw out and care for new queens. This is a complete course with hands on grafting, how to set up your equipment, and basics needed to set up a honey bee queen-rearing apiary. It is an advanced-level course recommended for beekeepers with more than 5 years of experience.

More about the Great Plains Master Beekeeper program: <https://gpmb.unl.edu/>

While 2020 has presented challenges for ISU Extension efforts, a little collaboration and creativity has made the ISU Bee Program stronger than ever!

#### **HapBee Hour with guest Shelby Kittle**

**When:** January 8, 2021, 5-6 p.m. CST

**Where:** Zoom Link <https://unl.zoom.us/j/92751396813?pwd=cjg5bG1qcGZcJjNMEpqN1czSFU1dz09>

**Meeting ID:** 927 5139 6813 (Passcode: H@pB33)

## **CIBA Member Contributions**

### **Beekeeping Classes to Increase Your Expertise**

*Submitted by Linn Wilbur*

By this point in our beekeeping life, most CIBA members have at least a year of beekeeping experience. No matter how many years we have been keeping bees, it doesn't mean we know it all, but many of us are now "experts" in the eyes of the uninitiated.

Besides being considered a little strange ("You enjoy getting stung?"), we become the go-to person for information on honey bees (and other winged, stinging insects that have any resemblance to a bee). Many of us are asked for advice on how to get into beekeeping. My litany when asked that question is 1) **take a beginning beekeeping course**, 2) **join a beekeeping club**, and 3) **find a mentor**.

#### **Beginning beekeeping classes**

For the first part, I refer them to the Iowa Honey Producers Association (IHPA) website at <https://www.iowahoneyproducers.org/> and direct them to the "Classes and Clubs" tab. The list normally is updated in December for classes that start in January or February of the next year. The updated list appears to be a little late this year, probably due to the pandemic. One instructor who had previously taught an in-person class was planning to go virtual this year and was still trying to figure out how the class would work. So caution people that they need to make sure the listing is for classes that begin in 2021.

For those of us who have already taken a beginning beekeeping class, I would recommend retaking such a course. The second time you hear information – after caring for your own hives – you will be amazed at how much you didn't hear or comprehend the first time. Also consider taking a course from another instructor as another perspective on the "art" form of managing bees – it is enlightening. After I got back into beekeeping after being out of it for 20-some years, I took a beginning beekeeping class four years in a row – initially twice with the same instructor and then with 2 different instructors who were commercial beekeepers. It was well worth my time and what better use of that time in the middle of winter?

#### **Advanced beekeeping courses**

If you have a few years of experience and are interested in advancing your knowledge, consider taking an advanced course. I'm not aware of any advanced classes being offered this year in Iowa but keep your eye on the IHPA web page once updated for 2021.

The University of Minnesota Bee Lab offers advanced bee courses. I have taken several of these courses in the Twin Cities and they are very good. Drs. Marla Spivak and Kim Lee along with Gary Ritter are knowledgeable and teach a beekeeping system specifically for cold midwestern climates. They are now going virtual so no need for the travel, though it was a nice winter break to spend a weekend in St. Paul. More information is at: <https://www.beelab.umn.edu/bee-squad/education/beekeeping-classes>.

I'm hearing rumors that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln may offer a virtual advanced beekeeping course along with some hands-on that might include hive time in Iowa. Keep your eye out for information from Dr. Judy Wu-Smart and the UNL Bee Lab at <https://entomology.unl.edu/bee-lab#tab3>.

#### **Master Beekeeping Program**

For those with a desire for a master certification, the Great Plains Master Beekeeping Program offers a regional Beekeeper Training and Certification. Information about this new program was presented at our 2020 CIBA Winter Seminar and is available at: <https://gpmb.unl.edu/>

#### **Iowa-Wintered Bees for Sale**

A 5-frame nuc is \$170; marked queens, \$45 each. Traits we select for our Iowa Hybrid bees: gentleness, honey production, Iowa winter hardiness, low mite counts, excellent brood pattern. To order, contact Ellen Bell, Bell Farm: (515) 707-9951 or [ellen@bellfarmiowa.com](mailto:ellen@bellfarmiowa.com).

## What to Do with All That Beeswax? Part 2

Submitted by Abigail Kelly, 2019 Central Iowa Honey Queen and 2020 Iowa Honey Queen

Greetings, fellow beekeepers! This is the final part of a series on how to use all that beeswax. In this article, I will tell you how to make Mom's Favorite Body Cream and Reusable Beeswax Wraps.

### Mom's Favorite Body Cream

This is perhaps the favorite beeswax product in our house. It does wonders for dry skin! I got my recipe out of *Honey Crafting: From Delicious Honey Butter to Healing Salves, Projects for Your Home Straight from the Hive*.

I decided to make this cream after I saw Emma Jakes, the Friendly Beekeepers of Iowa Honey Queen, make it at the Queen Day for Carly Raye, who was IHPA's 2017 Iowa Honey Queen. She sent a jar of it home with each participant and we found that it works wonders on cuts and scrapes.

I melted sweet almond oil, coconut oil and beeswax in a glass measuring cup in a pot of water on the stove. Sweet almond oil helps with wound healing and relieves eczema and psoriasis. I chose coconut oil because it is a moisturizer and may help with healing wounds. Beeswax acts as a barrier to keep in moisture while allowing the skin to breathe.

Once all ingredients were mixed together, I poured the cream into four-ounce jars and allowed them to cool. Once cool, I put the lid on the jars and labeled them.

### Beeswax wraps

These are reusable replacements for plastic wrap. I tried a couple different ways to make them. First, I cut fabric into different sizes for each wrap. I used cotton fabric and pinking shears for cutting.

The first method I tried was sprinkling beeswax, jojoba oil and resin on the cloth. I placed the cloth on parchment paper on a baking sheet. Then I "baked" the cloth in the oven at a low temperature (less than 250 degrees). This method did not work well for me.

Next, I tried melting the beeswax, jojoba oil and resin on the stove using a double boiler. Then I used a paint brush to spread the mix on the cloth, followed by "baking" the cloth in a low-temperature oven. This method worked much better. I hope to work on this process until it is perfected.

The YouTube tutorial I found most helpful was Beekeeping – DIY Beeswax Wraps by Pop's Shack. Here's the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vt0rfFhLQA&feature=youtu.be>

I hope you try making beeswax wraps. I would love to hear any tips you might have for making them!

Everything I've written about in this series would make great gifts and many are very popular among my customers. If you want something challenging, try the beeswax wraps. Be sure to let me know how everything turns out.



### Mom's Favorite Body Cream

1 cup sweet almond oil (olive oil can be substituted)  
½ cup coconut oil  
2 ounces of beeswax by weight  
½ tsp. Vitamin E oil (optional)  
15-20 drops essential oil (optional)

#### Instructions:

- Combine the oils and beeswax in the top half of a double boiler. Heat just until the wax melts. Remove from heat and continue to stir.
- Add vitamin E oil and essential oil. Stir.
- Spoon cream into a clean jar and cool.

#### Notes:

Choose a container that will be used only to make only this cream.

## Beekeeping Basics

# HELP! I NEED A QUEEN!

**(ACTUALLY, YOU  
PROBABLY DON'T)**

by MEGHAN MILBRATH



June is a lovely time in Michigan. The nectar flow is coming on strong, the threat of frost is over, and we have survived another split and swarm season. After a long winter and demanding spring, the bees have settled in to make honey, and all is finally well in the bee world. Until ... the calls for queens start coming. "Help! I need a queen!" "Do you have a queen available for IMMEDIATE pick up?" "I need a queen today!" All of these calls are coming from beekeepers who are panicked because they opened their hive during an inspection, expecting to find brood and a queen, only to see no sign of her highness, and no brood in sight. Knowing that a colony needs a queen, they aim to "fix" the hive by getting a queen as quickly as possible, and they start frantically calling around for queens. Many are distressed because they can't find someone who has single queens available for sale. If they do find one, it will usually be incredibly expensive, approaching \$100 with shipping costs.

The worst part is that all the stress and the cost are completely unnecessary. The beekeeper thinks they are taking quick emergency action to save a hive, but in reality, a colony is never "fixed" by just adding a queen. In almost all cases, the colony is either in the process of making a queen (and is totally fine without "help"), or it is so far gone that it needs more than just a queen. While jumping to purchase a queen is a normal reaction for new beekeepers, it isn't usually the correct solution for a hive that appears broodless. It is also an incredibly un-

sustainable system for keeping your bees. In this article, I'll explain why colonies commonly appear queenless during summer, and ways that you can deal with this issue without buying a mated queen.

**SITUATION 1: THE COLONY IS IN THE PROCESS OF REPLACING THE QUEEN. THERE ARE MANY SITUATIONS THAT COMMONLY LEAD TO QUEENLESS COLONIES IN EARLY SUMMER: SUPERSEDURE OF OLD QUEENS, SUPERSEDURE OF PACKAGES, AND CROWDED SWARMS.**

### SUPERSEDURE

Supersedure is the process where the bees replace queens by killing the old queen and raising a new one. Supersedure is common, standard, normal, and expected in colonies. It is a common beginner misconception that the queen will live for years and years, but in reality, most queens are replaced in under two years. In northern states, this replacement often happens right at the end of swarm season during the honey flow. Many experienced beekeepers replace queens after the honey flow every year to avoid this disruption of the honey crop. So, if you aren't requeening your colonies regularly and you have old queens going into winter, you should be prepared for the bees to replace her mid-summer the following year. Don't be surprised when your colony with an old queen goes queenless.

After the first big nectar flow is a big time for supersedure of old queens, and also of queens that arrive in packages. Based only off beekeeper phone

calls, my experience is that ¼ to ⅓ of packages will supersede the queen mid-summer. While established colonies supersede queens as a normal part of long-term colony health, my guess is that packages supersede because they aren't normal.

Bees don't do things randomly — they have cues that guide their behavior. One of their main cues is different ages of bees and brood in the hive, which the bees detect by pheromones. The workers are constantly assessing the queen this way — if a queen was good and laying consistently, then you would have all ages of bees in the hive, in the right proportions. If she was laying inconsistently, then you would have bees of random ages, and a big break in brood laying. In nature, if the bees came across this scenario of random age bees, they would know the queen was failing, and they would replace her. Think about what we get in a package — bees from all different colonies and ages just thrown together, and a queen who just starts laying at a really key time in the season. She doesn't look that great to her colony, but there is no way to politely remind the workers to give her a chance because they were in a package. The queen starts laying, and they let her go long enough to raise some brood and then replace her to remedy the "problem." Queens also get replaced if they are sick or are damaged from transport — if your package was heated at all, or she was sick, then the bees may also supersede around the same time. It is really common for packages and overwintered colonies with old queens to supersede in late spring/

early summer. It is really important to remind beginner beekeepers that this will happen so they can be prepared for supersedures.

#### SWARMING

In Michigan, by June we are out of reproductive swarm season, where overwintered colonies build up to split themselves, but we are just getting into crowded swarming season — where any colony swarms because their beekeeper has not provided them with enough space (where space = drawn comb above the brood nest). It is a really common error for beginners to underestimate the honey production of an overwintered hive. They are used to putting on boxes one at a time, as the one below slowly fills. In Michigan, like many northern states with heavy flows, you may need to add two to three honey supers at a time. If not, the bees will start to fill in the brood nest with nectar, the queen has nowhere to lay, and the colony swarms. It is easy to have a colony swarm and not notice it, as you'll have thousands of bees at this time. If your colony is completely full of nectar, you could have a post-swarm virgin running around.



*Honey between the boxes is a sure sign that the beekeeper (me) didn't put supers on early enough. Not only did I miss out on honey from this flow, but I likely shut down the queen (and put her at risk for swarming) by crowding the brood nest.*

#### SOMETHING ELSE/YOU KILLED HER

CBS (Clumsy Beekeeper Syndrome) remains a serious cause of queen injury and death. In the spring, beekeepers are doing a lot of manipulations and splits, and it is easy to roll the

queen or crush her when you are tearing apart a hive. It is always a risk that you can hurt or kill the queen in your manipulations such as spring splits, and the bees will need to replace her.

Regardless if the queen was lost to swarming, supersedure, or your deadly hive tool, the bees will work on a replacement if they have young enough larvae. Usually the bees can raise a new queen just fine, and a virgin will hatch out of the cell. Most of the time, she will come back from her mating flight and the colony will be back on track.

Where problems generally arise is when the virgin doesn't make it back from her mating flight (she gets hit by a car, eaten by a dragonfly, blown off course), and the bees don't have any more young larvae to make a new queen. In that case the colony is "hopelessly queenless." To determine if we are just queenless or hopelessly queenless, we need to look at the timing.

Most of the time when a colony goes queenless, it is able to replace the queen just fine. We tend to panic rather than wait patiently because the process often takes longer than we expect. In most of the panicked queen calls I get, the colony is fine, and it is the beekeeper's expectations that are the problem. Even worse, the colony was on its way to requeening, but the beekeeper messed it up (threw off the virgin or squished a queen cell), because they went digging in there too early. Thankfully, bees are pretty consistent, so we can use basic math to tell us when we should start to freak out about not having a queen in the hive.

First, look for brood. Remember that workers hatch out on day 21, drone brood on day 24. If you only have capped worker brood, then you had a queen 12-21 days ago. If you only have capped drone brood (that was laid by a queen — along the edges and in drone comb) then you had a queen 21-24 days ago. You may even be able to tell how old the capped brood is by the color and amount, or see larvae, giving you even more information.

#### Day 1 — Queen death — no more laying in the colony.

The bees will raise up a new queen cell, using a young larva. If the colony is swarming or superseding, they will have started the queen cell before the queen dies. In an emergency (e.g., you squished her), they will start the next day.

#### Day 8-14 — The queen emerges from her cell.

It takes 16 days for a queen to go from laid to emergence. Generally a colony starts with a young larva, so we can expect a new virgin about 2 weeks after the queen is gone. In a swarm, where they don't leave until she is capped (day 8 after the egg is laid), she will hatch out in just over a week.

#### One week after emergence (Day 15-20) — The new virgin gets ready for her mating flights.

She needs about a week to just be a virgin, eat up, and harden her wings before she goes out to mate.

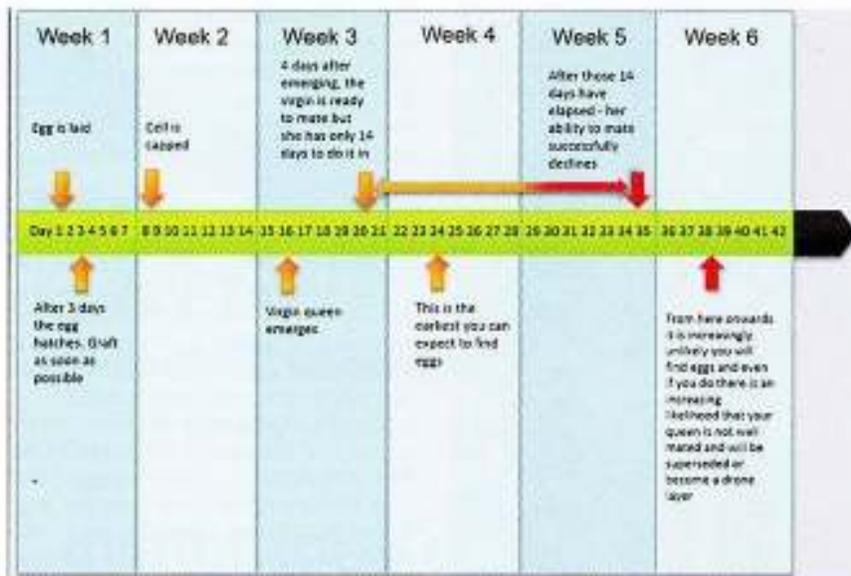
We are already 2-3 weeks out, and the queen may still need 2 weeks to get mated properly. Usually it is quicker than that, but if you have a lot of bad weather (like most Michigan springs), it can be into the second week.

This process can happen quickly (replacement after a swarm in great weather), or it can take weeks and weeks. A handy chart from Beespoke, info (next page), while written as a grafting guide, does a nice job of showing just how long it can be. It is starting to make sense why your mentors and teachers keep harping on you to take good notes, isn't it?!

Now, she is going to return, the bees will move nectar and polish the cells, and she can start laying. Remember she will only start with a small patch of eggs. If you can't normally see eggs, or you don't patiently and carefully look in the exact part of the nest where she starts, you may miss them if you search at this stage.

In the above scenario, the hive was without a visible sign of a queen for weeks, and do you know what? Everything worked out just fine. Let's say that instead of waiting, you bought and installed a mated queen. The bees would eat out the little candy plug, and then either kill her, or the virgin would kill her. She wouldn't even stand a chance, and you would have wasted a perfectly good, raised-with-love queen (and your time and money to get her). To avoid that scenario, we have to make sure the bees are not just in the process of happily re-queening themselves.

What to do if the queen is likely being replaced: Check your notes and wait. Most of the time, the replacement works out just fine. If you wait long enough it will be obvious if it worked (laying queen with good brood) or not (laying worker). See below for dealing with a laying worker colony.



<http://beespoke.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/QueenRearingTimeline.png>

**SITUATION 2: THE QUEEN IS JUST FINE, BUT THE CONDITIONS ARE NOT GOOD FOR YOU TO SEE EGGS. THIS HAPPENS WHEN THE COLONY EITHER HAS TOO MUCH FOOD (NECTAR) OR TOO LITTLE FOOD (POLLEN) IN THE BROOD NEST.**

Just because you don't see brood doesn't mean your colony is queenless. They may be in the process, as described above, or you may have a queen, but there are other reasons you don't see eggs.

**NECTAR BOUND**

Sometimes the queen will stop laying because there is nowhere for her to lay. The queen will only lay in cleaned, polished, empty cells in the brood-nest. If you don't have empty cells in the brood nest, you won't have eggs. When the nectar flow is too strong and there is no space in the honey supers to put incoming nectar, the bees put it in the brood nest. If the beekeeper adds supers in time, you may get just a temporary shut down of laying. If it is too long, the colony will swarm. Not only will you lose the queen, but the new queen will return, and won't have anywhere to lay. You can have a secondary swarm, or you'll have to wait until the bees can eat/move around the nectar. If your colony is nectar bound, you have to give them enough room to move the nectar out of the brood nest AND accommodate all the incoming nectar — this may be three boxes of drawn comb. That seems like a lot, and it is! It is a really clear example of just how far you were behind on

supering your overwintered colony! Get boxes on there as soon as you can, and mark your calendar to get your act together and get supers on your big overwintered colonies earlier next year. If you don't have drawn comb, it is much harder, because they can't just move nectar onto foundation. You can use a process called "checkerboarding" (<https://honeybeesuite.com/how-to-checkerboard-a-hive/>), but it will still take time for them to rearrange everything.

If you are impatient, your colony is nectar bound, and you want to know if you have a queen but she just doesn't have room, then add in a frame of emerging brood from another colony. As the brood emerges, the queen will have clean cells where she can start laying, and you can go back and peek to see if you have larvae in there in a week.

**NOT NECTAR BOUND, BUT NO SIGN OF BROOD**

What if you see no sign of brood in your colony, and the queen has plenty of cells in the brood nest where she could lay? You may be somewhere in the queen replacement schedule outlined above. If you don't want to wait a few weeks to see if it works out, you can do a test to determine if they are queenless. Give them a frame of eggs and young larvae from another healthy hive. If your colony is really queenless, then they will start to draw out queen cells. If they are in the process of doing it themselves, they won't draw cells, but will appreciate the bump of young bees.

**NOT ENOUGH FOOD**

Some colonies are really responsive to pollen availability. They will shut down brood rearing when there is not a lot of incoming food. This tendency varies by the strains of bees; some will ignore a dearth, and some will eat every last egg so as to not lose an ounce of protein. Before you assume you are queenless, make sure that your bees have enough protein (pollen or pollen patty).

Before you purchase a queen, make sure that the bees have enough protein and enough space to move nectar out of the brood nest. The queen needs ample room to lay, and the bees need enough food to raise the young.

**SITUATION 3: THE COLONY HAS BECOME A LAYING WORKER COLONY.**

**LAYING WORKER**

The final situation is that the queen has been gone for long enough that there is no more brood, and the workers have started to lay eggs themselves. Workers have ovaries, but their function is chemically suppressed by the presence of brood and the queen. When the colony is completely broodless and queenless, they can start to lay. Because the workers have never mated, the eggs are unfertilized and can only develop into drones. You can recognize a laying worker colony by multiple eggs in the cell (the workers are enthusiastic, but not talented at laying), and later, by scattered drone brood in cells where workers would normally develop.

A laying worker colony is genetically dead — they can't reproduce (swarming, raising new queens) to carry on their genetics as an organism. If you add a queen to this scenario, the bees will not accept her — they are too far gone. Plus, there is no mechanism for them to see a queen in a laying worker colony and think that she is okay. It isn't like a queen would just show up in a tree cavity in a little cage out in nature. Just like the package supersedure scenario, they would take one look around, and think she is doing a horrible job.

**IF YOUR COLONY IS HOPELESSLY QUEENLESS, YOU DON'T HAVE A COLONY — YOU HAVE A BOX OF BEES.**

Remember that a colony is so much more than a box of workers with a queen. It is a complex superorgan-



A typical laying worker hive. Note the "wavy" appearance of the comb as the drone brood is laid in worker-sized cells. Closer inspection would show poorly laid eggs and multiple eggs per cell. Photo by Ana Heck

ism, comprising eggs, larvae, pupae, nurse bees, house bees, and foragers. These different cohorts control and balance their behavior through a complex network of chemical signaling. As bees age, their bodies change — glands have different functions and signals. A colony that has gone through a sustained queenless period will not have all of these interacting age groups. Even if you add a queen (and they accept her), you are still a far cry from a functioning colony. If a queen were to start laying, there would be no nurse bees with fat hypopharyngeal glands to feed the young. All of the feedback loops are off, and you may not be able to get a happy functioning colony in time for raising winter bees.

If the laying worker colony is small, just add the box to another hive, or shake the bees off the frames in front of another hive. If it is big, you can combine it by placing it over a functioning colony, with a single sheet of newspaper in between the boxes. Just make sure that the bees up top have an entrance to get in and out. <https://honeybeesuite.com/how-to-combine-colonies-with-newspaper/>

You'll read in some places that you can bring it back by successively adding frames of brood, and then adding a queen. That is true, but what you have done is combined it with another colony (you added brood, nurse bees, and a queen with entirely different genetics), you just did it in

a way that was slow and highly laborious. If you really want to have the extra colony, combine it now, and make a proper split later when it is all healthy and happy. Don't try to resurrect a zombie.

#### What do I need to do to make the colony queen right and functioning (do I need to purchase a queen)?

**Be patient.** Usually the best course of action is to wait. Use the calendars above, and figure out when the very last day you could expect it to right itself would be. Write that date down, and put a note on your hive not to open it until that time. Go have a beer, build frames, watch them coming and going from the entrance, but leave them alone. If you go digging in there too early, you may not get any new information, and you may disrupt a queen cell, an agitated virgin, or a runny new queen. Let them do their thing. If your colony is hopelessly queenless (no queen and no brood), the worst has already happened. It can't get hopelessly queenless-er. If you catch it now, or if you catch it two weeks from now (even if it is a laying worker), the actions are still the same (you should combine it with a hive or nuc). There is no "catching it just in time." Either it is fine, and you will come back and there will be a queen, or it is not fine, and you will deal with it. There is no "beeemergency" situation where you need to take action today.

**Pay attention to what you see in the brood nest.** "I didn't see any eggs" is not that informative. When you look in the brood nest, where you expect to see brood do you see 1) nectar, 2) nothing, or 3) multiple eggs with spotty drone brood?

If you see nectar, then make sure they have room to which to move it. If you see nothing, then you can put a frame of brood in from a healthy colony to test for queen cells. If you see signs of laying workers, which is literally the worst case scenario, you can follow the instructions below.

Usually, if you wait, the bees just requeen and are fine. If they aren't fine, then you can add a frame of eggs, and they can try again, and then are fine. If they really aren't fine (laying worker), or you don't want to take the time for them to raise another queen, then combine them with another hive.

Remember that a colony is a super-organism. It needs to have a queen, brood of all the right ages, and all the right age worker bees (nurses, house bees, foragers, etc). Just because you have a hive with bees in it doesn't mean that you have a colony or that it needs to be saved as its own independent organism. As a sustainable beekeeper, you will always be combining and splitting, so that all your colonies are fully functioning.

If you think you are queenless:

- 1) Make sure that the hive has enough space to pull nectar out of the brood nest, giving a queen room to lay.
- 2) Record what you actually see in the brood nest (don't just say "no brood"). Is there capped brood? Drone brood? No pollen? Frames full of nectar?
- 3) Check your notes for the last time you were queen right, and look at a queen rearing calendar to figure out what you should be able to see at this point. Write down the day that you should check when you would expect to see a clear answer. Resist the urge to go digging in the hive early.
- 4) If you are an anxious person, you can add a frame of eggs and can check the next day. If the bees start to draw out queen cells, then you are for sure queenless. If they don't you are probably fine.

Meghan Milbrath is a beekeeper and honey bee and pollinator researcher and Extension specialist at Michigan State University.



# Central Iowa Beekeepers Association (CIBA) 2021 Membership

## Membership Dues Information

- ✓ Membership dues run on a yearly calendar schedule of January 1 through December 31.
- ✓ Dues are payable at the beginning of each new calendar year.
- ✓ **Make checks payable to CIBA.**

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## SELECT ONE

- New membership
- Renewal of membership from 2020
- Yes    No    N/A: For a renewal, has any of your personal information changed?

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## SELECT ONE

- \$10 for a **Single** Membership
- \$15 for a **Family** Membership whereby members are residing at the same address
- Waived** for a **New Student Beekeeper** taking a beekeeping class this year.

**You must provide an email address, as you will receive the newsletter & notifications only via email.**

Where are you taking your class? \_\_\_\_\_

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## PLEASE PRINT FOR LEGIBILITY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional name** \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional name** \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional name** \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Newsletter/Communication Delivery: Electronic or Mailed

Choose between receiving the quarterly newsletter and club communications via electronic delivery (email) or United States Postal Service (USPS) mail delivery. We encourage electronic delivery for the following reasons:

- ✓ Selecting electronic delivery saves CIBA the cost of postage.
- ✓ We can provide more information to you electronically. Review the table below.

While we encourage electronic delivery, you need to make a delivery option that serves your needs.

Communication Type	What you will receive with:		Details
	Electronic Delivery	Mailed Delivery	
BEELINE quarterly newsletter	Yes	Yes	Quarterly club newsletter
Meeting reminders	Yes	No	Mailed reminder postcards have been discontinued
Special information	Yes	No	CIBA organizational updates
Forwarded electronic information	Yes	No	IHPA news, upcoming events, etc.
By-Law changes	Yes	Yes	Infrequent club By-Law updates
Annual Membership Directory	Yes	No	Published in June. Provides a list of all members, and contact information.

**Family Memberships:** With **Mailed** delivery, **Family memberships** receive ONE mailed newsletter. With **Electronic** delivery, all members providing an email address will receive emailed newsletters/notices/membership directories/meeting reminders, etc

**New Student Beekeeper:** **Ensure you provide an email address.** You will receive all communications via electronic mail (email) only.

**SELECT ONE**

- Mail via USPS
- Email electronic delivery
- Both

**Membership Directory**

We publish an annual membership directory in June each year, which is shared only with club members.

**SELECT ONE**

- Yes, the club can publish my/all family member’s information in the Membership Directory
- No, the club may NOT publish my/all family member’s information in the Membership Directory

**Additional information (optional):**

1. How many hives and where are your hives located (# of hives/location)? EXAMPLE: 9 urban; 2 rural  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Urban                      \_\_\_\_\_ Rural
2. How many apiaries (bee yards) do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been beekeeping? \_\_\_\_\_

**Ideas for Meeting Presenters or Newsletter Topics**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your profession? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you consider assisting CIBA with your skills, if requested? \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail completed form with payment to:**

Linn Wilbur  
 CIBA Acting Secretary/Treasurer  
 64626 170th Street  
 Nevada, IA 50201

## Another Way to Show Your Support for Honey Bees

Here's another way to show your support for honey bees and the Iowa honey industry: buy a license plate decal. If you have a specialty or personalized license plate, there is space for a decal supporting a nonprofit organization or cause.

You can purchase a "Support Honey Bees" decal from the Iowa Honey Producers Association. All proceeds will go to renovation of the organization's booth in the Agriculture Building on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Cost is \$10 each, or two for \$15. More information is available on the IHPA website, [www.iowahoneyproducers.org](http://www.iowahoneyproducers.org).

## From the Editor, Laura Miller

### What a Year It Has Been!

You may have been wondering when you would ever read this last issue of the BEELINE? I was, too! It's been quite a year and so many things have changed or had to be accommodated in a different, sometimes more difficult way. But the good news is that we are here on the precipice of 2021 and things are looking up. Several effective vaccines are in the pipeline and on our way to Iowa, we had a good year for honey production, we were able to clean up after the derecho, CIBA has had a couple of Zoom meetings and more is planned for 2021. Whew!

Another complicating factor in getting out this newsletter was a lot of work on the CIBA website. I am so impressed with the energy and enthusiasm in this organization. Val Just, our new webmaster, has put in countless hours developing the website. We hope you like it, will contribute to it, and – most of all -- **USE** it in the coming year to find answers, connections and anything else you need for beekeeping.

I am happy to include in this issue a four-page reprint from the . Meghan Milbrath, an Extension specialist from Michigan State University, writes about queens. One of our members, Arvin Foell, read the article and gets many questions from Iowa beekeepers about queen. Arvin thought it would be helpful for all of our members to have this information, thus the request to reprint.

I leave you with this thought, a poem sent to me by a friend. May your beekeeping adventures bring you the same joy in 2021!



### Joy

Who could need more proof than honey—  
How the bees with such skill and purpose  
enter flower after flower  
sing their way home  
to create and cap the new honey  
just to get through the flowerless winter.

And how the bear with intention and cunning  
raids the hive  
shovels pawful after pawful into his happy mouth  
bats away indignant bees  
stumbles off in a stupor of satiation and stickiness.

And how we humans can't resist its viscosity  
its taste of clover and wind  
its metaphorical power:  
don't we yearn for a land of milk and honey?  
don't we call our loved ones "honey?"  
all because bees just do, over and over again,  
what they were made to do.

Oh, who could need more proof than honey  
to know that our world  
was meant to be  
and  
was meant to be  
sweet?

- ❖ "Joy" by Julie Cadwallader Staub, from Face to Face. *DreamSeeker Books*, © 2010

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