STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

NOTES FOR 2025

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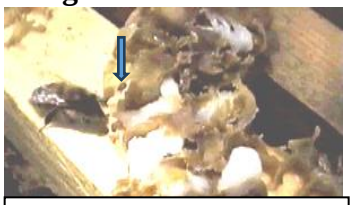
This will be the only Issue for August -- Summer is winding down!

Before I get into Looking back, let me say it is time to begin to prepare for winter. Varroa mite populations will continue to grow while bee populations begin to decline. Bees are using stored honey still available to them and a fall honey crop is not in the picture unless you live in an area with blooming plants. Feeding your bees now will stimulate brood production and lessen the impact Varroa mites will be doing to your bees when cooler weather arrives.

This month is almost the last chance you can really use to save a colony from the damage Varroa mites will do -- The chemical of choice at present seems to be VarroxSan™. Beekeeping literature is filled with ways to control Varroa mites but studies are showing that products used in the past are not producing expected results due to some resistance to those chemicals. Other new products are being developed but are not yet approved for use. A product called Norroa™ is currently under review by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) but it is not registered for sale at this time. If any of you using VarroxSan have any comments to make about using the product, I would appreciate your input.

I still have hope that we can find honeybees that build resistance to mites. The following photos show a honeybee attacking a varroa mite on newly exposed drone brood.

Honeybee sees mite



Honeybee moves closer

Honeybee attacks mite

I was asked recently what changes I have seen in beekeeping over the years. As most of you may be aware, I was born into a commercial beekeeping family. My very first bee yard I could call mine was in 1949 – I was 11 years old. But before that, it was my job to start the smokers for work crews, take off top covers, smoke entrances, and all the stuff a kid 7 or 8 years old could do. I remember coming home from school with the job of wiring frames – a job I still hate to this day as well as extracting honey. While other kids played ball or what-ever, I was assigned to work in the honey house – those steam powered uncapping knives, and hot, hot working conditions with nothing more than a hope for a good breeze of air. The honey house was designed with screen wire windows that allowed air to pass through the building while keeping bees out.
All hives were handled by lifting them except when working in the bee yard where we had one of those Kelley Hive Loaders. It was a boom attached to a center swivel with a hive cradle at the end of a cable. All bee hives were lined up in a row and this provided access to each hive because the truck could move between each row. The cradle moved up and down controlled by a 24-volt battery – thus allowing us to pick up supers or hive bodies to place on the truck. Today all this is done with forklifts and all bee hives are on pallets. After W.W. II jeeps became available and they were adapted with lifts. And then came a multitude of homemade fork lifts for moving hives. Getting stuck in bee yards was a common occurrence.

At the time, my father, suggested that I go to college – the first in my family to do so. It was getting harder and harder to make a living keeping bees. I really did not think much about the challenges ahead –beekeepers complained mostly about the changing farm practices largely due to reduced acreage of nectar and pollen plants. Each year brought in less and less honey causing many commercial operations to move west and northwest.

It is really amazing what colonies of bees can to in producing surplus honey when conditions are favorable and nectar producing plants are available. If one is looking to find someone today in the beekeeping business producing honey as the single source of income, you will find almost none that fit into that category. Follow the money trail – pollination, queen rearing, package and nuc production, and supplies for a large hobby beekeeping market.

The largest market for honey is being supplied with imported honey which has reduced the price for those commercially producing honey. I often check my subscriptions of Bee Culture Magazine and American Bee Journal for prices published in U.S. Honey crops and Markets. While local beekeepers in the Raleigh area are selling honey for $16.00 a pound (Of course this includes being bottled), commercial beekeepers are selling honey for less or a little more than $2.00 a pound because honey is imported into the U.S. from India, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vietnam, Argentina, and Brazil. Some of it for just a little over $1.00 a pound. I am even aware of a large box store selling 5 gal. buckets of honey for $175.00. (source listed as Vietnam, Canada, India, and U.S.).

Pollination is the biggest income factor for commercial beekeepers – without it, many would not survive for long.

But the biggest shock in my life came a year or so ago when I travelled back to Ohio. There was a road I used all the time when driving from Georgia to my home near Columbus. It was called Taylor Station Road. There is still a road sign off I – 270 with an exit to Taylor Station Road. It was a short-cut from I -270 to Havens Corner Rd. near

Gahanna. I wanted to visit the area I lived in for 30 years. I took the exit and came to a "T" intersection. Taylor Station Rd. was a fairly rural area with a lot of plant and forage possibilities for bees not a "T" road. In its place sometime during the last 12 years, a new hospital – a giant hospital had been built where Taylor Station Road went. Confused about turning left or right stunned me. I could not recognize the landmarks that existed only 12 years ago. I see the same thing happening in Raleigh and all other cities where cities are growing outward into what was called country. I heard a TV report that indicated that Wake County (Raleigh is located in Wake County) has lost 40 % of its farm land in the last 10 years.

August is a month with hot weather conditions and many plants have already set seeds. Thus, one must count on late blooming plants for bees to gather winter stores.

Task for this month:

- **Make sure your bees have access to water**
- **Bee behavior changes -- bees lacking nectar sources become more defensive**
- **Robbing is an issue with every colony. Mother nature is not kind to weak colonies.**
- **Feeding may be required**
- **Hive inspections are now more important than ever. Colonies with issues need attention while time is still available to save them.**
    - **Weak colonies can be strengthened by requeening, adding frames of brood from stronger hives, reducing hive entrances to prevent robbing, and feeding to supply winter stores.**
    - **The most important task is to understand the health of each colony. Treat for mites – many techniques such as brood interruption are off the table because colonies need bee populations for winter survival.**
    - **Some colonies at this time can be culled. Take losses in the fall and make increases in the spring. Time and money spent requeening a failing colony can be used to purchase new bees in the spring.**
    - **One comment on the issue above – Equipment can be reused and is a valuable asset to anyone planning to make colony increases in the spring. By using resources for saving strong hives – money spent on mite control for example – is far better spent than spending money on a failing hive.**
- **Look at your calendar and listen to the ticking of your clock. October and November are just around the corner!**

Keep in mind that if you have beekeeping questions or want to share beekeeping information with me, I do answer email request. Just email me at: stahlmanapiaries@aol.com.