



The Shore Swarm

The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

June, 2014

www.bgesva.org

Volume 5, No. 5

From the president:

My bees, along with Carolyn and I, agreed it was good to remove some honey supers over the holiday weekend. So I turned off my cell phone and email, suited up and smoked a lot of bees. I got four stings and sufficient frames of the golden treasure to spin out about six gallons of honey. My projection for this last weekend of May is to get a similar amount. Naturally, it depends on both my hurting back and Carolyn's cranking arm holding up. The bees are willing!

Most likely, by now, everyone has heard about or seen media pictures of the truckload of over 400 beehives that got rudely dumped in northern Delaware. Unfortunately, almost every year a big truckload of bees get dumped somewhere in the USA. I have not heard how many boxes were salvaged but the pictures showed some boxes that were still intact.

I enjoyed the all day Pollinators class. I was surprised to learn how many farmers are being educated into a way of thinking that having "all bare ground" is not the best for crop yields. There are many ways to include some space and plantings to enable wild pollinators to live and help pollinate both crops, and wild seeds and berries for wild life. There are large numbers of native plants that can be planted to sustain both wild pollinators and honey bees. There were about eight folks from the ES at the class of about 30, so ES was well represented.

For you 'serious beekeepers' it is a must to get hold of "Piping Queens" by Donna Fauber. She put it on YouTube as a recording of her queen bees piping to locate each other for a fight to the death. It looks like a fat mature queen looking for queens still in their cells. I hope Donna was able to get them separated before they killed each other. It is a very cool experience to be inside your hive and observe it as it happens. Who knew we would have a movie producer right here in our club! I hope Evan can find a place on our website for the recording. Donna, I tip my state beekeepers hat to you!

I have had lots of swarm and cutout calls from all over the area from Suffolk to VA Beach to Hampton to three calls from the ES. Fortunately, I have enough contacts in the whole area to send someone out on all the calls. Can you believe not one swarm call near me, as yet?

See you at the Chamber soon.
Paul

Next BGES Meeting

Saturday, June 7th
10:00 am – 12 noon

Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce
Melfa

Guest Speaker – State Apiarist Keith
Tignor

About our Guest Speaker

Keith Tignor is from the Richmond area and has been involved with bees for many years. He has multiple official roles in Virginia: he works for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) in the Office of Plant Industry Services (along with Angela Barnes). And he is Virginia's State Apiarist.

We'll have the opportunity to hear Keith's well-informed perspective on beekeeping across the Commonwealth and over the past several years. Paul tells me that Keith's knowledge is unsurpassed in Virginia. We'll certainly learn a lot from him.

About Nucs – Come & Get'm!

Donna Fauber (of "Piping Queens" fame) sends this:

There are several nucs available. First come, first served! They can call 757-618-7196 or email dfauber@verizon.net. Our nuc makers have had great success this year and the nucs have local, open mated queens.

We have been holding them for our BGES members but can't hold them much longer as they are outgrowing their houses!

Thanks!! Donna

Something new to worry about....

Russell Vreeland is our local expert on honeybee pests, and he wrote this, in response to a question from a beekeeper:

Hello BGES: This month Paul Kist forwarded another beekeeper to me after he sent a question to Paul. He describes some symptoms that I personally have never seen (and hope I don't). When I looked it up I agreed with his diagnosis and spent some time looking up some more information for him. I also spent some

time speaking with him so I added that material below. Paul thought it would make a good **NO NAME** column for this month so here is the question and answer. I edited it a bit for a more general audience.

Question:

I have a hive that is 3 years old. It made it through the winter and had lots of bees in the early spring, I think it swarmed a few weeks ago and I was just waiting to see if it re-queened itself.

I looked at it today and the bees are not acting right. There are lots of bees on the ground crawling and climbing on the grass but they cannot fly. The bees on top of the frames are shaking, their wings are spread out at an odd angle, and they cannot fly either. I looked at a couple of videos online and the symptoms seem to look like Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus. If this is the case, do you know if this hive is done for? Or will it work itself through this

My Answer:

I think you are correct. The symptoms you describe are considered classic Chronic Paralysis Syndrome (at least in my Pest, Predators and Diseases book) and it is occurring at the classic time of the year according to that source. The problem is that these hives generally do collapse suddenly. This is a disease of adult bees and transmits between them. What he didn't find is that this particular virus is most often associated with **Tracheal Mites** (*Ascariopsis woodi*) and they are the suspected vector.

Now if the number of infected bees is not yet too high relative to the total population you can try to save it (but I have now learned that the overall prognosis is pretty poor). That is probably because by the time we see these

symptoms things are already pretty bad. In addition to the shaking on top of the frames the bees will look rather greasy, in fact they actually lose all of their hair. They also look bloated, and they are, because while they can fill their honey stomachs they can't pass the food through their gut due to the paralysis. According to my sources this virus will infect other adults who simply rub against an infected individual, or get the virus on their legs (apparently from the wax and exudates from infected bees) and if they try to feed each other it is definitely spread. There is even information that it might be spread by air. So it may run through an entire apiary rapidly.

If you can't save the hive you need to block the hive off from other hives so the rest don't rob out the honey or explore the open wax and become infected themselves.

If you want to try to save a hive you can make up some grease patties with menthol, or wintergreen and get that on the colony to quickly eliminate the tracheal mites. Again that decision must be based on your assessment of the level of infection. I have included a recipe for these patties below.

If it is heavily infected I suggest writing it off. Grab the honey (all of it and harvest) the virus won't bother humans and may not be in the honey anyway. Cover the hive tight with plastic (at night you want them all in there) to suffocate the bees and let it go. Next really clean the boxes with bleach and soap (real soap is best), toss all of the old wooden frames and render the wax and start again. Don't give the wax to any other bees. If you use plastic frames scrape off and harvest the wax and disinfect the frames like you will the hive bodies then you can probably use them again. Get the boxes damp then I suggest you leave all

the bagged boxes in the sun for a while (several days) to get really hot. That will help you kill the virus and if the boxes are damp wet heat will help. Do give the infected hive bodies a long rest and plenty of cleaning also consider putting two coats of paint inside the infected hives. That stuff about never painting the inside of hives arose when paint flavors all came in leaded oil. Now that we have latex base without lead it probably doesn't have an affect but paint inside does prevent the wood from rotting from the inside due to humidity. It will make it easier to clean and the paint will seal any remaining viruses into the wood.

If you don't do anything quick these hives are doomed and may well infect the rest of your apiary.

Here is a recipe for grease patties I found: *Wintergreen oil can be toxic to humans when absorbed through the skin, so always wear protective gloves when mixing the patties.*

Grease Patties

Yield: One batch will treat 8-10 hives. You can easily increase or decrease the recipe size depending on your needs.

Ingredients:

4.4 pounds (2 kg) granulated sugar

3 ounces (90 ml) corn oil

1.5 pounds (0.7 kg) vegetable shortening (Crisco)

1 pound (454 g) honey

1/2 pound (227 g) mineral salt (pink color)

2.2 ounces (65 ml) wintergreen oil (or tea tree oil)

Directions:

Step 1: Pulverize the salt so that it mixes evenly throughout the patty. This also prevents water droplets from forming around salt crystals.

Step 2: Mix all the ingredients thoroughly using protective gloves.

Step 3: Make patties the size of small hamburgers.

Step 4: Store in freezer until ready to use. By the way, if you can't find a source of mineral salt—or you don't want to buy a 50-pound bag—go to your pet store and buy a "bunny wheel." A bunny wheel is nothing more than a mineral salt lick for rabbits and the bees don't seem to object to this inclusion of rabbit food in their diet.

For BGES: Realize that Tracheal mites are not the problem they once were but they are still around. Most of the information I have seen indicates that keeping the Varroa levels down helps with Tracheal Mites. Also we need to realize that without major and expensive scientific equipment none of us can detect viruses so if hives get infected we can't feel guilty. Also unlike bacterial infections viruses can't be attacked by antibiotics so don't waste your time. Clean the hives and let them sit most viruses need to keep moving through hosts to survive.

Keep yourselves and your bees healthy.

Thanks, Russell – your articles are always packed with new ideas.

What's next?

At our June meeting on Saturday, in addition to meeting Keith Tignor, we'll be voting on the slate of officers for the coming year. The nominating committee is putting forward

President – John Chubb

Vice Pres. – John Long

Treasurer – Chris Merritt

Secretary – Carol Zuccarino

Paul Kist has done a superb job over the past 5 years of beginning our guild and bringing it to this point. In the process he's helped to create many, many new colonies of honeybees on the shore and

many new beekeepers. Without his leadership we simply would not be here! So we are very thankful, and hope that a break from being president will provide a welcome rest for Paul – but not a diminishing of his expertise and care in our guild!

We also appreciate David Fluhart's good work as treasurer for several years. He has got the membership records into a standard computer program, which we hope will be easily transferrable to the next treasurer. John Chubb has been an extraordinary secretary, posting very thorough minutes on the website almost immediately after our meetings, and conveying important information and reminders to our members.



Beekeepers spy honeybees everywhere they go, and their eyes just naturally seek the habitats where bees can be found. Above is one of the bees I enjoyed meeting recently in Kotor, Montenegro.

Don't miss the meeting on Saturday, June 7th!