



# CENTRAL COAST BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

March 2019

ISSUE NUMBER 37

NEXT MEETING MARCH 27TH, 2019

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**By Jon Sumpter**

I was in a quandary as to a subject for this month's note. Then a friend who has nothing to do with bees said, "let the bees do it, slip a paper and some ink in the hive and tell'em to go at it". They could probably do it too if they weren't so busy.

I'm not sure about nectar flow here but the pollen is coming in. You lucky folks having maple trees around your bee lot should be doing fantastic. Watch for honey tight colonies and get supers on. Swarming season is just around the corner and as timing is everything in beekeeping, get those swarm traps out soon.

This month's meeting plan is a board meeting at 5:30 and meeting at 6:30 or thereabouts. Every member is welcome to the board meeting. We were planning a Q&A meeting where the more experienced beekeepers would speak with small groups of new beekeepers then the newbies move to another table after about 30 minutes.

You will note I say "were". Dr. Dewey Caron a renowned bee scientist and author of the Oregon Master beekeepers' journey text book is making himself available to beekeeping clubs for information about national bee health surveys and why they are so important for us to participate.

He has also consented to speak about spring beekeeping. If there is time and energy left after that, we'll do some Q&A.

April club meeting guest will be Judy Scher. Judy is an expert on other products of the bee hive. She is a presenter at the OSBA convention with a great presentation.

We have some volunteer opportunities where community groups would like beekeepers to come and have a booth for education of attendees. These are fun events for all concerned.

**Our March meeting is Wednesday, March 27th at 6 pm at the Newport Library.** Dr. Dewey Caron will be speaking about the Pacific Northwest Loss Survey and why we should all participate (see article below as a beginning point). He will also point out some of the essentials of Spring Management. Should time allow, we will have a Q&A session afterwards as you prepare your bees for SPRING!

## Pacific NW Loss Survey

Dr. Dewey Caron is once again asking for our assistance in the collection of data on last bee years losses. This is an important tool to help us know what is happening with the bees in the Pacific Northwest. Please participate in the survey, either on line or by paper. Click on link below to take the survey on line or print out the attached paper survey form and mail to Dewey.

<http://www.pnwhoneybeesurvey.com/survey>

### WHY IS THE SURVEY IMPORTANT TO US?

Beekeeping is NOT an inexpensive hobby and anything we can do to keep our bees healthy and happy is to our advantage. Participation in this survey and providing accurate data can help inform behavior and practices that make a difference in the longevity and success of our hives. Last year only 10 coastal beekeepers participated in the study and most of these were from Tillamook, so in order to get valuable data for our area in specific, we need more participation. It is still valuable to look at the data from the state as a whole and compare it to our experience. There were 38% losses across the state last year broken down as follows: 36% from 8 frame Langs, 39% from 10 frame Langs, 33% from Nucs, 53% from Top Bars, 45% from Warres and 31% from Others. These losses were defined by beekeepers to be primarily the result of Varroa (23%), Queen failure (17%) and weak hives going into the winter (14%).

Based on the survey data, the following points were identified as important takeaways:

- Backyard (small non-commercial) losses were slightly more than double the commercial losses and this has been consistent over the past 7 years that the survey has been done. This is most likely because the commercial operations tend to take their losses (combining weak and stronger hives) in the fall and are more proactive in Varroa mite control management.
- Doing an evaluation of dead hives is the first step in seeking to understand and solve the loss problems. Conjecture alone will not be enough. Doing a hive autopsy will help to pinpoint problems which can then be addressed. If you are having difficulty determining what the cause of death was, bring a frame to the next club meeting and consult with other beekeepers to help solve the mystery.
- More attention to colony strength going into winter and possibly mitigating winter starvation may help reduce losses. Some form of overwinter feeding should be implemented.
- Implementing an effectively mite control program will definitely help reduce losses. If you do not know your mite numbers and tract trends, it is difficult to know when to treat to avoid losses. The more mites that are present the higher exposure your bees have to detrimental viruses.
- Moisture, not cold, kills bees so hives should be located in the sun and out of the wind. Extra wind protection of hives and moisture control (moisture box, etc.) will help.
- Having an upper entrance to your hives appears to have a positive effect on hive losses.

As we are at the beginning of the bee year 2019-2020, now is the time to set in motion practices which will result in fewer losses for you this time next year. It is also the time to share your experiences during the past bee year so that we can all learn together. Please take a few minutes (it only took me 5 minutes) to complete this survey. Once the data has been crunched, we will share the results in the newsletter and hopefully figure out how we can reduce our losses on the Central Coast.

## KEEPING BEES IN MARCH

*Jason Rowan -Commercial Beekeeper from Lane County*

March marks the start of the beekeeping season for some of us. Up till now, a cursory glance at the entrance or taking a look under the cover is all we have done. Let's take a deeper look into the hives, shall we?

The beginning of spring gives us the opportunity to wipe the slate clean and get a fresh piece of chalk to start the new season. Mistakes may or may not have been made. Regardless, make note of what worked and didn't, and these can be tools to use in the season to come. Studying bee culture through books, meeting, or YouTube is a great way to prepare. Do your homework. Learning about what you are doing is the only way to be successful. During the month of March, I like to think of the hive as a garden and the work that I do now is the seed that I will watch grow for the rest of the summer. Take great care to stay ahead of your bees. It is the only way to help these creatures grow to their full potential.

First, let's unwrap the hive for the warm season to come. Take off all covering and insulation, including moisture traps if you desire. Hopefully, your hives are waterproof enough to make it through the spring rains. If not, leave the moisture traps on, but that does not excuse you from looking into the hives.

Pop open the lid and take a look. I would assume that you would wear all the necessary gear, plus smoker. Do things gently, move smoothly. There is no rush. Jarring and making bees fly when the temps are not optimal can cause their death or unneeded stress. Working bees when the days are dry and around 50°F is great, but you can check for weight even when the temps are much lower. You may be able to see the honey and determine that there is plenty or not. You may be able to take a stored frame and pop it in. If you have none, then a winter patty or some fondant may be used as an emergency feed. STARVATION is one of the ONLY things that you can control, so be responsible. You may want to try feeding a heavy syrup or a light syrup to simulate a flow. Putting pollen supplement on is a great way to get a jump start on the season, but know the costs. Every action causes a response in the bees, so think ahead.

If March marks the first time you have looked into your hive, you may have found it to be "dead." Fear not, you have just joined the rest of us who have found that to be the case as well. Bee keeping is a labor of love and cannot be marked by successes and failures. Just as your hives may have made it through the winter perfect for the second year, do not begin to believe that you have it all figured out. Being a beekeeper is an entomological journey into the world of the wild. Our poor human brains can hardly begin to understand the complexities of the natural world, so don't beat yourself up. Learn from what has happened and move on with open eyes and mind.

Having said that, why has your hive died? Much can be learned, and you can make the appropriate management changes because something clearly did not work. Get a good book or talk with other beekeepers about what you have seen, and you will find that the knowledge gained from those interactions can make a world of difference in the path of a new year. Clean that puppy out. Get rid of old drone combs and junky boxes. Start the

year off right. Leaving your dead, AFB hive out to rot because you think you might catch that 100 percent disease-resistant free swarm is not a service to anyone, most of all the bees. Packages and nucs are getting built this month. Get ready. They are coming, so let's make it work.

If you are one of the lucky ones and your hives came through great, take a look inside. Make sure that hive has a queen. If not, add it to another hive if possible. If one of your hives is weak and one strong, move a frame or two over with brood and bees (no queen) and give it a boost, but mark her for re-queening. Get those queens and supplies ordered and on their way. Don't be left out when things need to be done.

The last thing I would suggest for starting your garden off right this year is to be diligent about your pests and diseases. This may be a great time to treat for mites and brood diseases. Non-temperature-dependent mite control measures would be best. Please do not think that this is the last of your spring treatments. I have found more and more that the efficacy of most miticides has been greatly exaggerated. Bee aware and keep bees with care.

Happy Keeping.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**April 26th-27th - 45th Annual Bee Weekend- Location: Glory Bee, 29548 B Airport Rd, Eugene -Friday 9:30 am-4:30 pm; Saturday 9:00AM-4:00pm Food Carts / Kids Crafts /Honey Tasting/ Presentations & Live Installation Demos**

**May 18-19<sup>th</sup> – Oregon Honey Festival, Ashland, OR**  
<http://www.oregonhoneyfestival.com>

**July 12-14<sup>th</sup> – The Western Apicultural Society Annual Conference, Ashland, OR,**  
<https://westernapiculturalsociety.org>

**October 25-27<sup>th</sup> – Oregon State Beekeepers Association Fall Conference, Florence Events Center, Florence, OR**

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