

THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers



ISSUE

Spring 2018

UPCOMING MEETING INFORMATION

March 17, 2018

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

ISU Extension Office

Suite A

1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona

BUSINESS MEETING

- ✓ 2017 Treasurer's Report
- ✓ Membership Renewals
- ✓ Annual Audit Report
- ✓ 2018 Seminar Report
- ✓ Bee Yard Update
- ✓ Spring Auction Update
- ✓ Honey Queen Update
- ✓ Election of Officers

PROGRAM

- ✓ Swarm Traps: Build & Placement
 - ✓ Legislative Update
-

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

DEADLINE: May 15, 2018

Email Submissions

justiowahoney@gmail.com

Mail Submissions

Valerie Just
4609 Crestmoor Drive
Des Moines, IA 50310

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, or add a subscription by sending a notification to:

justiowahoney@gmail.com

From the President, Mike Sander

Greetings to all Central Iowa Beekeepers,

It is mid-February as I write this and the weather is cold and wet. Certainly, by the time you read this, that will have all changed. Hopefully your bees have fared well through this long cold winter. I have found most of mine looking quite well. Julie and I stopped to check on a few hives during those warm January days. We discovered that many of them had consumed much, if not close to all of their mountain camp food supply. We have been busy adding some additional resources for them. Hoping for the best because it will likely still be a while before the cold is past, and the warm spring sun is back.

We heard of beekeepers having good results using the oxalic acid vaporization when the hive is brood-less. On some of these warmer days we have been out doing some treatments in the hopes the oxalic acid vaporization will give the bees a jump-start against those awful mites this spring. We especially tried to get to those hives we treated last fall with a different treatment. Unfortunately, this treatment was so ineffective that some of those hives did not even make it to winter. I won't say here what treatment it was as I am still researching what may have gone wrong. It appears on initial research that poorly worded directions may be at least a partial cause.

Hopefully you are keeping in mind the annual beekeeper auction coming up in April. If you think you may have extra equipment please consider allowing us to help you find a great home for it. If you are in need of equipment I hope you stop by the auction and find what you are looking for.

Finally, we have a great program lined up for you at the March 17 membership meeting. The topic will be swarm trapping. It seems like all last season, every time I talked with Jamie Beyer on the phone, he would tell me how he had captured another swarm. Sometimes multiple swarms. I almost got tired of hearing about them (not really). It did however, get to the point that I would think to myself before our conversation "I wonder how many he caught this time?" I am excited that he has agreed to teach us all what it is he is doing to get such great results, at our upcoming meeting.

Wishing you an abundant beekeeping season,

Mike

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CIBA Business

March Meeting Location

Please take note that the March meeting will be taking place at the ISU Extension and Outreach – Polk County office in Altoona, at a different time than our typical meetings.

When: March 17th, from 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Where: ISU Extension Office, Suite A, 1625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona

Social Gathering: After the meeting, for those interested in dining together, we will meet/walk to the Big Steer which is very close to our meeting location. The address is 1715 Adventureland, Altoona.

Meeting Program Details

Presented by Jamie Beyer, CIBA Vice President

Swarm Traps

Bait hive use to catch free-flying honey bee swarms is a technique that is well-described by Dr. Leo Sharashkin on his website. He describes the process of making swarm traps as well as how to place them. Based on the successful experience of another beekeeper using Dr. Sharashkin's methods, Jamie made swarm traps and was successful in catching swarms last spring/summer. Jamie will go over the techniques of successful swarm trapping in order to capture free bees. All healthy hives swarm (unless closely managed) and the bee colony stands a better chance of surviving in Iowa if managed by a beekeeper; the techniques do not harm existing hives.

Honey Bee Legislation Update

The interest in honey bees is very intense right now. This is true in the Iowa Legislature as well. In this short presentation, Jamie Beyer will cover all Iowa legislative action that affects how we conduct the hobby and commercial interests. Topics upcoming in this year's legislative session: the governor has proclaimed March 14th as Honey Bee Day; promotion of a honey bee specialty license plate. More information will be shared at the meeting.

Meeting Minutes: January 20, 2018

Our Winter Seminar took the place of a quarterly meeting – there are no meeting minutes to provide.

Election of Officers / Committee Volunteers

The March 17th meeting will include election of CIBA officers and directors for 2018. The CIBA board has talked to many of you about serving and will have suggested nominees for the meeting. If you are interested in serving for the coming year it is not too late to step forward. Please contact any of the officers or board members. We will also be taking nominations from the floor at the meeting. Presently the open positions for 2018 include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 3 board of director positions.

We are currently welcoming volunteers for some committee positions as well. If you would like to be part of the queen/ambassador program, auction team, program/seminar committee, or the bee yard, please let us know. We would enjoy your participation.

January 2018 Seminar Report

January's seminar was a fun day for members of the CIBA, as well as for visitors from across the state. The CIBA Winter Seminar was held in Grimes again. We learned a lot and we were able to network with fellow Beeks. This year we held this seminar without having to charge anything for attendance. We did have Linn and Ann Wilbur donating lots of cookies and drinks. We also received enough donations to reduce the seminar expenses – refer to the financial report for more details.

Our speakers Dr. Amy Toth, Alex Walton and Randall Cass all did a super overview of their research on bees as well as sharing some of their experiences. Amy went over her research on infiltrating the hive mind; how and if parasites and pathogens manipulate honey bee behavior. Alex talked about individual behavioral differences within the honey bee work force. Randall related his practical lessons from a beekeeping cooperative in rural El Salvador. This seminar provided a diverse set of subjects that we were able learn from.

We had over 125 people attend. We were prepared for 250 people but with the January warm weather we believe a lot of beeks stayed home to check their hives after such a long period of really brutal cold weather. The facility in Grimes is an excellent one for holding our seminar – it is a centralized location and the facility accommodates a large audience

Linn Wilbur and I are planning this event again for next year. Currently, we are looking at Saturday, January 19, 2019, at the Grimes Community Center, so save the date on your calendars! We are planning on two speakers – one expert from out-of-state and one expert from Iowa. Stay tuned as the year progresses and learn more about our next seminar!

Treasurer's Seminar Financial Report

Seminar Financial Report			
Item	Expenses	Income	Grand Total
Grimes Community Center Rental Expense	\$190.00		
Speaker's Dinner Expense	\$56.15		
Other Expense: Name Tags	\$40.65		
Other Expense: Office Supplies	\$4.40		
Seminar Donations		\$193.00	
Totals	\$291.20	\$193.00	(\$98.20)

Other Seminar Outcomes			
Item	Expenses	Income	Grand Total
Bee Yard Donations		\$113.00	\$113.00
New Membership Applications		\$115.00	\$115.00
	Total		\$228.00

Call to Action



The DriftWatch Specialty Crop Site Registry is a voluntary communication tool that enables crop producers, beekeepers, and pesticide applicators to work together to protect specialty crops and apiaries through use of the DriftWatch registry mapping program.

Registered – Need to Renew

If you are already registered, you should have received a reminder email from **FieldWatch Customer Service**. Within the email, there is a hyperlink to go out to the website and renew your registration. If you haven't already done so, search your email for FieldWatch and take a couple of minutes to complete the renewal.

This service requires all specialty crop producers and beekeepers to renew their sites on an annual basis to confirm they:

- 1) are still active;
- 2) get deleted if the site is rotational crop; or
- 3) get modified if the site or profile information has changed.

If you can't find your email sent by FieldWatch Customer Service, access [DriftWatch](#) to sign into your account.

Not Registered

If you have not registered your hives, access [DriftWatch](#). When on the website, on the right-hand side, you will see '[Don't Have an Account](#)'; choose [beecheck – Map My Apiaries](#) option.

Receiving a Physical Copy of the Beeline

If you are receiving a physical copy of the Beeline and don't have access to the hyperlinks, just search [DriftWatch](#) on the Internet, choose the [DriftWatch-Home](#) option. Once on the website, you will have the option to either:

- Log into your account, or
- Establish an account.
 - On the right side of the page you will see '[Don't Have an Account](#)'; choose [beecheck – Map My Apiaries](#) option.

Beecheck Signs

FieldWatch has signs that are available to order. Once you are in your account, at the top of the page, there is an option [Order Signs](#).

No Spray Field Markers

On the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship website, there is an option to order No Spray signs for your apiaries IF you have registered your apiaries with FieldWatch. The signs are 12"x18" and are made of aluminum. You can either have the signs shipped to you or pick them up at the downtown office - I picked mine up last year, as I dislike paying for shipping. I called the IDALS office before I went to the office.

- Contact Mary Nieland at (515) 281-7656 if you have any questions or want to pick up signs.

- The address is 502 E. 9th Street, Des Moines.
- This is the [IDALS website](#) – the option to order field markers is in the bottom right side of the page.
- If you are receiving a physical copy of the Beeline, search **IDALS no spray signs** and choose the No Spray – Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship option.



2018 CIBA Membership

Membership Dues

Time really does fly, and it is that time of year again to determine if you want a single or a family CIBA membership. Membership in CIBA runs on a calendar year, January 1 to December 31. If you have not done so already, membership for 2018 is now due.

As a reminder, you must be a current member to participate in the election of officers and directors at the March meeting. Membership forms will be available at the March CIBA meeting and on our new website once the website is fully operational. A membership form was provided in the December Beeline, as well. If needed, you can mail in your payment (checks should be made payable to CIBA), with a completed membership application form, to:

Valerie Just
 CIBA Treasurer
 4609 Crestmoor Drive
 Des Moines, IA 50310

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE PAID IN ADVANCE FOR MEMBERSHIP DUES, PLEASE COMPLETE THE MEMBERSHIP FORM AND GIVE IT TO VALERIE JUST – WE ARE REQUESTING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH WILL BE DETAILED IN OUR 2018 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY, AND WE WOULD LOVE TO COLLECT THE INFORMATION FROM YOU.

Membership Directory

As a reminder, we publish a Membership Directory during June each year. While completing your membership form you can opt-out having your information published in the directory by choosing the second option on the form. If you inadvertently miss filling out this section, we default to **NOT** publishing your information in the directory; please pay attention to ensure we have your preference.

- 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



Honey Bee Day

MARCH 14, 2018, 7:00-9:00 a.m. (Eaaaarly!)
CONFERENCE ROOM 116
IOWA STATE CAPITAL
DES MOINES, IA

Meet with Iowa Legislators to discuss the importance of honey bees to Iowa and the role we play as beekeepers in their success.

How can I help?

Have you ever wondered that question when thinking of your honey bees? You are a beekeeper because of your love for bees, your love for honey, your desire to help our environment, to pollinate your garden, etc. Can this be taken one step further? Is there anything else you could do to help the honey bees here in Iowa?

YES, there is, and, YES, YOU CAN HELP!

Celebrate this day with fellow beekeepers at our State Capital. Enjoy visiting with your legislators about the importance of the honeybee, the difficulties faced by honey bees and beekeepers, the role of honey bees in our environment while enjoying some honey and honey treats.

YES, You Can Help! Bee a part of IOWA HONEY BEE DAY!

For further information contact your IHPA District Director or:

Linn Wilbur
lwilbur50201@gmail.com
(515) 382-4882

Jamie Beyer
[:beyersbog@aol.com](mailto:beyersbog@aol.com)
(515) 231-0215



CIBA Annual Beekeeping Equipment Auction



What: CIBA Annual Auction

When: Saturday, April 21, 2018
Consignments 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Auction starts at 10:00 a.m.

Where: Highway 141 and 8th Street (one block from Dallas County Hospital)
Spring Valley Honey Farm's Honey House
Perry, Iowa

Auction material to consign is open to any new, used or antique bee related merchandise. All equipment needing to be inspected will be done onsite prior to the start of the auction. Consignment rate is 15%. Lots are assigned in the order of sign-up.

To consign or volunteer, contact Julie Sander via email at majlsander@msn.com, or via telephone at (515) 957-8730. We will need help tagging items, set-up and tear down.

There will be concessions and we welcome any donations of baked goods, pop and water.

Join us for a great time of buying, selling and visiting with fellow beekeepers.



Club Buzz

CIBA Honey Queen or Ambassador Program

We are working on selecting a honey queen for the upcoming season. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a candidate for this position, please contact one of the board members and have them submit your contact preference to the Queen Committee.

The queen does not currently have a set or defined role. The queen should expect to represent CIBA at events and social functions. They will also help teach the public about honey bees and encourage support for them. What the queen would likely gain from this role is experience in working with and speaking to the public. They will also gather experiences that may help them transition to a role as state honey queen.

To be more inclusive, the board is considering moving toward an ambassador program that would allow anyone interested in promoting honey bees to become a candidate for the position. If you are interested in having input on this as we move forward, please consider joining the Queen Committee at the upcoming meeting.

Upcoming Board Meeting

The leadership team's goal is to have a board meeting on a quarterly basis. Members are welcome to attend our board meetings. Our next board meeting is on **May 8, 2018, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**, at Café Diem in Ankeny.

Hope to see you there!

CIBA Website

We have been working on getting our new website up and running. The Web Development students at DMACC have agreed to assist us with the new web site; however, it has taken a lot more time than I had anticipated.

While it is not quite ready for release, we can let you know how to find it. There is a hyperlink to our new website: <http://www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/>. The only parts of the site that are currently ready are a couple of announcements regarding our upcoming membership meeting and the auction. Please visit the site and check back often for updates.



Beekeeping Banter

Awful Bee Jokes

1. What do you call a bee with messy hair? A Frizz-bee.
2. Why did the bee go to the dermatologist? It had hives.
3. Why do bees have sticky hair? Because they use honey combs.
4. Where does a bee keep its cash and valuables? In a honey box.
5. Why do bees hum? They don't know the words.

6. And not so awful, but you need to be a beekeeper to get this one:

The First Law of Beekeeping: For every beekeeping idea, there exists an equal and opposite idea.

The Second Law of Beekeeping: They're both wrong.



Ponder This...

American Bee Journal; Beekeeping Rules and Regulations; June 1, 2016; Jamie Ellis

Beekeeping is a dynamic industry for some and a part-time hobby for others. It is a diverse enterprise, one that allows its practitioners to be doctors (diagnosing colony maladies), carpenters (assembling hive equipment), botanists (knowing bloom cycles), farmers (honey producers and crop pollination providers), and even business men/women (managing employees and marketing one's products), all among other jobs.

Whew, feeling tired yet?!



Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship News

News from our State Apiarist, Andy Joseph

By Andy Joseph

Hello.

Spring feels like it's finally around the corner as I'm writing this. From what I hear, this winter has been pretty rough. I've gotten very mixed reports of winter survivorship. This wasn't an extreme winter by any measure, though we have had some serious cold from time to time. If the bees were of compromised condition last fall, they probably aren't around anymore, and it's time to try again. This seems to be truer each year. Maybe those who are having great winter successes are just afraid to speak about it out loud for fear of jinxing their strong live clusters!

I've been asked a few times already what I might recommend as a spring mite treatment. This is a common annual topic of conversation, and it's a good subject to think about. Some of you have dosed your hives a time or two over winter with oxalic acid, either in syrup or by vaporization. If done while the bees were largely broodless, you ought to have had a great mite kill, and hopefully may be able to avoid coping with springtime mite treatment stress. If this is you ... take a mite count in order to KNOW this, rather than assume anything. For the rest of us, what's the "best" option?

Right now, I'm recommending Formic Pro. Have you seen this yet? It's the new version of MiteAway Quick Strips. The biggest difference between Formic Pro and MAQS seems to be its shelf life. If you've used MAQS, expect pretty much the same. The fiber pad material has been "upgraded" while the formic acid active ingredient remains unchanged. The biggest issue over years with a variety of formic acid treatments is the delivery. Too "flashy" and brood is harmed, maybe queens too. Too slow / low of a dose and mites aren't killed effectively. So, we're aiming for that sweet middle ground. MAQS has been a good product, though not without problems – particularly if used in hotter weather, or if used beyond its short expiration date. Hopefully this new version fixes at least one of those shortcomings.

Formic acid might be a good choice considering our short list of approved options. I'm not convinced an oxalic treatment is effective in spring, since bee brood is its Achilles' heel. I'm not a fan of Apivar in spring, since the

treatment takes five weeks or so followed by a “cool down” period to avoid contaminating any honey for human consumption. Apiguard is far better as a fall treatment, given its minimum required daytime temperatures and its month-long treatment period. Hopguard 2 has been squirrely, requiring multiple applications and struggling to control mites when colonies are significantly brooded up. Apilife Var is very similar to Apiguard, so I personally might save it as a late summer treatment option (and I wouldn't consider it to be a “rotation” opposite Apiguard). I don't really like Checkmite or Apistan due to both, resistance issues and chemistry. The list goes on ... and basically brings me to a formic acid product, either MAQS or Formic Pro.

Whatever you choose, give yourself a pat on the back / buy yourself a beer, because without live bees coming through winter you wouldn't get to make these fun decisions. Feed them! Get them treated! Build them up! Split them! And get ready for another awesome season.

See you. Andy

Get to Know Your Club Leadership



Jolene Eriksen, CIBA Secretary

How did I start in beekeeping? In 2000, I saw a class offered at our local community college, a 7- week course in beekeeping. It was \$35 and on a Tuesday night, which I had free. The class was taught by our state apiarist, Andy Joseph, and long-time beekeeper, John Johnson. I signed up for the class, thinking I would learn something about which I knew nothing. Next thing I knew, I was ordering hives and packages of bees. I started with 2 hives and today, I have 14 colonies, 11 here at my house and 3 more at a neighbor's house down the street.

I serve as secretary for the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association, am a member of the Iowa Honey Producers Association and am a member of the American Beekeeping Federation.

What do I like most about beekeeping? Bees are like my little pets. It is a joy to see the bees taking cleansing flights in late winter. It is exciting to realize I got my hives thru winter. Also, I feel so competent when I can make a split and that split becomes a great hive.

I like the pollination that occurs. My flowers and my raspberries are doing quite well. My neighbors to the south, have lots of fruit trees and they have noticed a difference over the years.

Another thing, I got my grandchildren are interested in bees. They have helped me install packages and have helped checked for queens in the hives. I hope to leave them with fun memories of their “Grandma Jo, Beekeeper”. We have spent some wonderful times at the hives.

What do I find most challenging about beekeeping? I find that I am constantly trying to outsmart the bees. Stings don't bother me. But just when I think I understand and know how they will behave, I am wrong. As we have joked at beekeeping meetings, the bees haven't read the same books we have. When you do what you have always done, and what has worked in the past, then to have it not work this time, well, that can be frustrating! But that is also some of the magic of beekeeping, problem solving.

What is the most thrilling to happen as a beekeeper? This past summer, I was in the driveway and heard a buzz. I looked up and saw a swarm over my house. I ran to my hives to see which hive the swarm may have come from. All eleven hives were calm. And the only swarm I had occur was two weeks earlier, so it didn't look as though this swarm came from one of my hives. I ran to follow the swarm as it flew towards my back yard. It was swirling around, like a cyclone in the backyard and wasn't moving fast. I ran to the shed where I have spare equipment, grabbed a nuc box, a couple of frames with drawn comb, and a bottle of honey. I also had a bottle of lemongrass oil so I sprinkled a couple of drops in the nuc, smeared some honey over the drawn comb and put them in the nuc. I walked out to the swarm, which was still in the backyard, looking for a spot to land. I put the nuc box on the ground under the swarm and stood back. They went for it! It took maybe 15 minutes for all the bees to land on or around the nuc. Eventually, I got three hives out of this one large swarm.

What troubles have I had in beekeeping? We had a winter a few years ago that was just brutal. Days when the high that day was below zero degrees. I lost 4 out of 5 hives. Many beekeepers had losses that year. I have really made an effort since then to go into winter with mu hives as prepared as I can get them. I have had the same trouble with varroa mites, as have other beekeepers. Doing mite counts twice a year and treating in the fall has helped to keep the hives going.

What is the best advice for new beekeepers? Talk to other beekeepers! Find a mentor and ask questions. Talking to fellow beekeepers is the best way to learn. Books are a good place to start, but talking with a fellow beekeeper with experience is the best way to learn. Also, join a club. A club is a great resource of information and is a place to find a mentor. I have had a fellow beekeeper come to look at hives and make suggestions. Beekeeper Jerry Kern has loaned me equipment and offered great advice.

What plans do I have for the future? I want to focus on queen rearing. I don't plan to sell queens but I would like to graft queens from a hive that is superstar among my hives, where the queen is a prolific egg layer and the hive overall is docile. I love showing off this hive to visitors. I also want to focus on bee health. In the past I have concentrated on honey production but I have learned that is just one component of beekeeping.

CIBA Member Contributions



Honey Bee Swarms

By Steve Hanlin, Board of Director

Why do bees swarm?

Swarming is the honey bee's method of colony increase where the old queen and about half of the worker bee force leave their former nest and seek a new home. The cause of swarming is usually crowding or that the majority of the bees in the colony have little to no contact with the queen and her pheromones. The colony initially creates multi-queen cells and just prior to the new queen's emergence, the old queen and approximately 5,000 to 20,000 workers and drones of various ages (minus the extreme young and the very old) leave the original hive to establish a new colony elsewhere. Prior to leaving the old hive, the bees fill themselves with nectar for their trip and the queen reduces her egg production so that she is able to fly.

Because the queen is not the strongest flier, inevitably she will need to rest at some point on the trip, this can occur on a branch, post, fence or even the ground. Once she lands, the rest of the bees form a fuzzy clump around her and create "a cluster". During this time, some bees will fly from the cluster to collect food and water and other "scout bees" will fly out to look for a suitable new home. The swarm may stay around for a few days or a few hours depending on if the scout bees find a new location or not. When the scout bees do return to the cluster, they will dance on top of the outside bees to communicate the location of a possible new site. Depending on the length of time the swarm is stationary, there can be small amounts of wax formed on the structure they are clinging to. This dense cloud of whirling bees or the large fuzzy clump of vibrating bees can be very alarming, however, because the bees are not protecting brood or honey, they are extremely docile and unless stimulated by being stuck with sticks, stones or squirted by a hose, generally will not sting.

Control methods to prevent swarming.

The most common answer for swarm prevention is to “give the bees plenty of room” or add adequate supers throughout the summer so that the bees are not crowded. If you begin to see queen cells scattered throughout the colony which contain eggs, larva and “royal jelly” (a mucus white substance which the larva floats and feeds on) generally on the bottoms or tops of frames, you may be too late on swarm prevention. However, if drawn cells are present and the queen is still producing eggs/larva, some people will remove either the individual cells or the frames with the cells and several frames of bees and make splits or re-queen weak or queen less hives for “swarm control”. Others will just smash the cells and add supers to prevent swarms. Sometimes either of these methods works for preventing a swarm or at least postponing it, other times the hive swarms even though these techniques were used. If the queen has quit or reduced her egg laying and you still want to make increases from the queen cells, you need to leave several cells in the hive for the hive is already preparing to swarm and will if they have a replacement queen or not. It has been documented, that a young queens swarm less than an old queen, being an older queen is more able to increase ovipositioning and then quickly stop laying eggs and shrink down. So, another “swarm control” maybe is just making sure you have young queens in your hives

Other methods which are used as possible controls against swarming are clipping a wing of your queen which is thought to keep the queen in the hive and prevent her from flying. However, individuals have observed a large cloud of bees flying low to the ground and a queen marching through the grass heading for a new home when crowding is occurring in the hive.

Another method of swarm control is an “artificial swarm” or the splitting of a colony into two, leaving brood in one colony and a large population of field bees in the other. The “parent colony” containing brood, young bees and the queen is moved to a new location in the same apiary and the field bees return to the “new” colony at the original site thus reducing the populations in both hives. A new queen or queen cells will need to be added to the “new” colony.

The “Demaree method” is much like the “artificial swarm” method in which the queen and foraging force is separated from the brood and nurse bees except the “new hive” is taken to a new location and a queen cell is added to the remaining brood or the colony is allowed to produce queen cells.

The last documented method is the use of a “Horsley Board” in which a special board is used to separate the queen and flying bees from the brood. It requires two brood boxes but keeps both groups together in one hive so thus a queen cell does not need to be added.

Catching or “boxing” a swarm.

If you are lucky and can find the queen in the “cluster”, you can place her directly into the hive and the swarm will soon follow her in. However, most swarms will need to be shaken or brushed into a hive. For swarms that can be reached either easily from the ground or assessable by ladder or other lifting device the following method can be used. Place an empty hive box with bottom board under the swarm. You will need to remove several frames prior to placing the bees into the hive (Ex. in a 10 frame super remove 4 to 5 frames in the center). Now shake or drop the bees into the box, you may have to use a “bee brush” to remove adhering bees from a branch or other structure and/or shake several times to get the majority of the bees into the box. You will still have a small group of bees flying and landing on the original swarm site for a period of time because of the queen scent that remains. Place the hive on the ground and replace the frames. Now observe the entrance and top bars, if the queen has been captured in the box you should observe bees fanning their wings and releasing a chemical signal to the other bees and soon you should observe more bees entering the hive than leaving. Now place the lid on top and you should have a “new” colony. If the swarm is on a branch that can be removed, you can cut the branch and gently bring it to the hive, set it on top of the frames and allow the bees to move into the box on their own. If possible let the hive set in the location until night fall or early the next morning. If you are not able to leave the hive, most of the bees should be within the box in 15 to 20 minutes and you can block the entrance and take it. In my experience, if a swarm is shaken to soon after it initially leaves the hive (less than an hour) the bees will generally not be satisfied with their new home and will swarm again within a half an hour or so.

If a swarm collects high up in a tree or other structure, you can use a “swarm catcher” to collect them. This is a device consisting of a 10’ pole with a 12” flat steel hoop at the end and a muslin bag sewn to the hoop. The bag is placed under the swarm and the bees are banged into the bag, the bag is kept vertical to keep the bees within,

brought to the hive and the clump of bees placed inside. Sometime you will need to put “the catcher” back into the air to catch any remaining flying bees which will form a cluster on the outside of the bag. Another version of a “swarm catcher” is a pole with a basket tied to the end. The basket is lifted until the swarm is within it, the swarm is “jolted” into the basket and the basket is quickly lowered and poured in front of or into the hive.

Another method used when you cannot shake or brush a swarm into a box is to spray the cluster with water and collected in a bucket or ladle and placed the bee into a box.

It has been documented that if 1-2 frames of open brood (minus bees) are placed in the center of a hive and honey frames on the outside, the likelihood of a swarm staying in the hive is increased. Also, it is recommended that you do not look at a caught swarm for at least 2-3 days after, so as not to interrupt the bees getting settled into their new home.

Swarm Traps.

One can take advantage of others misfortunes, in that if you want to increase your colony numbers and not have to purchase bees, you can catch swarms by building and putting up “swarm traps”. A swarm trap is a wooden box that hold 5-6 frames and the inside is treated with a layer of propolis. The box is baited with mint or lemon oil and placed 6’ to 8’ high in locations such as a tree or other structure where swarms frequent. Swarms of bees are attracted to the drawn combs and smell of wax/propolis and scented oils.

To get more detailed information on how to build and use “swarm traps”, come to the CIBA meeting on March 17th at the ISU Extension Office in Altoona from 2:00 to 5:00 where Jamie Beyer will be presenting a talk titled “How to Build and Place Swarm Bait Hives”.



Splitting a Colony

By Arvin Foell, Past President Director

I had the privilege of attending Andy Joseph's beginning beekeeping class. One of the students asked me why a beekeeper would want to divide a colony. My response was if you don't split your hives, they will split themselves.

There are many ways to split a beehive and I have chosen a few; you many have you own method. I have the good fortunate of owning a *The ABC & XYZ of Bee Culture* (1917) book. I thought it would be interesting to see how they split hives in the good old days – times when horses were used to transport beehives and honey. I found one technique, SHOOK SWARM - in this procedure, you remove the original hive and replace it with an empty hive with foundation and then find the queen and place her in a nuc box. Shake all adult bees into the empty hive with queen cells. Place the old queen in the original hive with brood and adhering bees. You basically created an artificial swarm.

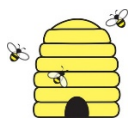
I find the SHOOK SWARM method too much work. When I make splits of my strong hives, I take two or three frames of brood and add a mated queen in a nuc box. In a couple of weeks, you should find eggs and some capped brood. Thus, you have the original hive that will not swarm and a new hive. In 30 days I move the new swarm from the nuc box into a ten-frame hive. I always feed these nucs to get the colony off to a good start.

Another quick method, which I will refer to as the Spring Valley Split – aptly named after Curt Bronnenberg's farm - can be used if you have a lot of splits to make. In this technique you do not have to find the queen. Curt shakes all the bees into the bottom hive and then places a queen excluder between them. Make sure all the brood is in the top box. During the night, the nurse bees will come up and cover the brood. The next day, Curt counts the brood frames and make his splits with two frames and a mated queen. He allows the old hive to requeen, creating a broodless hive for about thirty days, which also provides some Varroa control.

The last method to quickly divide a hive is to take two or three frames of brood and just leave them alone. This is called a Walk Away Split. Sometimes it works well and other times not so much. If they produce a queen, it may not make it back to mating nuc. If this is the case, just combine the queenless nuc with another nuc which will be in a ten-frame hive. This is simple, but risky.

Actually, the easiest way to split a beehive is just take the top hive body off and move it to another place. In about three weeks you can check and see if you have queens in both hives. If not, recombine them.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions – I am happy to assist.



Margaret's FAQs

By Margaret Hala, Board of Director

Question	Margaret Says
Q1. What are your beekeeping recommendations for the month of March?	If you have overwintered colonies, you should have been or be getting out to check for live colonies and feed them. More colonies die in March and April than the rest of the winter combined.
Q2. What other recommendations do you have?	I recommend that you track when the honey flow starts in your area for a couple of years. That sets an average time for the upcoming years, and you can anticipate the honey flow to start around the same time. Also track the end of the honey flow as it nears September, so you know when to remove your crop of gold.
Q3. Last year was my first/second/third year in beekeeping. I remember hearing the sugar water mix is different for spring and fall but can't remember what.	Spring mix is 1 x 1 sugar and water. That's 8# sugar to 1 gallon of water. They need the food to live on and to build up numbers and restore vigor. Fall is 2 x 1 so they can build up food for the winter. If you so choose, I can see no reason not to go with 2 x 1 spring and fall, but that's up to you.
Q4. Is it too late to order queens? Where?	No, but don't delay much longer. Ordering now in the middle of March will probably get you queens in mid-to-late May or even into June. Where depends on what strain of bees you have or want to get. Carniolan, Italians, Buckfast or Russian are some of the most popular strains, with Italian and Carniolan probably the most popular. Personally, we like Buckfast.
Q5. Last spring, I was late getting my splits made. When I did do it, there were lots of swarm cells. I scraped the small cells and removed the larger ones. The hive swarmed anyway and then the colony became a drone laying colony. Obviously, I shouldn't have removed all the large cells. How many should I have left, and why? Wouldn't leaving them all just have encouraged the hive to swarm more? I need answers for this spring, so please help.	Capped swarm cells mean the queen has quit laying and the hive is going to swarm! Period! Removing the capped cells means you just took away any chance for that colony to make a new queen. I would remove all but one or two of the best-looking cells to restrict how many queens will hatch and leave to start new colonies. Unless you can find the existing queen and remove her with only a frame of two of brood to make the colony think they have swarmed, they will do so. Every frame with capped queen cells poses a possibility of a new colony, so make use of them if it's warm enough for a small hive to survive the nights. (Late May and June are wonderful for this type of starting new hives.) If you find queen cells BEFORE they are capped, you can remove them with frame or more of brood (depending on how many frames of brood are present) and replace with empty frames in the parent hive. This relieves crowding and gives the feeling of swarming to the colony. If you have a colony with LOTS of bees that hasn't started 'throwing' swarm cells yet, you can take a frame from them and put with a cell removed from another colony to form a new colony. It's all a part of the splitting process.

<p>Q6. Had a hive swarm last spring. Caught and hived the swarm and set it up in the yard. They left and went back home. Why?</p>	<p>The bees may have left without a queen and thus returned home. Or maybe the field force returned home leaving many fewer bees with the queen. We have hived a swarm in the yard where they swarmed without trouble, but we usually hive it and take it to the next bee yard. This eliminates the field force from returning home. We also take frames of brood with bees with us to the next yard when making splits. This keeps bees adhering to the brood from returning home.</p>
<p>Q7. How long should I wait for the queen in a swarm I caught to start laying before combing with another colony or putting in a new queen?</p>	<p>It depends on if it was a fertilized or virgin queen. An existing queen who swarmed will start laying in a few days. If it's a secondary or after swarm with a virgin queen who is not mated it could take 2-3 weeks. She must go on her mating flight before she can lay fertilized eggs.</p>
<p>Q8. I've heard several ways to make splits. How do you do it?</p>	<p>If we're getting queens, we know when they are supposed to arrive, so we go out 1-3 days before arrival and move big larvae and capped brood to the top brood chamber, leaving NO MORE THAN 5 FRAMES OF BROOD (small larvae and 1 frame of large to capped brood) in the bottom chamber. We then shake all bees into the bottom chamber, put a queen excluder between the chambers and put the top chamber back on. The brood is all there and are still part of the colony, the queen just can't get to those cells to re-lay them. When the queens come we just go back, remove brood from the top chamber, remove the queen excluder and turn the queen loose into both chambers to now lay in all empty cells. I know it's getting into the colonies twice, but when you are trying to install queens you don't want to be delayed with looking for the queen in the colony as well as looking at brood suitable for removal.</p> <p>We start our new queens on 2 frames of brood, preferably capped or large larvae, 1 empty frame and 1 to 2 frames with honey. When the queen is out of the cage (usually 2-5 days) and laying (may take up to a week) we are getting her upgrade to a full-size colony prepared and when she is laying in the third frame we move the 'nuc' up into the full-size body. At this time, you can add a couple of frames from a strong hive to the nuc, one frame of brood on each side of her 3 frames, thus increasing her to 5 frames of brood.</p> <p>This doesn't stress the queen so much by giving her a smaller start-out hive size, nor do the bees 'think' the queen should be laying more than she is capable of doing 'right out of the cage'.</p> <p>We've tried 3, 4 and 5 frames to start out with a new queen and have found that we get a 90-95% acceptance rate with 2 frames to start. It's 75-80% with 3 frames and down to 50% with 5 frames. At the price of queens, we prefer to do a little more work.</p> <p>You can also make a 3-4 frame nuc above a parent colony with a queen excluder and when it's stronger, kill the old queen or remove the new colony.</p>



Bee Bulletin

When talking to your friends about your bees, don't exaggerate or they'll think you're blowing smoke. And for goodness sake, keep it brief – don't drone on and on!

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