



CENTRAL COAST BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

February 2022

Issue number 67

NEXT MEETING March 23rd 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Pat Wackford

I would like to thank all of the Club Members and Guests that attended the in-person meeting in January. My hope is to see the membership grow and have more interesting and informative input for new and longtime beekeepers. Keeping bees in Oregon takes due diligence.

Well the weather this month has been quite interesting, bees are breaking cluster and getting out to take cleansing flights and check for pollen sources. I received an email from the OSU Research Lab with a video discussing loss of hives this time of year due to starvation. With the warm weather it is time to quick check the hives and provide feed in the form of a sugar patty. The video tells how to mix 10 pounds of sugar and one cup of water; I used 2 ½ pounds sugar to ¼ cup of water for my 3 hives. Mix well and flatten handfuls of the mix into patties on paper plates or wax paper. Let them dry overnight and place them on the top of the frames in the top box. This will ensure that the hive will have an additional source of food to see them through the rest of winter. If the bees do not need it, you can remove the patties later, and make sugar syrup for spring feeding. Also, I did 24-hour mite checks using a clean sticky board and counted only 2-4 mites on the board of each hive. After 3 days only 3-4 mites. I keep a check as best I

can and have mite treatments on hand. With the climate changing, don't rely on the calendar to care for your bees.

Just a reminder that the Bee-ginning Beekeeping class at OCCC is 1PM to 4 PM on March 9th. Club members are invited to come. If you know anyone interested in signing up for the class, the fee is \$25 to be paid to the Collage.



January Club Meeting

In case you missed it, here's what happened at our January meeting

With fans blowing fresh air in from the outside and everyone (over 20 of us) properly masked, we had our first in-person meeting in nearly two long years. Pat Wackford, our new club president, introduced the board members in attendance to the group. She also asked for a volunteer to become the representative for OSBA. (Subsequently Max Kuhn volunteered, thanks Max!)

Our Bee-ginning Beekeeping Course which will be held at OCCC on March 9 from 1-4:00PM at the Newport campus. All paid members are welcome to attend the class at no cost. Pat, Judi, Becca, Max Jim and Jacob have volunteered to lead various parts of the class which includes beekeeping vocabulary, hive equipment, protective gear, where to find help and resources, and challenges & opportunities. We will then finish up with a Q&A session. We have 21 people signed up so far. This is a great vehicle to introduce more people to our club and recruit new members.

We discussed what we all needed to do to prepare for spring. It is a good time to do an inventory of your equipment to see what needs to be repaired or replaced, look for sites to hang baits for swarms, clean up frames and replace about 20% of them each year.

Feeding pollen patties can be done all year. Make sure to read the ingredients as they can vary widely. Some have no pollen and are comprised of only 'pollen substitute' – add real pollen to the feed. An ideal mixture in equal parts pollen, substitute and sugar syrup.

Plant pollen for the bees is available from a number of trees and bushes including acacia, alder, hazelnut, ivy, willows and cascara. Starting a bloom log is helpful to see when pollen is available and when you may need to supplement. More native plant descriptions are available at these websites:

<http://www.lincolnsxcd.org/native-plant-database.html>

https://bentonswcd.org/plant_cat/native/



Where can I get Bees?

Brad York from the Tillamook club wanted us to know that they will have nucs for sale through their "Farm Store" for \$145. You must join the Tillamook Bee club for \$20 to get this price, and you are responsible for picking up their bees.

Their website is tillamookbeekeepers.org

Bees are also available from Shonard's, Old Sol Apiaries (John Jacobs), Starr Farms of Eugene and Pacific Apiary Collective www.pacbees.com.



OCCC Bee-ginning Beekeepers Course

As Pat mentioned above, the club will be teaching a 3-hour beginners beekeeping course on Wednesday March 9th at the OCCC Newport Campus. All current members are invited to attend. Please RSVP to this email so we can get you on the attendance list.

March 9, 2022

OCCC Newport Campus

1-4PM

Nuc or package: how to buy honey bees

Rusty

[Honey Bee Suite](#) excerpted

One of the first problems a new beekeeper confronts is how to get a colony of bees. If catching a swarm is not in the cards, or if an entire established colony is not for sale in your area, you are left with two choices: you must buy either a nuc or a package.

What is a nuc?

A nuc(leus) colony is the central core, or heart, of a larger colony. In essence, a nuc is a small colony living on 4 to 5 frames. It has all the components of a fully-grown colony, including brood in all stages of development, workers in all stages of development, most likely some drones, and a laying queen. In addition, it usually has some stored honey and pollen.

Because there are no standards, nucs vary tremendously between sellers. Some sellers specify exactly how many frames of brood are guaranteed. Some say how many frames of adult bees to expect. Some offer a frame of honey and pollen. Some only specify the number of frames in the box, such as 4-frame nucs or 5-frame nucs. Also, some may be on deep frames and some may be on medium frames. Because of all the differences, prices are all over the map. It is up to the buyer to ask questions and learn what he is buying.

Another major difference between nucs is their age. In my opinion, the very best are overwintered nucs. In other words, the small colony is a cohesive unit that spent the winter together with their queen. Healthy overwintered nucs are likely to explode in the spring, giving you a vibrant, populous colony in no time.

Other nucs are made up immediately before the sale. The colonies may have been in pollination service, for example. After pollination, the colonies are divided, given queens, and sold as nucs. Sometimes this type of nuc doesn't do as well simply because it is not yet a cohesive whole. The bees may supersede their queen, or they may get off to a slower start. Although most of these nucs do fine, the buyer should ask whether the nuc was overwintered or newly established.

What is a package?

Bees can also be purchased in a wooden shipping box that includes a can of feed and a newly-mated queen. These boxes are usually sold by weight and come with 2- or 3-pounds of bees. Like the bees in newly-established nucs, the bees in the packages may have recently come from commercial pollination service. Frames of bees are dumped through a queen excluder into a funnel. From the funnel the bees are measured into a shipping box until the right weight is reached. Then a newly-mated queen in a shipping cage is added to the package along with a can of syrup.

Some of the bees in a package may be related to each other, but most probably are not. Certainly, the queen is not related, which is why the beekeeper most introduce the queen slowly to the newly installed package. Some of this depends on how long the bees were in transit. For example, if the package is put together, shipped overnight, and delivered the next day, the queen should be introduced slowly. If the package is in transit for a week, queen introduction should be simple.

Quality issues

Both nucs and packages pose quality issues which may be difficult for a new beekeeper to sort out. A nuc, for example, should be checked to see that it contains what the seller advertised. In addition, it never hurts to do a cursory inspection for brood diseases and parasites. This, by itself, is almost impossible for a new beekeeper. You may want to seek the help of a mentor, especially the first time.

Likewise, package bees may arrive in bad shape. Before accepting delivery, the beekeeper should be sure the queen is alive and looking healthy. You should also gauge the number of dead bees on the bottom of the cage. For an in-depth discussion of what experienced beekeepers believe is an acceptable number of dead bees, see this post: [Dead bees in a package: how many is okay?](#)

Logistical issues

For nuc buyers, a number of different options exist. Some sellers merely transfer their bees into your box. Some will want to trade new, unused frames for the frames containing the bees. Some will sell you the frames that contain the bees and put them in a cardboard nuc box which you needn't return. Some transport them in a wooden brood box which you must return. Again, read the terms of the sale so you know how to prepare.

For package buyers, there is often a deposit on shipping boxes, so you need to learn how to get your refund. Usually, there is a time limit and a damage deduction. Make sure you know the terms of your purchase.

Nucs vs packages, pros and cons

This next section is divided by issues that new beekeepers may experience. The issues that matter to an individual beekeeper will vary depending on experience, resources, region, and personal taste. Only you can decide which option works for you.

Type of beekeeping equipment you have

This may seem obvious, but I've helped a number of beekeepers wield hacksaws and wirecutters to make their nuc frames fit into their top-bar hives. This is not only a pain, but it's not good for the colony. So please note that most nucs come on frames that fit into a deep Langstroth hive. If you have something other than a deep Langstroth, check with the seller. Some may have medium Langstroths available. Most will not have anything that fits into a top-bar hive. If you have non-standard equipment, you most likely need to buy a package.

Expense

Nucs are generally more expensive than packages. The difference may be insignificant if you are buying one or two, but may be prohibitive if you are buying 20 or 30. This is necessarily a personal decision.

Watching the colony start from scratch

Many new beekeepers have enjoyed watching their colony start from a package. Like a swarm, the packaged bees have nothing to begin with, yet they soon manage to build a complete and viable colony. Watching the progression is a rich learning experience. Other beekeepers prefer

to start with an established colony, especially when they are unsure of their skills. Either preference is fine.

Feeding

Almost without exception, packages must be fed to get them started. Nucs may not need to be fed at all, or only fed for a short time.

Local conditions

If you buy a nuc from a local supplier, the queen is more apt to be bred locally and so be adapted to local conditions. The queens included with a package are usually from the southeastern states or northern California and are adapted to those conditions.

Intimidation factor

A number of people have told me they preferred a nuc because they were afraid of shaking a package of bees into the hive. For a new beekeeper, I can see where that may be scary. But if nothing else, beekeeping is rich with alternatives. If you don't want to shake bees out of a package, you don't have to. See this post for an alternative method: [Easiest package installation ever.](#)

And the winner is . . .

Personally, I never recommend one system over the other unless the beekeeper has particular concerns that can be addressed by one or the other. Both methods work, but they both have upsides and downsides. Decide which of the factors are most important to you and then make your decision based on that. Just remember, you can succeed easily with either option.



Take your Bee Supplement

According to Cheng-Kang Tang from National Taiwan University, a post-doctoral entomologist and first author on new research into the deformed wing virus, sodium butyrate (NaB) could aid in fighting off deformed wing virus (DWV). DWV causes bees' wings to crumple or be stunted in growth. The virus can also affect their memories, which can lead worker bees leaving the hive and not being able to find their way back.

"This compound could be like taking a vitamin for humans," Tang told BBC Science Focus magazine. "It could make the honeybees stronger if they were given it regularly." Found in a number of foods, sodium butyrate is a chemical compound made up of sodium, carbon, hydrogen and oxygen.

NaB is inexpensive and it's even found in the human gut when we eat dairy products and fiber.

A Real Sting Operation in Chile

From the BBC



Seven police officers were stung as they tried to remove beehives during the protest

Four beekeepers have been detained in Chile following a protest calling for government support for their industry.

The beekeepers held a demonstration outside the presidential palace in the capital, Santiago.

Seven police officers were stung as they tried to remove beehives placed by the protesters to block a main thoroughfare.

A prolonged drought has been ravaging beekeeping in Chile, affecting bees' food sources such as flowers and crops.

To highlight their cause, the beekeepers set up some 60 hives containing around 10,000 bees in front of the palace and prevented the police from dispersing the demonstration.



Club Info

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