

THE SKEP

COLUMBIANA & MAHONING COUNTY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

A Better Way to Bee: Winter Feedings



Longtime member Floyd Marshall, named Reserve Champ for his Honey and Bees Wax at last summer's Canfield Fair, explains his winter feeding techniques at January's monthly meeting.

According to Honey Bee Suite, ideally honey bees should not have to be fed in the winter. But sometimes nature conspires against us, and our colonies are plunged into winter with insufficient stores of honey – how much they need depends on the local climate and weather conditions, the size of the winter cluster, and the variety of bee.

Even with plenty of honey in the hive, bees sometime starve because they can't get to it. As a result, clusters starve with full frames of honey on both sides of them while others survive for many months on nothing more than sugar cakes and they continue to flourish the following spring.

Many colonies make it through a long, hard winter only to die in the early spring. If a hive makes it past the coldest part of the winter, it is easy to relax and not worry about the early spring—after all they made it through the worse part. But the fact is, they often use up their stores during the coldest months and starve after the weather starts to warm but before the nectar starts to flow. It is important to be vigilant about feeding during that “in-between” season.

What not to feed:

- Never feed bees honey that comes from an unknown source. Honey can contain the spores of diseases such as American Foul Brood.
- Never feed bees sugar with additives. Brown sugar contains molasses. Powdered sugar often contains cornstarch. Commercial fondant may contain flavorings and/or colorings. Any of these “extras” could cause honey bee dysentery.
- Although many commercial beekeepers use high-fructose corn syrup, be aware that it may contain hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF)—especially if it is old or has gotten warm. HMF is poisonous to bees.

The best feed:

- If you don't have extra honey from your own apiary to feed the bees, the next best thing is sugar syrup made from white table sugar. The syrup used in fall and winter should be in the proportion of two parts sugar to one part water by either weight or volume.
- If the temperatures in your area are going to be below 50°F (10°C), it is best to use fondant, sugar cakes (aka candy boards), or granulated sugar rather than syrup.
- Because table sugar lacks the micronutrients found in honey, you can add a feeding stimulant with essential oils such as Honey-B-Healthy or Pro Health to give them some added nourishment. (Continued on Page 2)

The Association's February meeting will be held on Sunday, February 16, at the Fellows Riverside Gardens / Davis Education & Visitor Center, 123 McKinley Avenue, Youngstown, OH 44509. The potluck luncheon takes place at 1 p.m. with the business meeting beginning at 2 p.m.



Winter Feedings (cont. from Page 1:**How to feed:**

- If your temperatures are warm (above 50°F) you can use liquid feed and one of the internal feeders so your bees don't have to go outside to eat. Also, you may want to add a mold inhibitor.
- If your temperatures are going to be cold, you can use a candy board, a mountain camp rim, or an empty shallow super filled with sugar cakes.

When to feed:

- If a hive feels light in the fall, you should start feeding liquid sugar syrup (2 parts sugar to one part water) as soon as possible. When the temperature starts dipping below 50°F, switch to one of the cold-weather methods.
- It doesn't hurt to feed sugar proactively. Some beekeepers begin to offer sugar cakes as soon as the weather gets cold. In this way, bees eat both honey and sugar simultaneously throughout the winter, and the honey supply lasts longer. This method is likely better than having them eat only honey (and then only sugar) because honey contains essential nutrients.
- In any case, check the hives on the occasional dry and sunny day. Move frames of honey closer to the cluster, if possible, or add feed if necessary. Do not be lulled into thinking that they have "made it" just because the temperatures are warming in the spring.

How to Submit Bee Samples for Diagnosis



By Barbara Bloetscher, etymologist at the Ohio State University

Ohio beekeepers are fortunate in that the USDA Beltsville Honey Bee Diagnostic Laboratory still conducts basic pest and disease diagnoses of honey bees at no cost for registered beekeepers in the United States of America.

It is important to send samples to a laboratory that is unbiased, professional and reliable so that the results can be trusted. The Beltsville Lab is run by well trained and knowledgeable staff who see a great deal of honey bee problems every year and can provide sound advice.

Several reasons may prompt the beekeeper to have his/ her bees tested:

Barbara Bloetscher serves as coordinator of OSU's "Integrated Pest Management in Schools" program.

- Any beekeeper who wishes to sell queens, bees, packages, or nucs in Ohio must have a Queen Certificate issued by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) **before** these goods are sold, per Ohio Apiary Law 909.08. This rule is to ensure that the bees are healthy and free of serious pests and diseases, mainly American foulbrood, *Nosema*, plus varroa and tracheal mites. The rule requires the apiary from which the bees are produced, to have both adult bees and a section of brood sampled for diagnosis.

- In most cases, the beekeeper needs only to write on his/her Annual Apiary Registration form of the intent to sell bees. The 2014 Registration form provides a box for the beekeeper to check if he/she plans to sell bees. Beekeepers must apply for a Queen Certificate by April 1 of each year that the beekeeper plans to sell bees/queens or nucs.
- The County Apiary Inspector will receive a copy of these forms and inspect these yards first. The inspector will collect a composite sample of 50-100 bees from the total number of colonies per location and place them in alcohol, then cut a section of brood from the colonies per location.
- If the results received from the USDA Honey Bee Lab are negative for the pests described above, ODA will send the Queen Certificate to the bee-keeper. The beekeeper should keep this document and either show or give a copy of it to those who purchase the bees.
- If a colony does not look vigorous or healthy or the queen is not producing as expected, the beekeeper may want to have the bees tested to determine if a disease/ pest is present. If a disease/pest is found, the beekeeper can then treat appropriately, instead of guessing or treating unnecessarily.
- Many entrepreneurs are now raising their own queens and making colonies exclusively from their own hives instead of ordering packages. To maintain the quality of his/her stock, the beekeeper will want to have the bees tested at least once a year. (continue on Page 3)

How to Submit Bee Samples for Diagnosis (continued from Page 2)

- Sometimes an unknown insect or strange looking bee or pupa is seen in the hive. The beekeeper can send these samples for ID as well.

To submit a sample, the item must be collected correctly and mailed following recommended guidelines so that the package will arrive at the Lab in the best condition. A moldy or damaged sample cannot be diagnosed and thus would result in a waste of the beekeeper's time and money.

Submission of Samples for Diagnosis:**General Instructions**

- ✓ Beekeepers, bee businesses, and regulatory officials may submit samples.
- ✓ Samples are accepted from U.S. states and territories, and Canada; **samples are NOT accepted from other countries.**
- ✓ Include a short description of the problem along with your name, address, phone number or e-mail address.
- ✓ At this time the service has no charge.
- ✓ For additional information, call (301) 504-8821 or e-mail: bart.smith@ars.usda.gov

How to Send Adult Honey Bees

- ✓ Send at least 100 bees and if possible, select bees that are dying or that died recently. **Decayed bees are not satisfactory for examination.**
- ✓ Bees should be placed in and soaked with 70% ethyl, methyl, or isopropyl alcohol as soon as possible after collection and packed in leak-proof containers.
- ✓ USPS, UPS, and FedEx do not accept shipments containing alcohol. Just prior to mailing samples, pour off all excess alcohol to meet shipping requirements.

How to Send Brood Samples

- ✓ A comb sample should be at least 2 x 2 inches and contain as much of the dead or discolored brood as possible. **NO HONEY SHOULD BE PRESENT IN THE SAMPLE.**
- ✓ The comb can be sent in a paper bag or loosely wrapped in a paper towel, newspaper, etc. and sent in a heavy cardboard box. **AVOID** wrappings such as plastic, aluminum foil, waxed paper, tin, glass, etc. because they promote decomposition and the growth of mold.
- ✓ If a comb cannot be sent, the probe used to examine a diseased larva in the cell may contain enough material for tests. The probe can be wrapped in paper and sent to the laboratory in an envelope.

Send samples to:

**Bee Disease Diagnosis Bee Research Laboratory
Bldg. 306 Room 316**

Beltsville Agricultural Research Center - East Beltsville, MD 20705

Bee Packages

Contact Board Director Don Kovach at kovach87@aol.com or 330-792-6797 for information on package bees.

You can also visit:

www.simpsonbeesupply.com

This year's Queens: Carnolins

Cost per package: 3 Pounds \$105

4 Pounds with two queens \$146

Make checks payable to:

**Don Kovach
3374 DeCamp Road
Youngstown, OH 44511**



Online used-car retailer Carmax features a beekeeper (left) in its 2014 Super Bowl ad. Board member Don Kovach was quick to point out that the beekeeper's veil is on backwards!
(provided by Don Kovach)

President's Corner



By Bruce Deafenbaugh

At the last meeting we learned several ways to feed your bees and when to use each method. On a warm day (above 50-degrees Fahrenheit) when putting sugar on your hive, hopefully some of the girls will welcome you. If, on the other hand, you have hives that didn't survive, clean them by scraping off any burr comb – but be sure to save the propolis: It offers good health benefits, or you can make lip balms or healing ointments. Recipes are available via handouts which we will continue to provide at our upcoming meetings.

You can also sell your propolis. One company that could be interested in purchasing it is Beehive Botanicals (1-800-BEEHIVE). Beehive Botanicals was started over 35 years ago by a remarkable man, Warren Ogren, whose entrepreneurial spirit still lives on today at the company, now operated by his daughter and granddaughter, Linda and Michelle Graham and Sally Gagan. The company began business as an exporting company of one product, bee propolis, to several countries in Europe.

If your bees did not survive, to help determine why please consider sending a sample to the Beltsville, MD, address detailed in the "How to Submit Bee Samples for Diagnosis" article on Page 2.

If you've been caulking old foundations to help curb diseases and keeping your old hives clean, it might be time to replace them with new wax or plastic foundations, several of which are offered for sale at regional seminars. It's a good idea to call ahead first – while some vendors have plenty of merchandise on hand, others will not ship new beeswax foundations until the weather breaks. And you'd better hope the new foundation arrives before your new bees do!

Save your wax scrapings and when the time comes you can repurpose them in a solar wax melter. As spring approaches, so does home improvement season, so keep an eye out for discarded window frames and doors glass – you can easily build your own solar wax melters by upcycling these old materials. Our Association library features a nice selection of DVDs, VHS videotapes, books and handouts that detail how to make your own melters, hives and a variety of other useful components for your collection. As members, these are your materials to use, so visit our mobile library during our upcoming monthly meetings. The library has been recently refreshed and reorganized by new librarians Anna Detoro and Nick Deemer, who've also been busy converting our old VHS library to DVD, so stay tuned.

Finally, a special thanks to our generous suppliers who have provided us with catalogs and door prizes. It means a lot to these folks to hear back from you, so be sure to mention our club when doing business with them:

Koehnen; Better Bee; Miller Bee Supply; Sailor Plastic; Mann Lake; Glory Bee; Pigeon Mount Trading Co.; A.I. Root – Bee Culture; Drapers; Beeline Apiaries; B&B Honey Farm; Blue Sky; Brustly Mt. Bee Farm; Cowen

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