

THE BUZZ!

November 2005

An electronic newsletter from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's State Apiarist's Office

Winter beekeeping chores

In one week it seems like we went from trying to do some last-minute fall beekeeping chores to performing winter chores that do not involve opening hives. I'm now more concerned about a lack of firewood – that pile behind my house is pretty small – than about the food stores in my hives. But the warm weather is not entirely over; I suspect we'll have a few more chances to open up our hives for some last-minute tasks, like removing mite strips that are due to come out. But this cool weather is a notice that real winter is at our doors, and that I need to haul some firewood!

Mouse guards, entrance reducers, ventilation, etc.

Among the pre-winter beekeeping chores that need to be done are installing entrance reducers (mouse guards) and assisting the colonies with ventilation. The main purpose of entrance reducers - typically pieces of wood with small openings that are inserted into the hive's entrance - is to prevent mice from entering the hive, not to prevent air from entering the hive. This time of year mice are looking for a nice sheltered place to spend the winter, and the inside of a hive seems like a cozy spot. Don't think that just because your hives are full of bees, the mice won't enter. With the bees clustered up, there is still plenty of room for mice to take up residence, and the bees will coexist with them quite well. Then, come spring, you'll find a bundle of grass, holes in your wax, and often wood frames chewed up as well. So get those entrance reducers out, and install them ASAP.

You can use the wooden entrance reducers, which often come with purchased bottom boards, or you can make your own. Entrance reducers can also be constructed using four-mesh hardware cloth (four openings per inch) tacked to wood strips that will fit into the entrance. Or you can just staple hardware cloth over the opening. Mice can get through any opening that they can get their heads through – they don't need much space. Bees can go through the holes in the hardware cloth, but mice cannot. Another alternative is to purchase entrance reducers made of strips of aluminum with small holes drilled in them, or you could make those yourself as well. The ones I've purchased have three-eighths-inch-diameter holes. The advantage of hardware cloth and non-wood entrance reducers is that more air will flow through the hive, increasing (or at least not decreasing) ventilation through the entrance.

Ventilation in hives can also be improved by placing small pieces of wood (even twigs or stones), about one-quarter inch in height, on top of the back of the inner cover and under the outer cover. This allows air to flow between the inner and outer covers and should be done year round. In summer, assisting the bees to ventilate hives is important both for cooling the hive and for lowering the humidity inside (helping to reduce the moisture content of the ripening honey). But good ventilation in winter is important as well. Compare the inside of a hive full of bees to a large, closed room packed with people on a cold winter day. Just as the air in the room would eventually become warm and humid from the moisture given off by the breathing of all the people in the room, the inside of a hive will collect moisture from the respiration of the bees. This point was driven home to me one spring, when I raised the rear of the outer covers in some of my hives, but not in the others. In early spring I found the hives with the raised outer covers quite dry. However, water dripped from the covers of the other hives. Clearly, the propped-up outer covers increased ventilation and decreased the buildup of moisture in those hives. Caulkbrood, a fungal disease of honeybee brood, is more commonly found in spring in hives that are poorly ventilated.

2006 Beekeeping School in Lexington

The third annual Bluegrass Beekeeping School (previously called the Kentucky Beekeeping School) will be held February 18, 2006. For those of you who have not attended this event in the last two years, it is a one-day school that will take place this time at the Marriott Griffin Gate Hotel in Lexington (located on Newtown Pike just south of I-64 exit 115). We're very excited about this site because of both the convenient location and the excellent facilities at the Marriott. We will no longer be crowded during the breakout sessions, and we will have enough space to invite beekeeping supply companies to join us this year.

The school format will again consist of an opening session and four breakout sessions. Once again, Dr. Tom Webster from Kentucky State University will conduct the beginner track of classes (four beginner classes - one during each breakout session) for new beekeepers. In addition, during each breakout session there will be four classes on a variety of topics for more experienced beekeepers to choose from (for a total of 20 classes).

We're making plans for the first time to have a special keynote speaker in the opening joint session of the school. Watch the next issue of THE BUZZ! or the State Apiarist's Web site for the announcement of who this special speaker will be.

There will be an advanced registration fee of \$15 per person, which includes lunch. Registration at the door will be \$20 per person with a \$5 discount for students high school and younger. Advance registration forms and a preliminary listing of classes to be offered at this year's school will be available later in November. For the most current Bluegrass Beekeeping School information, you may check the Kentucky State Apiarist's Web site at http://www.kyagr.com/state_vet/bees/index.htm, or contact Phil Craft (contact information at the bottom of this newsletter).

The Lexington Griffin Gate Marriott Resort is offering a preferred room rate of \$95 (plus tax) per night for the dates of February 17-18, 2006 for attendees of the Bluegrass Beekeeping School who wish to stay overnight. To secure this special rate, make your reservation by February 3. For more information go to: <http://www.stayatmarriott.com/bluegrassbeekeeping/>

2006 Bowling Green Beekeeping School

The Allen County Beekeepers Association will host its second annual Beekeeping School, on Saturday, February 4, 2006 at the L.D. Brown Agricultural Center, Western Kentucky University Farm, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Doors will open at 8:30 a.m. CST for registration and classes will begin at 9:30 a.m. Cost is \$6. Lunch will be available at the Ag Center Concession Area. (There will be a horse show running concurrently in the arena.) There will be three concurrent class tracks. Guest speakers will include Dr. Tom Webster, Dr. Randolph Richards, Dr. Tammy Horn, Robin Mountain, Phil Craft, Kent Williams, Gerald Burchett and other experienced beekeepers. For more information, please contact Martin Hickey, President of the Allen County Beekeepers Association, at (270) 846-1702 or Queenannsrevenge2002@Yahoo.Com or see the association's Web site at www.allenkybees.com.

"Sideliner" Beekeeper symposium planned for ABF convention in Louisville

We're getting closer to the American Beekeeper Federation annual convention which will be held in Louisville in 2006. Plans are underway for a "Serious Sideliner Symposium" to be held as part of this year's ABF convention, aimed at those beekeepers that operate fewer than 300 colonies. These beekeepers, while no longer hobbyists, do not fully support themselves with beekeeping-related income. The goal is to help them become better at what they are doing through new efficiencies (equipment, procedures), through expansion of product offerings (specialty honeys, propolis, beeswax items), and through offering new services (pollination, bee removal service).

Dr. Larry Connor of Wicwas Press, New Haven, Conn., is coordinating the symposium. Dr. Connor has extensive experience working with smaller beekeepers as well as experience in beekeeping extension, commercial queen breeding, and publishing. "This group of beekeepers is often neglected," he says. "Not hobbyists but not full time either, they may be bringing in \$500 or more a week in extra family income in honey sales and pollination rentals. The region around Louisville, especially, is filled with these families."

The symposium will run concurrently with regular ABF programming, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 13, and Saturday, Jan. 14. The cost for the two days, including coffee breaks, admission to the ABF Trade Show and any portion of the regular program they wish to attend on Friday and Saturday is \$95 with advance registration. Persons who register for the full four-day convention are welcome to attend any part of the symposium on Friday and Saturday without additional charge.

A tour of the Walter T. Kelley Co. and the Serious Sideliner Symposium will "book-end" the 2006 American Beekeeping Federation Convention. The convention is set for Jan. 11-14, 2006, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Louisville, Ky. The bus tour to the Kelley plant - with lunch provided by the Kelley Co. - will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 10. The buses will depart Louisville about 8 a.m. and return by 5 p.m. Pre-registration and a transportation charge are required for this optional activity.

The general convention begins on Wednesday morning and continues through Saturday evening. For a pre-registration packet with more details on the Kelley tour, the Sideliner Symposium, and other convention activities — plus the general convention program — contact the ABF Office, P.O. Box 1337, Jesup, GA 31598, phone (912) 427-4233, fax (912) 427-8447, e-mail info@ABFnet.org, or visit www.ABFnet.org.

Free "Kids & Bees" program in Louisville during the ABF Convention

For those of you who have an interest in beekeeping and honeybee programs for kids, or who just have kids, you may be interested in another program that's going to be held in Louisville in conjunction with the American Beekeeper Federation's annual convention in Louisville. And this one is completely free! On January 14 (Saturday), the last day of the ABF Convention, there will be a free "Kids and Bees" program conducted at the Louisville Free Library, 301 York Street, from 2-4 p.m. EST.

This program is coordinated by Kim Lehman, a beekeeper and professional storyteller from Austin, Texas. Kim has been coordinating these "Kids & Bees" programs during ABF annual conventions since 1999. The ABF National Honey Queen and Princess, Honey Queen candidates from around the country, and other beekeepers will assist with this program in Louisville. Hands-on activities, such as candle making, honey tasting, and "bee" puppets, will be an integral part of the program.

So come to the Louisville Free Library on January 14. Bring your kids, bring your neighbor's kids, or bring your grandkids, and have fun! This will also be a great opportunity to learn about conducting school programs for kids! See the next article!

Beekeeping programs for kids in Kentucky

I frequently get calls from teachers requesting the name of a beekeeper who will visit their school and conduct a beekeeping program for their students. Most of these requests come from elementary schools and are typically for classroom visits, but sometimes they are for special events such as agriculture or science days or fairs. Unfortunately, I have a very short list of beekeepers who sometimes (or very often!) conduct such visits. One of those folks is Jed Davis (THANK YOU JED!), Blue Grass Beekeepers Association secretary and past KSBA president. In fact, Jed conducts so many of these visits, in addition to a VERY heavy schedule at the North-Central 4-H camp, that I hesitate to give his name out. There are a few other beekeepers who I know are active in doing programs in schools, such as Anne Broyles in Paducah, and there are some local beekeeping associations that I know will attempt to connect a beekeeper with a school. But as I said before, my list is short — way too short when we consider how many beekeepers and local associations we have in Kentucky, and the high level of interest we currently have about beekeeping.

Opportunities for teaching young people, and the public in general, about beekeeping can take place in other settings as well. Many associations set up beekeeping booths at local fairs and festivals. I recently attended a field day of the Northern Kentucky Beekeepers Association in Campbell County, at a local nature center. This event was attended by both youths and adults. Both groups learned about beekeeping, and perhaps the seeds were planted for some future beekeepers.

I recently became aware of a very special beekeeper education project in Highland Park, Illinois, at the Heller Nature Center. Local beekeepers, with the assistance of the nature center, maintain more than 20 colonies at the nature center and conduct a variety of educational programs with the hives for both kids and adults. The nature center incorporates the study of bees with other insects. The beekeepers involve the public with the extraction of the honey, and the proceeds from the sale of the hives are used to support the educational program. This year they produced 3,200 pounds of honey. If you have Web access you can learn more about this project at <http://www.hellernaturecenter.org/about/honey.html>

I often hear beekeepers worrying that young people are not getting into beekeeping and talking about how sad it is that the number of youth entries at the Kentucky State Fair is so low. But I think kids are interested — they just don't have opportunities to learn how to become beekeepers. So I would like to challenge our local beekeeper associations in Kentucky to take a more active role in developing formal programs to coordinate beekeeping programs in schools. I think each local beekeeping group should maintain a list of beekeepers who are willing to conduct school programs and help train them to conduct these programs. I suspect that some beekeepers would be willing to visit schools but are not sure how to go about conducting a program. Need a good topic for an upcoming local association meeting program? Invite a speaker to help teach beekeepers about conducting school programs.

Apiary inspectors' supervisor position open in Ohio

If you've thought about making a living in a full-time beekeeping-related position, are willing to relocate to Ohio, and have the necessary education and experience, you might be interested in this. There is an opening for a full-time apiary inspector supervisor position in Ohio. For more information go to <http://statejobs.ohio.gov/applicant/results2.asp?postingID=143256>

Losses in the Kentucky beekeeper community

On October 16, 2005, Kentucky lost a long-time beekeeper, Don Stoelting, 80, of Louisville. He was a beekeeper for 35 years and was a member of the Oldham County Beekeepers Association, Kentuckiana Beekeepers Association, and the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association. At one point he maintained approximately 400 colonies. Don was well-known in this region as THE premier producer of pollen. He mentored many beekeepers throughout the years. He was a man of few words. We will remember him wagging his finger while shaking his head when he didn't agree with you, or if you were about to do something "wrong." He was a good beekeeper, a good man and a good friend to those who knew him. He was a unique individual who will be missed. Submitted by Steve & Marcie Anderson, Crestwood, Kentucky.

Dennis John Rachford, 57, of Stanford, died Wednesday, October 19, 2005, at his residence. Born November 18, 1947, in Cincinnati Ohio he was the son of Sue Dunn Cooper of Hustonville and the late Charles John Rachford. He was a graduate of Morehead State University and a retired music teacher and band director at Lincoln County High School. He was a long-time member of the Advocate Brass Band, for which he played first clarinet. He was also an avid gardener, photographer and beekeeper. He has served as president of the Dix River Beekeepers Association, president of the Kentucky Beekeepers Association and had attended several national beekeeper meetings, including EAS and American Beekeeping Federation conventions. He had won numerous blue ribbons for his honey, including the sweepstakes award at the Kentucky State Fair in the 1990s. Dennis seldom wore a bee veil while working his bees and kept about 40 colonies for several years. Private services were held Tuesday, October 24, 2005. Pallbearers were Jerry Freeman, Ronnie Bates, Dennis Hale, David Nutgrass, David Harris and Rick Sutton. Memorial Contributions may be made to the Advocate Brass Band (in memory of Dennis Rachford), 330 S. 4th St., Danville, KY 40422. Submitted by Rick Sutton, Lancaster, Kentucky.

Nothing to do with beekeeping – unless I let him drive my bee truck!

Just want to warn any of you who might be driving in Jessamine County — my 16-year-old son has his learner's driving permit! Some of you have met Mike. He's a good kid, but he is 16. I'm not sure when I'll let him drive the bee truck; the bees and my dog (all of whom sometimes ride in the truck) have voted no! While this has nothing (unless he drives the bee truck) to do with beekeeping, it has everything to do with the new grey hairs on my head.

Upcoming Beekeeping Events – mark your calendars

IN KENTUCKY

- January 11-14, 2006, the 2006 American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) Convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency Louisville Hotel. For more information go to the ABF Web site at: <http://www.abfnet.org/> . Updates on the convention will be posted there periodically.
- February 4, 2006 the second annual Central Kentucky and Tennessee Beekeeping School will be held at the Western Kentucky Ag Center in Bowling Green. This will be a one-day beekeeping school. See article elsewhere in this issue, or for the most current information contact Martin Hickey, President of the Allen County Beekeepers Association, at (270) 846-1702 or Queenannsrevenge2002@Yahoo.Com or see the association's Web site at www.allenkybees.com.
- Feb. 18, 2006, the Bluegrass Beekeeping School (previously called the Kentucky Beekeeping School), in Lexington, Ky., at the Griffin Gate Marriott Hotel in Lexington. See article elsewhere in this issue, or for the most current information you may check the Kentucky State Apiarist's Web site at: http://www.kyagr.com/state_vet/bees/index.htm, or contact Phil Craft (contact information at the bottom of this newsletter).

IN SURROUNDING STATES

- February 25, 2006 the Indiana Bee School (IV) will be held at Southport Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. Dr. Keith Delaplane, Professor of Entomology at the University of Georgia at Athens, will be the keynote speaker. On-site registration starts at 8 a.m. EST with program starting promptly at 9 a.m. and concluding at 3:30 p.m. Registration fee will be \$20 per individual or \$30 per family (lunch included). To guarantee lunch, reservations must be made by February 15, 2006. For more information go to: <http://www.goshen.edu/bio/Bee/Memberform.html> or contact Steve Doty at (317) 485-5593 or e-mail at: jsdoty@indy.net.
- March 25, 2006 the 2006 Southwestern Ohio Beekeeper School will be held at the Loveland Conference Center in Loveland, Ohio (a Northern Cincinnati suburb). This is one of the largest and most educational beekeeping schools in the state of Ohio. The program is designed to be educational for anyone interested in honeybees, with programs for the beginner and experienced beekeeper. For more information go to: <http://warren.osu.edu/ag/bschool.htm>.

To have THE BUZZ! sent directly to you!

If someone has forwarded you this issue of THE BUZZ! and you would like to have THE BUZZ! sent directly to you via e-mail, send me an e-mail at phil.craft@ky.gov and ask to be added to my list. I organize my e-mail list by name, so make sure you sign your e-mail with first and last name. Also, if you are a Kentucky beekeeper, I'd appreciate knowing a little about you and your beekeeping activities – address, how many hives, years of beekeeping experience, and if you belong to a local beekeeping group or to the Kentucky State Beekeeping Association. I would also like your mailing address. This information helps me better serve the beekeepers of Kentucky by knowing where beekeepers are located and allows me to let you in on regional beekeeping activities, or to drop you a note if I discover your e-mail address stops working. This e-mail newsletter is not restricted to Kentucky residents. Many subscribers are from our surrounding states, especially Tennessee and Indiana. If you're from out of state, I need only your full name and home state; any other information is optional.

Keep those smokers lit and your bee veils on!

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