Rhode Island Bee Keepers Association

Newsletter

Final Quarterly Issue / Fall 2013

Whole Foods Honey Standard Report (Summary)

By Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

The August 19, 2013 issue of TIME magazine featured a cover story "A World Without Bees" in which a Whole Foods store in Providence was mentioned in the first paragraph of the story for its innovative approach to highlight the importance of bees to our food sources. RIBA member Bonnie Combs came up with the idea to remove from its produce section all of the food that depends on pollination. Of 453 items, 237 had disappeared including apples, lemons, zucchini and other squashes. Celeste Nadworny and I were invited by Bonnie Combs to host a RIBA exhibit and educational display during Whole Foods' celebration of Pollinator Week in June (see picture on p.8 of RIBA Newsletter Summer 2013 issue).

This article is not a commercial message for the Whole Foods corporation, but a chance to report the good they are doing by being interested in the overall health of bees and in being among the first to develop a scientifically-based Organic Honey Standard for their use and, potentially, for that of American beekeepers. I summarize here some of the main points of their lengthy report "National Organic Standards Board, Organic Apiculture Recommendation" (2010) which Whole Foods educator Bonnie Combs kindly shared with me after consultation with her employer about making public selected parts of its excellent set of recommendations.

The report begins with the fact that honey, and its associated products are valued in the organic food industry. As a key alternative to refined sugars and a respected contributor to managing allergies and abrasions, honey represents an iconic product, one that consumers assume is one of the purest and simplest ways to consume a product that is close to nature. This recommendation was produced for the USDA standards to govern the production of organic honey and honey-related products, such as pollen, propolis, royal jelly, beeswax, and bee venom. Because the biology and behavior of honeybees is so markedly different from other types of organic livestock, and because they fly and forage a wide area, specific standards are required to ensure consistency between organic certifiers and to ensure that organic honey meets consumers' expectations for organic products.

Honey is the end result of an intricate process of Nature, performed by honey bees, which also serves as a critical input in successful agriculture and food for other species of animals and birds. At least 30% of agriculture relies directly on pollination, a job that bees perform. As the bees collect nectar and pollen as food sources they travel from flower to flower on a variety of different plants, they carry the pollen thereby 'pollinating' other plants and crops, a necessary catalyst to crop maturity. Thus, the honey bee promotes biodiversity. That the bees and their forage are managed organically has a significant impact on our food. It is important to create reliable, rigorous standards that ensure the quality and organic integrity of the food supply.

Front cover of TIME magazine, August 19, 2013

In the past decade, several issues have arisen that pose real threats to the health and survival of all honey bees. Tracheal mites, varroa mites and Colony Collapse Disorder have all been identified as reasons for significant declines in healthy bee colonies, in fact colonies that are able to survive at all. The commercial organic honey industry is well in place, despite the lack of organic standards specific to organic apiculture. Refined standards, which provide much needed clarification on practices specific to honeybee production, will ensure the continued success and growth of the U.S. organic honey market. While many of the certified producers have honored all the requirements of the existing regulation, there has been some variation in certifier expectations and interpretation. The European Union and Canada have detailed apiculture requirements as part of their organic standards. In order to facilitate effective trade with other countries, and to effectively compete in the international market, it is important that a U.S. organic apiculture standard be implemented.

The following are materials the Working Group believes must be reviewed for appropriate status and petitioned for addition to the National List if necessary: formic acid, thymol, and carbon dioxide. The Group does not believe that oxytetracline or terramycin should be approved for use in organic beekeeping. Antibiotics are not permitted for any other type of livestock. Synthetic miticides are also not permitted. The EPA list of prohibited substances (CFR 205.671) include asbestos, lead-based paint, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

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Whole Foods (Cont.)

The Working Group also discussed materials used in the smokers. The Group agreed that synthetic materials in bee smokers are prohibited unless listed on the National List of approved substances. The group recommends that folic acid and lactic acid should have the following annotations for use in mite control: Folic Acid – for use as a pesticide to control varroa mites solely within honeybee hives, after the last honey harvest; to be discontinued 30 days prior to addition of bee product harvest equipment and Lactic acid – to be used after the last honey harvest and to be discontinued 30 days prior to addition of bee product harvest equipment.
Apiculture practices standard.

The application of this organic practice standard is meant to regulate the production of bee products, and not to require the use of organic bees for organic crop pollination. Basic regulation includes 1) knowledge of the origin and sourcing of bee colonies 2) The transition, or transfer, of bee products from an apiculture operation that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be from colonies and hives which have been under continuous organic management for no less than one year prior to the removal of the bee products from the hive. At the beginning of the one year transition, foundation wax (if used) must be replaced and all brood comb must be new and produced by bees under organic management. 3) Foundation may be sourced from: organic foundation, plastic foundation dipped in organic or conventional wax. Once an entire apiary has been converted to organic production, all plastic foundation must be dipped in organic wax. Queen bees are not required to undergo transition. 4) Replacement Bees introduced from organic sources or from non-organic sources (i.e. packaged bees), are permitted for replacement purposes provided, that the bees from non-organic sources are limited to 25% of colonies present in the previous honey flow; are managed organically for at least 60 days; and harvest equipment is removed from the hive during the 60 days.

A producer of organic apiculture products must develop an organic apiculture plan that must include: 1) a map of the apiary which shows the location of the hives, the forage zone, including the location of organic and wild land, and the location of all non-organic areas and human housing 2) the Forage Zone, a description of all crops grown, the quantity of organic and/or wild forage to be provided per colony 3) The Surveillance Zone provides a description of crops grown and high risk activities such as sanitary landfills, incinerators, sewage treatment facilities, power plants, golf courses, human housing, towns or cities, land to which prohibited materials are applied, and all other sources of potential contamination located in the surveillance zone of 2.2 miles (3.4 km) beyond the forage zone. Crops produced using excluded methods, deemed by the accredited certifying agent to be attractive to bees, are not permitted on land within the surveillance zone. 4) A description of the water sources available in the forage zone must be provided.

Recognizing that bees may occasionally and minimally forage on non-organic land in the surveillance zone, the Organic System Plan (OSP) must demonstrate that sufficient organic forage is available within the forage zone throughout the year. Given that even in well-managed operations with sufficient forage in the forage zone, a small number of bees will travel out of the forage zone to forage, the OSP must also demonstrate the crops in surveillance zone offer minimal risk to organic integrity.

The producer of an organic apiculture operation may provide supplemental feed from organic honey, organic sugar syrup, and/or pollen substitutes and

Bonnie Combs at Whole Foods Hive Donation

supplements that are allowed under EPA/CFR 205.603, except, that, the producer must not provide organic sugar syrup less than 15 days prior to placement of bee product collection equipment. However, the producer of an organic apiculture operation must not maintain colonies during the forage season in an area where a significant risk of contamination by prohibited materials exists within a 1.8 mile (3 kilometers) radius of the apiary, as described in the operation's organic apiculture plan.

Approved hive construction materials include: hives made of non-synthetic materials, including wood and metal, not treated with prohibited substances. Outside hive surfaces may be painted with non-lead based paints. Plastic foundation may be used if dipped in organic beeswax. The producer must establish and maintain preventive health care practices, including: selection of bee stocks, hive densities, and colony locations appropriate to site-specific conditions and resistant to prevalent diseases and pests; Maintenance of adequate supplies of honey and pollen in the hive, including leaving hives with reserves of honey and pollen sufficient for the colony to survive the dormancy period; use of foundation wax not contaminated with diseases or pests; destruction of equipment and bees contaminated with disease or pests; use of approved management methods or modified equipment or materials to control pests and diseases provided, that such materials are not prohibited under CFR 205.604; and use of therapeutic applications of synthetic materials, provided, that such materials are allowed under § 205.603.

The organic honey producer must not: accept the presence of pests, parasites, or disease without initiating efforts to restore the health of the colony; use synthetic materials not listed as allowed under § 205.603; use non-synthetic materials prohibited under § 205.604; use lumber treated with synthetic materials not listed as allowed under § 205.603 or non-synthetic materials prohibited under § 205.604 for hive construction materials; use synthetic materials or non-synthetic materials prohibited under § 205.604 in bee smokers; use synthetic bee repellants to remove bees from their honey; annually destroy bee colonies following honey flows; rotate hives between organic and non-organic management; or sell apiculture products as organic if they contain a residue of a prohibited material greater than 5 percent of the Environmental Protection Agency's tolerance for the specific material, pursuant to § 205.671.

Many Beekeepers and those who sell honey and honey products are uncertain as to what a label of "Organic Honey" actually means. The Whole Foods Honey Standard model is certainly an excellent way to advance the movement to develop a national honey standard, a much needed clarification of what is and what is not organic honey. Many thanks to Bonnie Combs (a perfect name for a fellow beekeeper) for her help and support with this article.

Last Quarterly Newsletter

Outgoing editor Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

Quarterly publication of the RIBA Newsletter ends with this Fall 2013 issue. After nearly five years as editor of the newsletter that combined local news and RIBA events with beekeeping features from around the US and the world, it was decided to shift to a monthly online newsletter produced by current RIBA President Chuck Woods.

I took over from former President Everett Zurlinden who designed the 12 page newsletter format after there was dissatisfaction expressed with a two-page monthly newsletter that consisted solely of RIBA News and brief notes. RIBA's president will experiment with a return to this model.

It has been both educational and rewarding for me to produce the RIBA Newsletter, and I thank all who have been supportive over the years I have served as editor, especially those who sent interesting materials and submitted ideas or pictures. Fare thee well.

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

Whole Foods Donates Beehive

For the second year the Whole Foods store in Providence has donated a beehive to a worthy community organization to support community beekeeping. This year the donated hive went to the Roger Williams Park Community Garden located in the park near to the Greenhouse and Arboretum. Whole Foods' Bonnie Combs speaking at the July 24th gathering when the hives was delivered to the garden.

Fall Feeding

presentation by President Chuck Wood at the September 15 RIBA meeting

As the honey flow is over, it is time to feed, the bees need at least 30 days of feeding to process honey so that it doesn't ferment and that there is enough honey for the winter, at least 60 pounds per hive. The fall standard for feeding is 2 parts sugar to one part water to stimulate storing of honey and not use energy on collection and processing. One gallon of feed is approximately equal to 7 lbs of liquid stored. 50 lbs of sugar to 3 gallons of water, do not boil the liquid. Feeding is now essential for the survival of the hives into spring, when the screen bottom boards can be closed off during the spring brood rearing seasons. It is not necessary to close off the screen bottom boards for the winter and the ventilation may be beneficial. A top feeder holding about 1.5 to 2.0 gallons of liquid is useful or a freezer bag of the sugar water with a knife-slit at the top is also a good idea.

As for the use of fumigillin as a nosema preventative, beekeepers disagree; Ed Lafferty noted that if there are no signs of nosema there is no need to treat prophylactically and unnecessary use will decrease the effectiveness of the antibiotic. Woods recommends the use of Honey-B-Healthy, a vitamin supplement, in feeding or as a drenching solution using a spray bottle.

It is time to put on the mouse guards before the first frost when mice are likely to take up winter residence in the hives. Mice will eat beeswax, honey and dead bees. Hives with two brood chambers or three mediums are ideal for overwintering. A sheet of homosote is ideal for keeping the hive dry during the winter as moisture is the worst enemy of overwintering hives.

Beware, Hive Beetles

Vice-president Ed Lafferty commented about his notice of the presence of hive beetles in greater numbers than he has observed in all of his years of beekeeping. In one of his hives he discovered drone comb full of putrid honey, slime and loss of the hive to the onslaught of a large number of hive beetles. He noted that hive beetles are difficult to control, that they can overwinter in the hive cluster, and that they retreat into sandy soil only to reappear and re-infect hives in the spring. Moreover, the bees cannot kill them because of their hard shell, but they can propilize them. Thought to be a problem for southern beekeepers he observed that the problem is increasing in New England and he anticipates that "slime out"—the overall effect of hive beetle infestation—will become more prevalent in the future. This year 250 hives were brought from Florida to pollinate the cranberry bogs, and this can be a major route of transmission. "This is much worse than wax moth," he noted. Hive beetle infestation is notable for the offensive smell of the hive and the telltale slime. Hive Beetle traps, that use oil to drown the beetles, and treating the ground into which they retreat are usually effective. The study of anticipated hive beetle problems in the future is a good idea for research projects at Rhode Island College, where hives exist for public education, or another university with an interest in entomology and the health of honey bees in the northeast.

BEE VENOM AND HIV

Scientists from Washington University School of Medicine, St Louis, have found that bee venom can kill the HIV virus without harming the body or its cells. Bees could hold the key to preventing HIV transmission, through an anti-HIV vaginal gel and other treatments. Scientists found that melittin, a toxin in bee venom, destroys the virus (Antiviral Therapy report).

Theoretically melittin-loaded particles could be injected into an HIV-positve person to eliminate the virus in the bloodstream. Because the toxin attacks the virus' outer layer, the virus is likely to develop a resistance to the substance making it more effective than other existing HIV drugs.

Money Matters

Audit of the Books (from Lori Dobson, RIBA co-Treasurer)

The 2012 financial records have been reviewed and deemed reasonable and acceptable. A big Thank-You to Lou Chasse and Lori Hill-Joslin who volunteered to be this year's auditors.

Who's Who?

We have 2 treasurers (huh?) how does that work? Upon recommendation of last year's auditors, the position of Treasurer was separated into the rolls of receivables and payables, or "cash-in" and "cash-out" as a best practice, both as a transparent way of dealing with the increased money flow, and to preserve the sanity of the people who have to handle it all. So when you pay money in for any reason, it will ultimately go to Cindy (cash-in). When bills are paid or people are reimbursed, the check comes from Lori (cash-out). But don't worry if you still get them confused — just give your payment or reimbursement request to either of them and they will simply pass it to the correct treasurer.

Did You Know?

Anyone can see the financial records at every meeting? There is a quarterly report prepared at the end of each quarter, and you can review it along with all the supporting documents between quarters, such as bank statements and bills, in the big white binder titled "2013 Reports and Treasurers' Records." Just ask one of the treasurers for it. This is your bee association, and you have a right to know.

RED HONEY PROMPTS STATE INVESTIGATION

(Deseret News, Andrew Adams, September 4, 2013)

Red Honey concerns in Utah

Red honey turned up in commercial hives in many counties in Utah state, believed to be the result of a yet to be named large commercial operation that began "open feeding" operation whereby bees were fed a concoction of crushed rehydrated candy canes, and other candy materials. Other bees discovered the caches and returned contaminated to surrounding bee yards.

The red honey began showing up in July and was discarded. Also Chris Spencer noted that breeder queens had to be removed for evaluation along with problems with brood production as well as data collection material from drones. "The dye is in the genetic material," he said which it should not be. The county bee inspector has resigned sue to fatigue from the situation. Thus far none of the red honey has gotten to the market, citing its terrible taste, at best tasting like peppermint, coconut or cherry. Utah Dept of Agriculture and Food downplayed any danger to the public, but they are meeting with other local beekeepers to determine the seriousness of the situation. Some argued that the red honey violates the Utah Honey Standard Identity Act which identifies honey as a product that originates from a plant source and thus the red honey cannot be sold in stores.

Dates for the 2014 RIBA Meetings

JANUARY 10, 2014, WEDNESDAY 7-9PM
FEBRUARY 9, 2014, SUNDAY 4-6PM
MARCH 9, 2014, SUNDAY 4-6PM
APRIL 4, 2014 FRIDAY NIGHT 7-9PM
MAY 4, 2014 SPRING BANQUET DINNER AT 5PM.
Locations may vary so stay tuned.

LATE SUMMER into FALL HONEY REPORT and ADVICE

(extracted from USDA Honey Reports by James Praski, with much thanks for his years of contributions to the RIBA Newsletter's "Honey Reports")

JUNE AND JULY

New England weather for the summer months of June and July ranged from cool to mild with a few very hot and humid days and plenty of rainfall for ideal soil moisture conditions. The weather in July had average temperatures generally above normal combined with high humidity throughout the month. August returned to more normal temperatures and humidity. Topsoil moisture levels were perfectly suited to foster a full and complete ornamental/floral bloom. Keepers reported that ideal conditions would be high humidity with 70 to 90 degree temperatures. Frequent rainfall hurt much seasonal nectar and pollen sources especially black locust, autumn olive, staghorn and smooth/shiny sumac. Many floral, pollen and nectar sources were blooming earlier than usual such as grass clovers, honeysuckle, wildflowers, herbs, knapweed, loosestrife, catalpa, and buckwheat as well as linden (basswood), tulip popular, sumac, black locust and blooming fruit trees and vegetable crop plantings. Reportedly providing excellent bloom was berry crops especially strawberries. Vegetable crops showing good bloom were tomatoes, peppers, squash and pumpkins. The higher elevation areas had high floral nectar levels offering heavy honey flow possibilities. Early harvested honey was reportedly some of the highest quality and lightly colored ever harvested. Commercial beekeepers have moved pollination services from apples to cranberries. In June farmers were ahead of schedule on the pollination of squash and cucumbers which started the beginning of June. Reports of swarm activity have been extremely high especially in regional areas near salt and/or fresh water sources. This is the time of year that Supercedure and swarm cells can be starting to materialize.

"Bee on Zinnia" by Kathy Schnabel and James Praski, USDA Honey Reporter

In July the wet and 90 degree weather kept bees home bound thus honey production slowed with honey supers not filling up and some keepers feeding, particularly this year's new hives. Feeding is especially important on the hives that are drawing out new comb. Many keepers kept sugar feedings going in order to strengthen nectar buildup and to also add two supers at a time instead of a single. Many keepers have expressed their delight in the early extraction of extremely lightly colored honey from black locust trees. The amber colored seems to be sourced from dandelion, Dutch clover and yellow sweet clover. It seems that the "buzz words" for June was "bad/failed queens". Queens in packages that just don't seem to be up to par over the last couple years and this year it seems to be very pervasive, causing weak hives and/or queen less hives. June is a major honey producing month for the Northeast. This year there seems to be an overabundance of burr comb and propolis and mite populations are noticeably low as well. Reportedly so far, there have been very few pest problems. No American foul brood or pronounced tracheal mites infestations have been reported to date. Additionally, the varroa mite and hive beetle counts have not been high enough to seriously hurt hives. Keepers this month continue to check for diseases and at this time if found will utilize Fumidil-B, Terramycin, apiguard and formic acid. Additionally, Hivastan, - that is comparable to Apistan (fluvalinate), has been added to the fight against mite diseases. Resourceful beekeepers are implementing the drone brood frame program which seriously interrupts the mite breeding cycle. Additionally, seasoned beekeepers report that locating hives in the sun upon initial setup helps fight mite problems; as well as confectioner sugar dusting and using screened bottom boards.

During the July heat keepers reported that many bees were spending time outside the hives in order to escape the heat while others line up with their backs toward the entrance and fan their wings to create a cooling air flow through the hive. Many hives had bees clustered on the front of the hive with bearding. This indicates that the bees are not out foraging and are opportunistic to any easy nectar source because of their tendency to swarm to the nearest nectar source. In July a nectar dearth is common, so keepers administered syrup feedings if necessary. The bees found it hard to find nectar with so much heat and humidity. Bees put what they are bringing inside the hive into brood production. It appeared that this season's main first honey flow ended in July. It was an interesting honey flow progression this year for New England. This seasons main foraging sources started with honeysuckle (Lonicerata morrow), white clover (Trifolium repens), black locust (Robinia pseudo acacia), blackberry (Rebus spp.) Followed by multiflora rose, which produces a golden brown pollen, shag horn sumac (Rhus typhina), linden-basswood, Tilia cordata, T. Americana, smooth sumac (Rhus glabra), milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) and with much of the region being dominated by white clover (Trifolium repens) to which the pollen is brown and sweet. Bees were working black locust, swamp thistle, button bush, purple loosestrife, wild radish, American basswood/linden (Tilia Americana), chestnut, celthra, milkweed (Asclepias syriaca), winded sumac, staghorn sumac (Rhus typhina), smooth sumac (Rhus glabra), buckwheat, sweet pepper bush (Chethora), meadow sweet (produces a light olive pollen color) as well as vegetable crops and a variety of flowering trees and wild flowers. Some excellent pollen and nectar sources for bees are the legumes such as alsike clover (Trifolium hybridum), purple vetch (Vicia sativa), birds foot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus), alfalfa (Medicago sativa), and clovers such as white sweet clover (Melilotus alba) and yellow sweet clover (Melilotus officinalis) are all in full bloom at this point in time. Additionally with many unanticipated feeding sources available, this could be one of the most interesting honey crop years regarding sourced varieties in New England.

The honey flow dramatically slowed in mid-summer as nectar became scarce, brood rearing slowed but there's still a large population of bees. Keepers were advised to extract honey as soon as possible and leave enough honey for the bees during July and August when nectar is scarce. Honey flows have been good in strong colonies however currently, honey production has been limited, - first too much rain in June and too high temperatures in July. Both weather conditions directly impact a plant's ability to provide nectar and pollen. Early commercial crop pollination services involved cranberries with pollination fees ranging from $75.00 to $125.00 mostly $90.00 per hive colony depending on transportation cost requirements. Additionally, some keepers that offer pollination services are only now moving bees for summer pollination of squash, cucumbers and pumpkins. Commercial keepers and queen producers have received many requests for queens from other keepers for splitting hives and re-queening relative to replacing second year queens. Early harvested honey reportedly was some of the highest quality and lightly colored ever. Harvested honey has been averaging 35 lbs. per colony. The Italian and Russian honeybees have reportedly been the best honey producers with keepers that have been successful with strong honey production numbers. New England needed milder weather in order to start the August nectar flow.

FALL HONEY REPORT (cont.)

August and September

August was busy for most beekeepers as they started making decisions about winter. Most colonies are in very good condition; queen right, healthy worker populations with sufficient honey and pollen. Additionally, colonies have begun early winterizing with propolis and organizing their winter stores. It is still too early to assess the overall crop for the season as golden rod, knotweed and loosestrife are still blooming. At this point in time, reportedly most honey producers have been finding surplus honey, typically seeing 30-40 pounds in supers and are calling it a so-so year, not the worst but definitely not a great season for honey yields. New England received regular rainfall so the previous dry conditions have greatly improved for the latter part of August. There were sporadic complaints regarding varroa mites, nosema disease and especially chalkbrood. Affected colonies that have been slow to build populations seem to bounce back after treatment with Fumidil-B., to the point that these colonies with heavy mite loads look like they will be able to right themselves before winter. Beekeepers are scrambling to treat in order to lower the mite populations before the fall chill and winter cold.

In September keepers report huge populations of bees easily filling the entire area of 2 deeps for brood rearing.M any hives appear strong and heavy. Bees have been working celthra alnifolia, Mexican & Chinese bamboo, fall aster, staghorn sumac, white & sweet clover, thistle, purple loose strife, button bush, assorted wild weeds especially knotweed, sweet pepper bush, assorted wild flowers and particularly golden rod. The ornamentals, joe-pye weed, pickerel weed, sedum (stone crop) are out in abundance as well as jewel weed which leaves a slight white pollen mark on the thorax. Many food sources have diminished however, other late food sources still blooming are buckwheat, Indian silk and coreopsis to finish the month. The region experienced a very quick bloom of sweet pepperbush and goldenrod, as much as 2 weeks earlier than usual. Consequently, honey flow and colony populations were significantly advancing early on however; both were dramatically slowed by the end of the month. Overall bees are working hard with a strong population buildup. Keepers are looking to maintain 3 or more deep frames of brood for as long as the queen will lay. Ideally, heavy egg laying is necessary by mid-September and feeding 2:1 sugar syrup will stimulate the queen to lie more heavily. Half frames represent weak hives and those with fewer than 6 or 7 frames of bees in the late fall will probably need to be combined with other hives. Additionally, this procedure includes combining weak colonies with strong ones as one strong colony has better chance of survival then two weak ones.

Reportedly, strong colonies have plenty of food stores in two hive bodies and are exhibiting large populations of young bees (generally born from after Labor Day) and are, percentage wise, the ones that will live through the winter because they haven't been foraging. Currently bees are working diligently at storing as much nectar and pollen as possible. Keepers inspect and are proceeding with the arrangement of honey supers for winter with the final setup being brood in the bottom with honey and pollen in the top. In early fall, keepers will ensure that there are a several frames of honey on the outer edges of the bottom box. Keepers state that if the queen does not move to the bottom box by early October, then keepers will proceed to move all the brood frames to the bottom so that honey can be stored in the top box and this will ensure that the top hive box is either full or advancing to be so by sugar feeding by the beginning of November. Keepers need as many young healthy bees as possible for the winter. Bees live longer in the winter because they don't weaken due to foraging. One of the keeper's tasks in the fall is to be sure that each hive has at least 60 pounds of food stores before cold weather, so hives should still be heavy from the fall. At this point in time, many keepers re-queen in the fall in order to have a strong, healthy queen and brood for the spring. The amount of brood rearing in the fall affects the winter adult population. The more young bees produced in the fall, the more adult bees there will be available for winter survival. The queen begins reducing egg lying in November and may stop completely in December. Purportedly, the region had quite a problem with swarming and queen losses and a number of hives had gone queen less or with underperforming queens especially those who started packages in the spring.

In New England after the fall equinox on September 21 the days are shorter and the nights are longer and although a killing frost has yet to occur it is nonetheless time to pull off the honey. Commercially speaking, Labor Day weekend inspections revealed heavy supers with all the promise of a good fall harvest. The pattern that emerges is that the areas subjected to a summer drought exhibited a poor honey harvest and the areas with rain had a good crop. Beekeepers reported colonies to be in generally good to very good condition with mite and disease problems under control. The treatments currently being used for mite another pest control are apistan strips and pads, apiguard, mite away, formic acid, paradichlorobenzine, Terramycin and powdered sugar to name the ones most popular in use.

For the most part, colonies were reported to be good condition as colony strength and health is generally very good. Mites are below normal levels, in part as a result of three heat waves this year. Tracheal and varroa mites are typically a problem in July and August. Mites cannot stand the heat as well as the honeybee. Additionally, other diseases such as chalkbrood and foulbrood do not appear to be a problem for bees. Regionally speaking, demand at all retail/wholesale outlets remains strong and honey sales remain unchanged. Prices quoted for retail 1lb bottled units were quoted at $7.00 to $11.00 mostly $10.00 and occasionally higher inclusive of all varieties; for food service operations prices were steady with 5 gallon units selling at $185.00 to $225.00 mostly $220.00 occasionally higher for both dark and light, raw and natural honey depending on variety and quality.

RIBA NEWS

Jane Dennison with Mayan 'stingless bees' Honey

The Fall Harvest Dinner will take place at 5:00 PM on Sunday October 20 at the West Valley Inn, 4 Blossom Street, West Warwick. The featured speaker is well-known Worcester beekeeper Ken Warchol. A raffle and hot Italian buffet menu are featured as well. Celeste Nadworny will coordinate the raffle and donations are welcome. The speaker will focus on best practices for first year beekeepers.

The dates for the 2014 RIBA Meetings are as follows: January 10, 2014, Wednesday 7-9PM; February 9, 2014, Sunday 4-6PM; March 9, 2014, Sunday 4-6PM; April 4, 2014 Friday night 7-9PM; May 4, 2014 Spring Banquet dinner at 5PM. Locations may vary so stay tuned. RIBA now owns an Observation Hive that can be used for public presentations. Contact Celeste Nadworny at fruithillapiaries@verizon.com for the use of this educational tool.

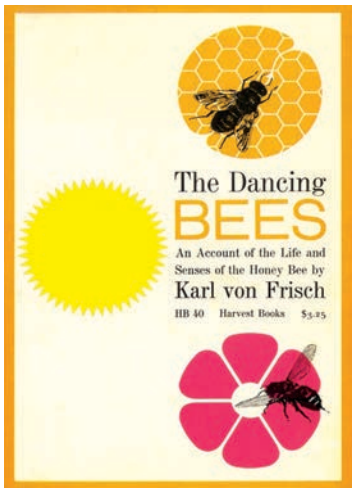
The Bee Schools for 2014 will be announced before the end of the year. There will be Introductory and Intermediate Bee Schools at Rhode Island College taught by Bee School Director Betty Mencucci beginning in February. Renee Gamba, director of the **Roger Williams Museum of Natural History** that maintains a **beehive** in the museum requested help from RIBA members to oversee and maintain the museum's beehive whose window entrance/exit allows visitors to see an observation hive inside the museum and the bees flying from outside the museum. Two RIBA members stepped forward, Bob Barnes of Johnston and Cynthia Holt of Providence, offered their assistance to the museum which expressed its gratitude to RIBA for its initiative and interest in the Museum's beehive. Roger Robitaile established the beehive that was featured in the winter 2012 issue (vol. 4, No. 4) of the RIBA Newsletter.

The RIBA webpage is under construction and should be "unveiled" or available online by the end of the year.

Dr Jane Dennison brought a unique form of honey from the Yucatan where Mayan Indians collect honey from the "stingless bees" of the New World, the only native bees in the Americas that store honey and are NOT Apis mellifera. Interested RIBA members had the opportunity to taste this unique honey leading to a recommendation that RIBA host a honey tasting event during the winter months when the tastes of summer can be enjoyed in anticipation of beekeeping seasons to come.

FUTURE OF RIBA BOOKS

The following books and tapes belong to RIBA. They have been brought to meetings and I personally have found them to be very helpful when I was a new beekeeper. Some are classics. They can continue to be brought to meetings, or be stored for Bee School use at Rhode Island College. Here is the list, and suitable donations would be welcome. Contact the former RIBA librarian Celeste Nadworny at: ***fruithillapiaries@verion.net***



LIST OF RIBA BOOKS

The Dancing Bees, Karl von Frisch (1953); von Frisch won the Nobel prize for his discovery and documentation of the bees' waggle dances
First Lessons in Beekeeping, by Keith Delaplane; noted beekeeper who spoke at RIBA in 2011 on "The Hive as Superorganism" (see RIBA Newsletter (vol. 3, no.4 winter 2011)
The Hive and the Honeybee, Dadant Company, (1975), a classic from the world's oldest beekeeping supply company.
Starting Right with Bees, Frank Stuart (1949)
World of Bees, Gilbert Nixon (1959)
Life of the Bee, Maurice Maeterlinck (1908), a classic, the basics of beekeeping do not change.
Country Year, by Sue Hubbell (1986), much acclaimed work chronicling one of Missouri's most successful female beekeepers who describes her isolated but fulfilling life as a beekeeper
Beeman, Laurie Krebs and Valeria Cis (2008), written by two rising beekeeping authors.
Swarm Prevention, Herman E. Werner (1979), never out of date
Art and Adventure of Beekeeping, Ormand and Harry Aebi (1975)
Wick, Wax and Talk, Maxine Wilhelm (1990), about joy of candle making
New Comb Honey Book, Richard Taylor (1981)
Asian Apicuture, Connor, Rindereer, W. Sylvester (1993)
City of the Bees, Frank Stuart (1949)
Bee Pollinators in your Garden, Tech Bullitin (1999)
Hunting Wild Bees, Robert Donovan (1980)

TAPES: Ohio State University set of 12 tapes on various subjects of bees & beekeeping
Four Seasons, featuring Charles Mraz (the noted reviver of apitherapy in New England)
Bee Venom Therapy
Monk and the Honeybee (1988)
Candle Making for Everyone

SURPRISING USES FOR HONEY OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN

1. Make lip balm: combine beeswax, olive oil, cocoa butter and honey and an essential oil according to your taste (recipes abound online)
2. Apply the naturally antimicrobial honey directly to minor cuts or burns to shorten healing time
3. Fight parasites: mix a drink of equal parts honey, vinegar and water, a well-known cure for "backpackers stomach" and minor stomach ailments
4. Fight insomnia: a bit of salted honey will help you get back to sleep
5. Enhance the beauty of your hair: add 1 tsp. of honey to a quart of warm water, dilute, then soak your hair in the mixture post-shampoo
6. Acne/ facewash: dab a small bit of honey directly on the pimple and let sit for half-hour, then rinse gently; mix a small dollop of honey with a bit of warm water in the palm of your hand, then massage over face working up and out
7. Anxiety relief: blend honey, ginger and lemon juice for a stress reducing concoction
8. Hair improvement: add 1 tsp honey to a quart of warm water, soak the hair in the mixture post-shampoo; also good to calm 'frizzy' hair ends (abstracted from article by Starre Vartan, Mother Nature Network)

SOME RECENT BOOKS OF INTEREST

The Wisdom of Bees: What the Hive can Teach Business about Leadership, Efficiency, and Growth, by Michael O'Malley (Penguin Group, New York, 2010)

"It seemed to me that the bees were working on the same kinds of problems we are trying to solve. How can large, diverse groups work together harmoniously and productively? Perhaps we could take what the bees do so well and apply it to our institutions." What are the key elements? 1) Distributed authority 2) Keep it simple 3) Protect the future.

BUZZ: Urban Beekeeping and the Power of the Bee, by Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut, New York University Press, 2013.
This is a fascinating blend of sociology, ecology, and community by New York beekeepers who lead the way toward the rise in urban beekeeping throughout the country. In the book you meet a passionate and eclectic group of city beekeepers who demonstrate the many connections to community that beekeeping and honey bring.

TEXAS DISTRICT COURT CASE INVOLVING BEE STINGS

(with thanks to Steve Burke for sending the case)

COURT OF APPEALS OF TEXAS, CORPUS CHRISTI 133 S.W.3d 726; 2003 Tex. App. LEXIS 9335, October 30, 2003

Opinion by Chief Justice Valdez

Santos Flores, Sr. died from anaphylactic shock triggered by a bee sting. The Flores four adult children sued Curtis Wilhelm, and other parties. A jury found Mr. Wilhelm liable for Flores's death. On appeal, he raised nine issues. In the first six, he challenged the legal and factual sufficiency of the evidence supporting various jury findings. In his remaining issues, he contended: (1) the trial court erred in admitting evidence of laws pertaining to the transportation of bees; (2) the award for pain and mental anguish was excessive; and (3) he was protected from liability by the Good Samaritan law. The family appellants raised a jurisdictional issue. We affirm, in part, and reverse and render, in part.

BACKGROUND

John Black operated a honeybee business. On September 7, 1994, Black and his employee, Alejandro Mercado, needed help moving some beehives that Black was purchasing from Wilhelm. Flores agreed to help and put on a protective suit provided by Black. After stopping at Wilhelm's house to pick up a hive, the three men went to the property where additional hives were kept. The property was located in a remote area of Willacy County, behind three locked gates and miles from a paved road. Wilhelmt did not own the land but had permission from the landowner to keep the hives there.

After the men loaded one hive onto their truck, Flores took a break and walked into the brush some yards away from the truck because he had the urge to defecate. He soon returned yelling for help and staggering. The veil on his suit was open. Flores sustained several bee stings. He suffered an anaphylactic shock reaction. Flores died before an ambulance could reach him.

The Flores family sued Black, Joan Walsh Reichert (Black's business partner), and Wilhelm in the 370th District Court of Hidalgo County. The jury was given a charge on general negligence and found that the negligence of Black and Wilhelm was the immediate cause of Flores's death. The jury assigned fifty percent of the negligence to Black and Wilhelm each, and awarded compensatory damages to the Flores family in the amount of $ 1,591,000. The jury also found Black and Wilhelm grossly negligent and assessed damages of $ 75,000 against each. Wilhelm appealed that judgment. Black does not appeal the judgment.

ANALYSIS

The allegations of negligence included numerous acts, but can be separated into five general categories: (1) failure to have a reasonable safety program; (2) failure to ensure Flores was tested for bee sting allergy; (3) failure to provide proper protective equipment and instructions on how to use such equipment; (4) failure to warn Flores of the dangerousness of honeybees and Africanized bees; and (5) failure to provide Flores with proper and timely medical attention. We first examine whether the appellees established a duty to warn of the dangerousness of bees.

Further, the courts in a number of cases have expressly held that beekeepers are liable only if they have been found to have acted negligently. Wilhelm admitted that he knew that a certain percentage of the population is allergic to bees stings, and that most people who die from bee stings are not aware that they can suffer anaphylactic shock from the sting. In light of this evidence, the court found the evidence both factually and legally sufficient to support the jury's verdict that the appellant's failure to warn of the dangerousness of bees was a proximate cause of Flores's injuries.

The court held the evidence is both legally and factually sufficient to support the jury's finding that appellant had a duty to warn Flores of the dangers associated with bee stings, including the danger of an adverse allergic reaction, and that appellant breached that duty.

The Flores family contended that the record showed Wilhelm was an entomologist who knew about the risk of allergic reactions to bee stings, but took no precautions to prevent Flores from being stung. However, it is undisputed that Flores and the others moving the bee hives were wearing bee suits. Additionally, there is no evidence Wilhelm knew Flores was allergic to bee stings. Accordingly, the court found that there is no evidence that Wilhelm was consciously indifferent to Flores's welfare and safety, thus his contention of unintentional harm was sustained by the court.

The evidence reflected that Flores and the others picked up the first hive at Wilhelm's house and then proceeded to a rural area in Willacy County where they were going to pick up additional hives. Mercado and Black both testified that upon arriving at the Willacy County property, Flores had the urge to defecate and excused himself into the nearby brush. When Flores emerged, he had unzipped his protective veil and was yelling for help.

The Appeals Court's review of the trial court's finding ended up supporting the finding. The record shows Judge Noe Gonzalez signed the final judgment on December 18, 1997. On February 2, appellant filed both his notice of appeal and a sworn motion asserting that neither he nor his attorney received notice or knew that the judgment had been signed until January 29, 1998.

BEE SCHOOLS SCHEDULE FOR 2014

The Bee Schools for 2014 will be announced before the end of the year. There will be Introductory and Intermediate Bee Schools at Rhode Island College taught by Bee School Director Betty Mencucci beginning in February. The classes will last for five weeks and will take place on Fridays and Saturdays in order to accommodate RI beekeepers diverse schedules.

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Value of Honey Increasing

By Andrea Boyle Tippett, (aboyle@udel.edu)
University of Delaware

With honeybees facing a population decline and the number of new beekeepers surging, the ability for those beekeepers to properly price and market their product is vital to their success.
To assist the industry, an interdisciplinary team in the University of Delaware's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources conducted research on consumers' willingness to pay for honey products originating from different locations. From December through February, the group asked 115 adult participants recruited from the local community questions about their willingness to pay for honey from three specific production origins -- local, national, and international.

"Our results indicate that consumers are willing to pay more for local and U.S. honey, compared to international honey," project researcher Wu said. "With no information given, consumers are willing to pay 20 percent (98 cents) more for a jar of local honey, and 10 percent (48 cents) more for a jar of U.S. honey, compared to a jar of international honey."

The researchers also found that providing consumers with labeling information about local and international honey changed the consumers' valuation of the products. When informed by a label about the potential risks involved with consuming international honey, willingness to pay for local honey increased by 57 percent ($2.78). When provided with information about the pollination benefits of local honey, the valuation for local honey increased by 22 percent ($1.07).
The information about potential allergy benefits, however, did not change the consumers' willingness to pay.

As to concerns about international honey that can be found on the shelves in supermarkets, Delaney said much of it, when studied, had the pollen removed. "Why has it been removed?" she asked. "Is it because they don't want us to know that it's from China, where it's banned from being imported? Or is it watered down with corn syrup?"She said there is "definitely an integrity issue with international honey" that goes beyond being diluted. "There is much concern that it's coming from places where it's banned and that are known to have contaminants." Most consumers do not know that, in the United States, there is no legal requirement that something labeled as honey is actually from bees."