

Lake Cumberland Beekeepers Association

Newsletter
August 2016

Message from David Gilbert, LCBA President

As the honey harvest is winding down beekeepers are beginning to think about the upcoming fall and winter seasons. Varroa mite treatment is a must if you have removed your honey supers. Whether you are using oxalic acid, mineral oil or thymol a good management practice is to treat for these pests. Be sure to examine your hive by using a sticky board or alcohol wash to determine if you do have mites. Another must is to read all labels completely and follow the manufacturer's directions. Soon the bees will be gathering goldenrod when they start blooming, along with the clover which is still abundant.

I hope to see each of you Monday night. Our speaker will be giving important information concerning fall and winter management.

Best wishes in beekeeping,

David Gilbert

Next LCBA meeting will be held on Monday August 15, 2016

6pm Doors open for general discussion and advice on bees and beekeeping

6.30pm LCBA business meeting

7pm Laura Rogers from Kentucky State University will give a presentation on Fall Hive Management.

Laura's talk will cover varroa mite treatment, dealing with wax moth and small hive beetle infestations in the hive, the amount of honey a hive of bees will need to see them through the winter, plus a general discussion on hive over-wintering tactics.

Meeting venue: Pulaski County Extension Service Office. LCBA meetings are free and open to the public.

Nominating committee set to search for 2017-2018 LCBA officers

As mandated by Article 7 of our by-laws three members have volunteered to be on our nominating committee. Dan Crockett, Mike Wooton and David Spears came forward at July's meeting and volunteered to assist the association in searching for next year's officers. If you are interested in serving the two-year term, contact one of these members. All positions, which consist of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, are open and will be voted on at our October meeting. They will be looking for members with enthusiasm and time to volunteer in continuing our mission of promoting enjoyable beekeeping in the Lake Cumberland area.

Apiguard varroa mite treatment and AP-23 artificial pollen will be offered for sale at the August meeting at a substantial saving to LCBA members

At the August meeting, LCBA will again have single-dose quantities of **Apiguard** varroa mite treatment for sale. Treatment is 2 doses per hive. Single doses will be on sale at the meeting at a cost of \$2.00 per 50mg dose.

As stated on Dadant's website, "Apiguard is a slow release thymol gel, a new and effective treatment. A natural treatment with efficacy rates ranged from 85% to 95% and an overall average of 93% even after thousands of treatments."

AP23 artificial pollen feed produced by Dadant's will be offered for sale at a cost of \$2.00 per lb.

According to Dadant's website, "AP23 stands for artificial pollen and is the 23rd formulation to be developed and tested to date. . . It is formulated to deliver all of the nutrient levels, in a highly palatable blend of specifically selected ingredients. It is a high protein feed developed for all levels of beekeepers. It helps maintain colony strength by boosting populations, which result in better crop pollination and honey crops. "

For full details and application information for both of these products, visit Dadant's website at www.dadant.com.

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July 2016 LCBA meeting report

Following the business meeting, Ray Tucker and Dorothy Morgan talked briefly of their recent experiences at the Heartland Apicultural Society Conference held in Bowling Green. Ray Tucker emphasized the importance of treating hives for varroa mites, to enable bee populations to build up for the winter.

LCBA had single doses of Apiguard, a varroa mite treatment, for sale at the meeting. (Apiguard will also be offered for sale at the August 2016 meeting).

Dorothey Morgan had attended classes given by Purdue University on the rearing of 'mite-biter' queen bees. According to research carried out at Purdue, it had been found that bees in some of the University's 100 colonies were dealing with varroa mites by biting the mites' legs off. You have to applaud the sharp eyes of the researcher who first noticed this phenomenon! Queen bees are being raised from the hives that have developed this form of mite control, and these queens will eventually be available for sale to the public so that the queens' genetic traits can be disbursed nationwide.*

Pat Rizenbergs described the use of a refractometer, which is an instrument for measuring the moisture level of honey. Honey needs to have a moisture level of 18.2 or less before it is harvested, otherwise the honey will ferment and spoil. LCBA owns a handheld refractometer, which is available for rent to LCBA members (contact Imants Rizenbergs at 606-679-5087 for details). Ray Tucker demonstrated his personal digital refractometer, which had improved accuracy and ease of use over the handheld version. However, this is a costly piece of equipment, perhaps only justified for large honey producers.

LCBA meeting attendees had been invited to bring honey from their own hives for moisture testing and also for a honey tasting. We had 4 different samples of honey to choose from for the tasting, each with a totally different color, aroma, viscosity and taste.



Tasting and talking honey are (l-r) Pat Rizenbergs, Carola and Jim Cason, David Spears, Tony Saylor and Mike Wooton

In conjunction with the honey tasting, LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs provided a delectable treat for everyone to try: a simple combination of fresh goat's cheese, honey and chopped walnuts, served on plain crackers, raised the experience of honey tasting to a totally new level. Thank you, Pat, for your generosity and inspiration!

For more photos of the evening's activities, and information about renting the LCBA equipment, visit the LCBA website at www.lakecumberlandbeekeepers.com

*** LISTEN to Tammy Horn Potter** talk to Across Kentucky presenter Mike Feldhaus on July 29, 2016 about the mite-biter queens! Go to <https://www.kyfb.com/federation/newsroom/across-kentucky-july-29-2016/>

Using the handheld refractometer

While the refractometer is a simple instrument to use, it is critical that usage instructions are followed precisely to provide a correct reading. An initial attempt to measure the moisture level of one of the honey samples brought to the meeting showed a level of nearly 20! The screen was carefully cleaned off, and at a second attempt, with the honey properly applied, a more acceptable reading of 18.3 was obtained.

To use the refractometer correctly, a small drop of honey is placed on the instrument's screen. The plastic lid is closed over the screen. The honey must cover the screen completely, and be free of air bubbles.

To ensure proper application, it is important that you **DO NOT USE YOUR FINGER TO SMEAR THE HONEY OVER THE SCREEN**. Instead, a wooden toothpick may be used to get the honey to cover the screen.

Honey should be in place on the screen for at least one minute before checking moisture levels, to allow the screen and the honey to reach the same temperature.

After use, clean the screen off gently, using a soft, damp cloth. Scratching the screen will result in damage to the instrument.

LCBA outreach

Wolf Creek Observation Hive disaster

In July, LCBA received an urgent request for assistance with the observation hive at Wolf Creek Fish Hatchery, and we immediately drove down to investigate. We had been part of the team presenting exhibits on bees at Wolf Creek over the summer, and while the observation hive was not a part of our exhibit, we were familiar with its situation.

On arrival at Wolf Creek, Environmental Education Specialist Moria Painter presented us with a cupful of wriggling grubs that she had collected from the enclosure in which the observation hive was housed. We feared straight away that this was a disaster situation.

The observation hive is extremely difficult to get to, situated as it is within a cupboard with access from outside the building through a narrow door. The bees use a small tunnel which leads between the lower hive body through the building's wall to the outside world.



The base of the lower hive box: a mass of small hive beetle larvae swimming in fermented honey, and if we needed any confirmation, there was a strong smell of rotten oranges.

There were a lot of unhappy bees flying about, so we put on our protective gear and lit the smoker before investigating further. The hive consisted of 2 deeps and a medium super, all joined together with wooden slats. Apparently the beekeeper who had been looking after the hive was able to remove all three boxes as one unit in order to inspect the bees. Instead, we removed the slats and took off the boxes one by one. The super was entirely empty. The two deeps were covered with wax moth webbing, larvae and pupae, and all of the stores were slimed by the activities of small hive beetle.

We checked carefully for the queen, but there was no sign of her, nor was there any brood in any stage of development. We suspect that the queen and her bees had deserted the hive earlier, and the bees presently in the hive had hatched since her departure.



The frames were festooned in wax moth webbing. The honey stores were covered in a gleam of fermented honey following contaminations by small hive beetle.

We advised Moria that the hive was a total loss. We removed all of the frames, washed them out under a hose, and consigned them to the fishery's deep freeze. Subsequently, we have advised that the frames should all be destroyed.

We now learn that the hive we dealt with was not the only colony that had been lost in this situation; previous colonies had been wiped out on an annual basis.

Our analysis of the situation is that, with the hive being so difficult to access, it has not been possible to adequately check the health of the bees on a regular basis. Although the hive we saw had been healthy at one time, with plenty of stores and crescents which had held brood, the bees had not been able to thrive and had been overcome by small hive beetle and wax moth.

- Hilary and Ray Forsyth



The hollows excavated by wax moth larvae when they pupate were clearly visible on the interior walls of the hive body.

Visit the LCBA website for reports and photos of LCBA outreach events,
www.lakecumberlandbeekeepers.com

August news from the FSA

Producers in Pulaski Co. implement conservation practices that benefit pollinators and upland birds

In June, 2016, the first acres of field border were planted in Pulaski County for the Conservation Reserve Program's Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds (CP33) Initiative.

The Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds Initiative is part of the Conservation Reserve Program designed to convert marginally productive cropland along the borders of agricultural fields into grass buffers that create more habitats for upland birds. A recent enhancement to Kentucky's practice specifications for CP33 allows the borders to be planted to a Pollinator Habitat seeding mixture that serves as upland bird habitat, but is designed to also offer pollinators at least three species of native forbs (wildflowers) in bloom all throughout the growing season. Local producers have implemented the practice around field margins adjacent to forested areas, and say they expect to see the overall profitability of those fields improve, as they are taking low-yielding areas out of crop production, in exchange for fixed income through the CRP annual payment. This saves money on seed, fertilizer, and equipment inputs that are not likely to be fully recovered from the low yields generated by those 30' margins where crops compete against trees for sunlight, nutrients, and water. This is a great example of how conservation programs can work for local producers both economically and environmentally.

PROGRAM PAYMENTS

Eligible producers enrolling in CRP for CP-33 can earn \$150/acre sign-up incentive, an annual per-acre rental payment for each of the 10 years of enrollment (based on soil type; averages \$126/ac. for Pulaski Co.), and cost share and practice incentive payments which, when combined, are estimated to cover 90% of the out-of-pocket costs of establishing the practice.

ENROLLING IN THE PROGRAM

Local FSA offices will take offers for the CRP Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds Initiative on an ongoing basis. Eligible land may be enrolled at any time. There is, however, a limit on the number of CP-33 acres that can be enrolled in the state, so if a producer is interested in implementing this practice before planting their 2017 crop, it would be appropriate for those offers to begin now, so that the contracts could potentially be approved and ready well ahead of time for seeding next spring.

Local beekeepers, or individuals with interest in promoting development of pollinator habitat are encouraged to share this information with crop producers in your community, to help build awareness of the need for the practice, and share information about the program, as contained in this article. Any tenant or landowner/operator could inquire with FSA about the suitability/eligibility of this program for their land, however an owner or operator must actually submit the offer.

For more information about FSA and its conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation, or contact your local FSA county office at <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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Bee news from Casey County

July/August bee report

Late July brought us some mighty warm and humid days to contend with, but the good rains continued and as a result there should be a good supply of pollen and nectar going into the fall.

Our bees have been busy on the plentiful shining (or dwarf) sumac, which started flowering just as smooth sumac was finishing. Now, goldenrod is just starting to bloom, and we have noticed that hive inspection boards are stained yellow from pollen dropped by the bees. White asters, another fall favorite for the bees, are filled with buds and will be in flower by the end of the month. Indications are that this will provide a good flow of nectar and perhaps some honey for us as well as the bees.

We have been regularly inspecting our bee hives using

inspection (or sticky) boards in place to keep a check on varroa mite levels. All varroa counts were low through most of July, then numbers suddenly spiked on one of the hives! We immediately put varroa mite treatment in place on all of the hives. We used MiteAway Quick Strips, a formulation containing oxalic acid. Mite drop levels during treatment indicated that 2 of the hives had big infestations of mites, although counts from the other 5 hives were low. We will continue to monitor the situation to make sure that the treatment was effective.

This experience was a heads-up to us: constant monitoring is essential in beekeeping, and a single cursory check for mite levels is just not enough.

- Hilary Forsyth