

03/24/09

Catch the Buzz

Over the last three winters, more than one in three honey bee colonies in the U.S. have mysteriously died; a staggering phenomenon scientists have named Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD. And for the second year, the Haagen-Dazs brand is taking the lead in driving solutions to solve this dire puzzle threatening our food supply and stumping scientists from around the world. Because honey bee pollination is required to produce one-third of all the natural foods we eat, honey bees play a critical role in ensuring we have enough food to feed our growing population.

Why hasn't the cause of CCD been identified? Three basic factors are hampering research into the crisis: lack of awareness among the general public, lack of action aimed at alleviating the problem, and lack of funding to determine the root cause and address much-needed solutions. Largely through the brand's education efforts, the study revealed that only a little more than half of consumers are aware of the crisis. And only one in six is aware of something specific that they can do to help the honey bees(1).

Funding on the scale required to seriously tackle this issue also remains elusive. The Farm Bill approved by Congress last year included a provision to fund more research, yet Congress has not yet allocated the money, putting the allocation in question. In the meantime, bees continue to die by the billions.

That's why the Haagen-Dazs brand is stepping up for a second year and redoubling its *Haagen-Dazs loves Honey Bees*(R) campaign efforts. Elements of the campaign include:

- A second donation to UC Davis and Penn State Universities of \$250,000 . This brings the brand's total donation for honey bee research to a half million dollars over two years.
- Continuation of the Haagen-Dazs brand's public education efforts with:
 - o A special flavor, Vanilla Honey Bee, and all "bee-built" flavors (*flavors that use at least one honey bee-pollinated ingredient*) of ice cream, sorbet, frozen yogurt and bars proudly carry a *HD loves HB*(R) symbol and message under the lid.
 - o A full-scale awareness effort, coupled with unique print and online advertising.

Part of the brand's donation to UC Davis is being used to create a Haagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven - a one-half acre bee-friendly demonstration garden coordinated by the California Center for Urban Horticulture. Visitors to the garden will be able to glean ideas on how to establish their own bee-friendly gardens and help to improve the nutrition of bees in their own backyards.

Continued on Pg. 2



Catch The Buzz, *Continued*

- An upgraded interactive website (www.helpthehoneybees.com) premiering in April with a focus on examples of how consumers have gotten involved in helping to save the hardworking honey bees.

"Thousands of people reached out to join in our efforts to save honey bees over the course of the year. We're making a difference but there is still much to be done," said Ching-Yee Hu, Haagen-Dazs brand manager. "We are so proud to continue our support. This is a problem bigger than simply protecting our source of all-natural ingredients, like the almonds in our Vanilla Swiss Almond flavor. This issue affects our ability to provide food for our tables." The brand encourages everyone to find a way to become a bee crusader in 2009. Do your part to help save the honey bees. Here's how you can make a difference:

- Create a bee friendly garden with plants that attract honey bees. Select a plant with a long growing season or a group of plants that together will offer flowers from spring through fall. A great resource for information can be found at www.helpthehoneybees.com, or from the horticulturalist at your local plant nursery.
- Avoid insecticides in your garden. Instead, promote good bugs (called 'beneficial insects') in your garden - bugs that will happily eat the bad bugs chomping on your plants. A comprehensive resource for information is www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/ and <http://horticulture.psu.edu/extension/mg>
- Every time you buy a Haagen-Dazs ice cream bee-built product, a portion of the proceeds of the sale go toward helping the honey bees.
- Tell a friend - The honey bee disappearance is already having an effect on the world's most beloved foods. However, many people have yet to learn about this issue and how they can help. Visit www.helpthehoneybees.com to send a Bee-Mail or to create your own animated honey bee to help spread the word.
- Visit the Haagen-Dazs Bee Store at www.helpthehoneybees.com - All proceeds from our bee store will fund CCD and sustainable pollination research at Penn State and UC Davis.

For full details on how the Haagen-Dazs brand is helping honey bees and how you can take part, please visit www.helpthehoneybees.com.

Editor's Notes

Note: I have changed This Month in the Bee Yard to Next Month in the Bee Yard since you do not get it until near the end of the month. This will let you know what to do for the upcoming month. Hope it helps!

Mr. Charlie Says.... #7 *By Deborah Sasser*

March 2009

Things have been buzzing along on Sasserfrass Hill.

I have been busy painting hives, assembling the telescoping tops, planting flowers and getting ready for my girls to swarm. My hives are strong and bursting at the seams. I was hopeful none of my hives would swarm while I was attending the Beekeepers meeting in Rock Hill. On my return I was very happy to see the girls had not absconded. Tuesday, March 10th was a beautiful day with temperatures reaching into the 80ies. The bees started to swarm late in the afternoon around 4:30pm. The sky was alive with bees. The girl's finally settled high in my oak tree. The queen had been raised in the hive so she was not clipped or marked. It was frustrating having little or no chance of reaching these bees. I had a Cone Style Trap Swarm Box complete with Bee Lure (The lure contains a pheromone that duplicates the scent that scout bees release when they find a good home) at the base of the tree. I also put out a new hive underneath the tree. I sprayed the frames with sugar water; optimistic the scouts would choose one of these two worthy options.

I was out early Wednesday morning keeping an eye on the girls to see if I could see which direction they went when they decided to fly away. The sun broke through the trees about 8am and a few bees began to around. As the 58-degree temperature warmed up the bees got more and more active. I kept watching and waiting. Documenting their activity with photographs. About 11am the phone rang. I ran inside for five minuets and when I looked out they had flown away and much to my chagrin I had missed the entire event. Mr. Charlie said they look like a flock of birds when they take flight. I could not believe I had waited all morning, turned my back for one minute and they were gone.

I said a little blessing for my adventurous girl and wished them well.

Mr. Charlie says, if you are lucky enough to find a feral hive you need to treat them for mites right away. You could put 2 ounces of Formic Acid (MiteAway) into the hive for 24 hours, or do a powder sugar dusting. You need to get the bees clean and ready for a healthy prosperous spring.

I am looking forward to adding a few more hives this spring. Hopefully the next time my bees swarm, it won't be in top of an oak tree and I hope they choose to stay on Sasserfrass Hill.

Cook's Corner: Fresh Orange Honey Bread

¼ cup shortening	2 ½ tsp baking powder
1 cup honey	½ tsp baking soda
1 egg	1 tsp salt
1 ½ TB grated orange peel	¾ cup fresh orange juice
2 ½ cups sifted flour	¾ cup finely chopped walnuts

Cream shortening; continue creaming while adding honey in a fine stream. Add egg and beat well; add orange peel. Sift flour once, measure; add baking powder, baking soda & salt: sift all together. Add flour alternately with orange juice, a small amount at a time to first mixture, beating after each addition until smooth. Stir in walnuts, blend. Turn into a greased loaf pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour or until done.

Next Month in the Bee Yard

April

Before starting the April checks, you should have a queen excluder and at least two extracting supers available for each hive.

Again in the early part of the month, check each colony as follows:

1) Evaluate the food stores. Check and make sure that each colony has at least fifteen pounds of reserve honey. If the colony has less than the above-recommended fifteen pounds of reserve honey, then they should be fed. Steve Taber (1980, Bee Behavior, *American Bee Journal*, 120-8, 565) put it very nicely when he wrote the following: "The problem of wintering your bees is not over until the honeyflow has started in the spring. Read that sentence again; it's really important."

2) Remove any Apistan strips that may have been added. Apistan strips are used to control the varroa mites. These strips are impregnated with fluvalinate, a chemical, and thus need to be removed before adding any supers that are to be used for human consumption.

3) Check and equalize the brood. Brother Adam (1987) used equalization as a method of management and he described it as follows: "Equalising means attempting to establish all colonies throughout the apiary or apiaries at the same level of strength, so that at a given date in early spring all the colonies will be starting the season on a footing of equality." He also wrote that during the first spring inspection, "A note is made of the number of combs each colony covers and from these notes the overall average strength is assessed. Thus, we know in advance which colonies are in need of help, the exact amount of help they require, and at the same time which of the colonies can give up combs of bees and brood." Brother Adam, a monk at Buckfast Abbey, Devon, England, was the head of the monastery's internationally famous bee department for 73 years (1919 - 1992). It was during that period that he developed the Buckfast bee. The Buckfast bee is significant because it appears to have some degree of resistance to the tracheal mites.

Equalizing the brood is quite labor intensive but it is a good system that will help the weaker colonies by giving them more bees and at the same time will help to control swarming by reducing the number of bees in the stronger colonies. Unfortunately, this system will only work if you have more than one colony. A frame of mostly sealed brood with adhering bees is moved from the strong colony and exchanged with an empty comb from the weak colony. **Before any frames are transferred, the queen should be located and set aside.** Also only move that amount of brood that the weaker colony can keep warm. If both the strong colony and the weak colony are in the same yard, you must keep in mind that most of the older bees will return to the parent colony and will not be available to help keep the brood warm in the weak colony. Even though you move brood and bees, there is no way to predict how many adult bees will remain. After all of the brood and bees have been moved, return the queens to their respective hives.

4) Place the queen excluder, "their super" and two extracting supers, in that order, on top of the brood chamber. Supers with new foundation should not be added at this time. Wait approximately two days after the nectar flow starts and then add one super only with new foundation to a hive (with no extracting supers).

I use a queen excluder on each of my hives from April through October and it is kept immediately above the brood chamber. Having "their super" as the first super on top of the brood chamber assures that it is filled first in case of a poor honey crop. Having "their super" in this position, in my opinion, also helps to

reduce the amount of pollen that goes into the upper supers. Pollen in the comb is not too much of a problem when extracting but it sure is a distraction if you are producing comb honey.

The super noted above, as "their super" is a super that is always a part of that hive and none of the frames are ever extracted. It serves both as a food chamber and as a brood chamber. It is used, most of the time, as a part of the colony's food source but is used for brood in the early spring before the queen excluder is put in place. As this early brood emerges from "their super" (now above the queen excluder), the bees will fill these cells up with honey that the colony will then have for their winter stores. With "their super" now above the queen excluder and the queen below, it will be necessary to check this super for queen cells in five or six days. Sometimes a strong colony will start queen cells above the queen excluder even though the colony has a laying queen in the brood chamber below.

If you plan to start with new foundation, be sure to use ten frames in order to get these frames drawn out without burr and brace comb. After the center frames are well started, move the four outside frames to the center and the center frames to the outside. Switching the frames around in this manner will encourage the bees to work on all ten frames simultaneously instead of working only on the center frames. This is especially helpful if the colony is a little weak or if the temperatures are on the cool side. If you would like to get near perfect combs, reduce the number of frames to nine when all of the combs have been drawn out and about half filled with honey. Nine combs, when filled with honey, will result in thicker combs that are easier to uncap. These combs, when extracted, will be some of the best combs that can be made. Also this is a good time to add a second super of foundation. Place this new super of foundation under the first extracting super.

5) And finally, remove the entrance reducer. The entrance reducer can normally be removed early this month. However, if unusually cold temperatures are in the forecast, just delay the removal a few days.

After the colony has built up for the nectar flow, then the next big concern is swarming. Most swarming takes place in our area during April and May. Swarming should be prevented, if at all possible, because a colony that swarms will produce little or no honey. The cause of swarming is normally associated with a crowded brood nest but Richard Taylor (1992) identifies the cause of swarming as follows: "What causes a colony to swarm is, primarily, its becoming *congested with brood*, not with bees. The way to keep swarming down, therefore, is to keep what is called an 'open brood nest', that is, one in which there are always plenty of empty cells in the center for the queen to lay in. The hive can become as populous as you like, so populous that the bees are not only occupying the supers but even hanging out on the front of the hive, and they are still not likely to swarm if there is empty, broodless space right in the center of the brood nest."

Dr. Taylor proceeded to explain how to obtain an open brood nest. "And the way you get that, of course, is to replace the combs that are full of brood with empty ones, or with foundation. More precisely, you take out two or three or four combs of brood from the center of the brood nest - three are about right - and replace them with empty drawn combs or frames of foundation. It goes very much against the instincts of the bees to swarm when there is that kind of emptiness in the middle of the brood nest. They want to get that filled up with brood first. So, having made that exchange of empty combs for brood, you repeat the exchange in another ten days or so, to make sure that open brood nest is preserved."

The brood and bees that are removed may be given to a weak colony, as they were during brood equalization, or they may be used to start additional hives or nucs.

The Association promotes and encourages good beekeeping practices, enhancement in the knowledge base of novice, intermediate and expert beekeepers, production of honey bee products, and public education concerning the honey bee and honey. Any person who has an interest in honey bees and beekeeping is encouraged to become a member of ABA. Membership is open to anyone; novice or expert, hobbyist or commercial beekeeper, and you are encouraged to join us.

Contributors

Editor

Janice Harmon

Format & Organization

Nathanael Beach

Chief Publication Manager

Vickie Browder

Additional Authors

Deborah Sasser, Nathanael Beach



The Buzz is an Aiken Beekeepers Association publication. The Aiken Beekeepers Association and this newsletter is made possible by The Clemson University Extension Services. This newsletter, its contents (excluding clip art and images), and the Aiken Beekeepers Association logo is copyright by the Aiken Beekeepers Association.

All Rights Reserved

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.



ABA Officers

President

Jonathan Hanger

Vice President

Nathanael Beach

Treasurer

Carey Mathison

Secretary

Janice Harmon

