March/April 2016
VOL 74, No. 2

American Beekeeping Federation NEWS
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American Beekeeping Federation

NEWS

March/April 2016 /// Volume 74, No. 2

Issued bi-monthly by American Beekeeping Federation, Inc.

Copy deadline is the first day of January, March, May, July, September and November for publications mailed at the end of the same month.

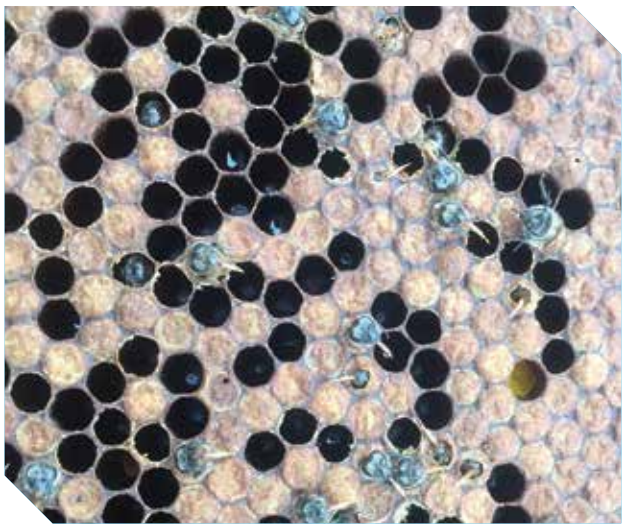
Perspectives in Beekeeping:

The World's Greatest Honey Bee Pollination Event

by: Gene Brandi
ABF President

Gene Brandi, ABF President

Spring has finally arrived throughout most of the country, and the bees are buzzing from flower to flower pollinating various plants, a job for which they are so perfectly designed. In the Central Valley of California where I live, however, spring generally arrives in February when nearly a million acres of almonds come into bloom, and this year was no exception. As in 2015, the almond bloom was somewhat earlier than normal, beginning in earnest prior to Valentine's Day, and it progressed very quickly as warmer than average temperatures brought on what many describe as a "flash bloom." A large number of colonies actually gained some weight due to the great weather during almond bloom and the fact that there was an abundance of alternative forage, such as mustard and fiddle neck, in many areas due to the winter rains that fell in the Central Valley and surrounding foothills. Another reason many colonies gained weight during almond bloom this year is that there was a shortage of good colonies, which equated to fewer "head per acre" in parts of the valley. Beekeepers and livestock folks all know that fewer head per acre means that individuals will generally do better than if there was more competition for the available feed.



Honey bee pupae died as they were hatching with their tongues sticking out

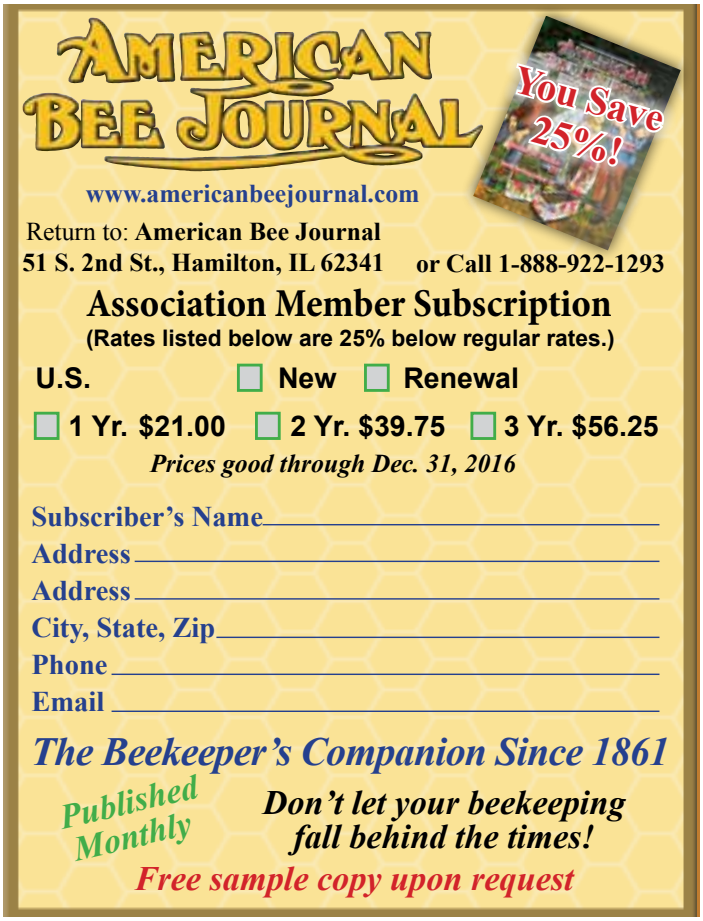
The wonderful bloom and generally great condition of the good bee hives in the almonds has been tempered by the fact that a number of beekeepers have experienced a severe loss of brood as a result of bloom time sprays in the almonds again this year. Fungicides or fungicide/insect growth regulator tank mixes applied during full bloom can result in either a brood gap or severe loss of brood about two weeks after the applications. A "brood gap" in almonds due to fungicide applications has been an issue for many years, being worse in some years than in others. When pollen is contaminated with certain fungicide products, the larval food becomes contaminated and the bees will remove the contaminated larvae. In recent years the addition of insect growth regulators to the tank mix of materials applied to blooming almonds has resulted in the death of emerging pupae about two weeks after exposure. Young fuzzy bees as well as deformed pupae will often clog the entrances of the colony as other workers attempt to remove them from the hive, but often the workers cannot keep up with the volume of dead pupae and newly emerged bees. Unfortunately, I experienced this phenomenon first hand again this year as one of my growers applied a fungicide/IGR mixture during the day at full bloom. My brother also had several hundred colonies in the area and experienced massive amounts of dead brood.

Two years ago the brood kill in much of the almond-growing region was severe enough that EPA listened to our appeals and actually sent two high-level representatives to Los Banos for an impromptu meeting in my brother's back yard with about 35 beekeepers in attendance. In addition, there were at least that many beekeepers and others on a teleconference line who participated in to the meeting. My wife and I passed out survey forms to the beekeepers in attendance and also kept a tally of the number of colonies reported by those who spoke up on the phone. Beekeepers who responded to that survey indicated that nearly 80,000 colonies were impacted by the bloom sprays in 2014. This number has been reported many times and has been interpreted by some to be the total extent of the colonies damaged by almond bloom sprays in 2014, but it was only a snapshot of the situation on that one day by the beekeepers who responded to our informal survey either in person or on the phone. Surely the number of colonies impacted was greater than 80,000.

Neither the fungicides nor the insect growth regulators have any bee hazard warnings on their labels since EPA has determined that these products are not toxic to adult bees. EPA officials stressed in 2014 that labels will not change without product re-evaluation using an enhanced risk assessment procedure and that this would not likely occur in the near future. They suggested that the best short-term solution would be to develop best management practices for growers, pest control advisors, and pesticide applicators to use during almond bloom.

The Almond Board of California should be applauded for their efforts, as they went right to work and by September 2014 published a set of great BMP's for use during almond bloom. The most important

continued on page 4



Perspectives in Beekeeping – cont. from page3

recommendations were that no insecticides (including insect growth regulators) be applied during bloom, and that if fungicide applications are necessary, they be applied late in the day or during the evening after almond pollen has been collected for the day. Since those BMP's were published in 2014, a number of progressive growers, pest control advisors, and applicators have adopted the practices recommended by the Almond Board, and the problems with negative effects on brood have been minimized in many parts of the valley during almond bloom in 2015 and 2016. There are others, however, who refuse to recognize the BMP's or the fact that their traditional practices of tank mixing and/or spraying during the day can have a negative effect on pollination efficiency and on the health of the bee colonies for which the growers are paying good money.

Two years have passed since the severe incidents of 2014 and the problem remains. It is a shame that the Almond Board's best management practices have not been more universally adopted given that approximately 1.8 million of the nation's bee colonies pollinate almonds and have the potential of being exposed to these conditions. If the California Association of Pest Control Advisors were to recognize and endorse the Almond Board BMP's, it could go a long way toward solving the problems associated with tank mixing and daytime pesticide applications, but so far they refuse to acknowledge that there is problem. It appears that some pest control advisors and applicators will not change their ways until EPA requires a change of behavior by adding restrictions to the labels of some of these products.

Many samples of pollen have been collected this year, some by the Bee Informed Partnership, some by county personnel or even individual beekeepers. It is hoped that the data gleaned from these samples will reveal some of the most damaging compounds or tank mixes that negatively impact bee colonies. In addition to the fungicides and IGR's, it is entirely possible that some other ingredients in tank mixes, such as adjutants, could be synergizing with the other ingredients to magnify the toxicity of the mix.

If you pollinated almonds and encountered brood damage in your colonies this year, please fill out the ABF survey so that we can help to ascertain the extent of the damage to the beekeeping industry this year. Also, even if you have already moved your bees out of state, it is important that a report of loss be filed with the Department of Agriculture in the county where your bees were located during almond pollination.

EPA, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR), and many County Agricultural Departments are aware of the situation and are concerned about the apparent magnitude of the damage again this year. We will continue to work with state and Federal officials to urge that some changes, perhaps label modifications, be made to avoid these problems in the future for the sake of the bee industry as well as the almond industry. The world's greatest honey bee pollination event needs to be a safe place to keep bees!

Message from the ABF Vice President

by: Tim May
ABF Vice President

Tim May, ABF Vice President

Things have really changed in the beekeeping industry. There have been some positive changes, although most have made it difficult for the bees and the beekeeper.

I began working in the family business back in the late 1970s when I was in high school living outside of Chicago. At this point my father and grandfather had spent almost 30 years building up the business from 2 hives to around 1400. The amazing part of this is that they did so while having daily jobs outside of the bee business.

They were able to do this by being very "frugal." Only when needed, they would employ other family members or friends to help pull and extract honey. One cousin was even given a mattress so that he could sleep in my grandpa's attic and avoid travelling across town during the summer. Since they also worked outside of beekeeping, profits were put back into the business. Most of the expansion was done on the "cheap." Used equipment was purchased from retiring beekeepers or made from scrap wood my grandpa "found" on jobsites.

The beekeeping business itself was very simple, at least in our area. In the spring (March) we would check on the bees to see how they did over the winter. The hardest part of this was getting through the mud. Most of the overwintered hives had survived (80-90%) and were building up. We never fed pollen or syrup in the spring. Some hives did end up starving, but we were always able to make our own splits to make up for the losses. Queens were purchased from California for around $4.00 and were available in April. After all the splits were made, we began putting on supers. The hives were all supered by mid-June. The honey flow really did not start until July back then and would also go until late August.

By the second week in July, we began pulling off and extracting honey. We would only pull off one or two supers per hive and would replace them with the wet supers that had been extracted the previous day. The bees really seemed to jump on those wet supers. This method allowed us to pull honey up to three times from each hive in one year. Honey production usually averaged around 100# per hive.

After all the honey was pulled, we treated the bees with terramycin and reduced the entrances. That was it until spring. We never fed or wrapped them. We just left them alone. My dad went back to his tile-setting job and my grandpa sold the honey and counted the money.

Things are quite different and expensive nowadays. Tracheal and varroa mites really changed the industry. It has become expensive and labor intensive for commercial beekeepers to test and treat for the mites. Keeping bees alive has turned out to be much more difficult. Mites build up resistance to the treatments, so new treatments have to be developed on a regular basis and are usually more expensive than their predecessors.

Due to the mites and the expanded use of pesticides, the bees began to have smaller clusters going into the winter. This forced us to insulate and wrap the hives for winter. The wrapping methods have gotten better over the years. The clusters are able to stay warmer and move around and get to the honey stores. Winterizing the hives is important in our area but is also another expense and labor intensive.

The honey flows are shorter than ever, and poor weather for a week during the flow can destroy an entire season. Floral sources are vanishing with corn and soybeans being grown from road to road. There are no more tree lines in our area. They have been plowed up along with the wildflowers that used to grow between the fields. This has reduced honey crops and increased the need to feed syrup and artificial pollen--another added cost that is also labor intensive.

Winter losses have been increasing every year. There may be a decent year now and then, but the trend has definitely been towards higher winter losses. Instead of replacing the losses with our own splits, we now must purchase packages and nucs. The cost of bees has also gone up dramatically. Once again another added expense.

Not all of the changes in the industry have been adverse. The price of honey has gone up tremendously over the last 30 years. The image of honey has also improved in the eyes of consumers, thus allowing the price to rise without negatively affecting the demand. The demand for pollination services has also increased. This has helped increase the price. Pollination has become more important than honey production for many commercial beekeepers.

So as beekeepers we have to work harder and smarter. We must be aware of changes in the industry and the environment. We must also adapt to those changes rapidly. Procrastination is not an option for a beekeeper. Good luck, and I hope everyone has a happy and productive spring.

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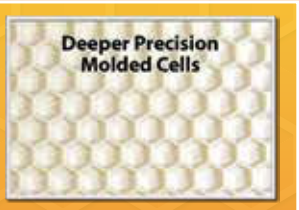

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Government Relations Report

by: Gene Brandi
ABF President

MP3 Symposium

ABF Board members Joan Gunter, Bob Sears, Past President George Hansen, and I attended a symposium in Washington, D.C., on March 10-11 to discuss the development of Managed Pollinator Protection Plans (MP3's). The meeting, which was sponsored by EPA, USDA, NASDA (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture), and the Honey Bee Health Coalition, was designed to provide the tools, insights and relationships necessary for state, tribal, and other stakeholders to pursue the development of MP3 plans effectively and efficiently.

MP3 plans, as discussed at the symposium, are voluntary and proposed as a means of opening lines of communication between beekeepers and growers and/or pesticide applicators. Increased communication can be beneficial, but it is only the first step in helping to improve the situation, as communication alone will not necessarily decrease the impact of pesticide exposure to bees and other pollinators. The ABF position, which I stressed, is that clear, enforceable pesticide label language is the best means of protecting bees from pesticides. Of course the pesticide label language must be based upon accurate, comprehensive risk assessment of the pesticide products.

EPA's suggestion that MP3's can provide notification to beekeepers, so that bees can be removed from areas where pesticides will be applied, is not a practical solution to mitigate the issues honey bees and other pollinators encounter with pesticide exposure. One government speaker dispelled this concept when he stated that MP3 plans are not a "get out of jail free" card for pesticide applicators! Clearly, continual moving of honey bees away from areas where pesticides are applied is neither a practical nor sustainable means of protecting them on a broad scale, given the relative ubiquity of pesticide applications in many parts of the country.

It was mentioned that there are several managed pollinators besides honey bees including leaf cutter bees, alkali bees, blue orchard bees, bumblebees, and others. A number of attendees stressed the fact that all pollinators need protection from pesticide exposure and most of them cannot be moved. It was evident that many attendees did not have an understanding or appreciation of the problems bees and other pollinators face with exposure to pesticides. One state representative told me that beekeepers surveyed in his state place pesticides at the bottom of their list of problems. Knowing that particular state and its pesticide problems, I wonder which beekeepers participated in the survey. Even though this symposium was convened in order to specifically discuss protecting bees from pesticides, frequent mentions of varroa and bee management issues, and comments that beekeepers just need more education, were prevalent amongst some speakers and others with whom I spoke in the hallways between sessions. I stressed that beekeepers are just like farmers in many ways, since we must contend with a multitude of issues as we endeavor to maintain the health of our bees, but certainly exposure to pesticides is one of the most serious issues we face.

There are many challenges to the possible success of MP3 plans, not the least of which is that voluntary programs are impossible to enforce. The fact that a group of more than 150 people gathered to discuss protecting bees from pesticides is positive, irrespective of the fact that some tried to deflect the issue. I truly hope that symposium attendees were

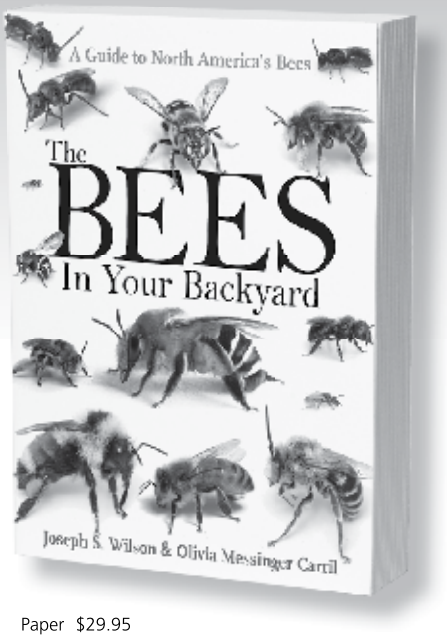
enlightened by the beekeepers in attendance who have been dealing with pesticide issues for many, many years.

EPA Imidacloprid Comments

The comment period for EPA's Preliminary Pollinator Risk Assessment for Imidacloprid has been extended until April 14. The ABF continues to develop comments, which we will submit jointly with the American Honey Producers Association. EPA encourages stakeholders and interested members of the public to review the risk assessment and related documents and submit comments to the docket at *www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2008-0844*. According to EPA, all comments submitted to the docket will be considered in the final risk assessment.

GMO Labeling

Genetically modified organisms (GMO's) have been in the news lately as the Vermont law, which requires that products containing genetically engineered ingredients be labeled, is scheduled to become effective on July 1, 2016. In an effort to negate this law and prevent other states from enacting similar legislation, a bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate that would have called for voluntary disclosure of GMO ingredients nationally, while prohibiting states from enacting their own GMO labeling requirements. This bill failed to garner support and died in the Senate. Discussions surrounding the possibility of another Senate bill that could head off the implementation of the Vermont law before July 1 are ongoing. It is clear that the majority of consumers want to know whether or not the foods they buy contain genetically engineered ingredients. The debate continues as to whether or not GMO labeling of foods will be required nationally or allowed on a state-by-state basis. The good news is that, according to the European Union, Australia, several other countries, and the state of Vermont, honey is a non-GMO food as defined by their adopted standards.



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by: 2017 North American Beekeeping Conference & Tradeshow Committee

2017 North American Beekeeping Conference & Tradeshow
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Save the date for the 2017 North American Beekeeping Conference & Tradeshow. That's right, The American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) and the American Honey Producers Association (AHPA) will join forces for a combined conference & tradeshow in 2017. This is one conference you won't want to miss so make your plans now.

The conference will be held at the Galveston Convention Center in Galveston, Texas. Guest rooms will be available at the following properties:

- San Luis Resort
- Hilton Galveston Island Resort
- The Holiday Inn Resort Galveston

With anticipated attendance of 1000+ this is the perfect place to learn more about beekeeping, share best practices and visit with vendors who have lots of great information to share with you.

And, while you're in Galveston, mixing business with pleasure is easy as the island offers plenty of opportunities for exploring, from the

adventure pyramids of Moody Gardens to the thrills of the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier. Visitors can learn about Galveston's unique history at a variety of museums, like the historic mansion Bishop's Palace or the 1877 Tall Ship ELISSA. In Galveston, even shopping and dining are historic, cultural experiences. The Historic Downtown Strand Seaport District boasts of beautiful Victorian storefronts featuring unique shops, restaurants and art galleries just a short walk away from Galveston's Pier 21 and glistening harbor. We look forward to seeing you in Galveston!

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Commercial Beekeeping

by: Jan Lohman

Kona Queens Hawaii: Gus Rouse

In my efforts to highlight commercial beekeepers, I have covered beekeepers from Georgia to California and Texas to North Dakota. I have also looked at operations that primarily produce queens and operations that produce large quantities of honey as well as pollinators. I thought that it would be interesting to look at commercial beekeeping in Hawaii and the challenges and differences they experience in Hawaii compared to the mainland.

This month I am going to introduce you to Gus Rouse of Kona Queens Hawaii, as if he and his wife Sandy need any introduction at all! Gus is one of those people who can entertain a crowd with his stories and captivate a room, while wife Sandy introduces herself to everyone in the room and has a genuine interest in what they do and how they are doing.

Gus Rouse of Kona Queens Hawaii

Gus Rouse did not begin beekeeping in Hawaii; instead, in 1974 he and his brother Mont and Mont's wife began working in the Sacramento area with Jack Garrison, and then with Dermont Hill in their hometown of Marysville, CA. Their beginning included all aspects of beekeeping: pollination, queen rearing, package sales and honey production. Don Strachan gave them breeder queens and bought their packages, which was paramount for a young business.

I am always interested in the HOW and the WHY involved in the decision making of becoming a beekeeper, especially since I fell into our operation with no planning whatsoever! When I asked Gus how the "BEE BUG" stung him he said, "I still remember the day that Jack Garrison pulled a frame of brood and handed it to me. The fascination began." Since Gus and Mont's father raised walnuts, peaches and prunes and hired beekeepers for his farm pollination, they both knew the long hours and hard work required getting the job done, and those experiences have come in handy over the past forty years.

In 1978, Gus saw some beehives while honeymooning in Kona and tracked down the manager. The manager sent them to meet Jim Powers in Idaho, which required driving two days through a blizzard. He was told to come back in five years, but Gus could not let the opportunity pass and kept talking until he came away from the meeting with a promise of a job in Hawaii for four fifty an hour! One year later the manager of the Kona Queen Company quit and Gus was offered the job. Gus says, "We all knew that I was not qualified." However, he had Jim Powers, the largest beekeeper in the 70's, and Roy and Binford Weaver ...the largest queen breeders in the 70's, as his mentors.... He did well and within five years, he became one-third owner and managing partner of his business. In the mid 90's he obtained full ownership of Kona Queens Hawaii.

Another curiosity that I have about beekeepers is the nuts and bolts of how they make their particular operation run smoothly and what the differences are depending on location and operations.

1. In Hawaii, they keep bees for 12 months of the year – full speed ahead with no winter break.
2. As crazy as it seems, they still move bees by hand. They are not in the pollination business and their ground is definitely NOT flat.
3. They feed thousands of hives pollen patties every week for months leading up to the spring season start.
4. They LOVE candy boards.
5. They work in t-shirts and usually no veils because of the mild weather and of course, their gentle bees, but it was not always that way (gentle bees).
6. They go home every night!

Hawaii is ranked by Forbes as the most difficult state in which to do business. The cost of living can be as high as 30% more than places on the mainland, they have had mandatory paid medical coverage for employees for decades, and incoming and outgoing freight costs are added to EVERYTHING. They only get from 6000 to 8000 miles on a new set of tires because of the curvy roads and lava rocks, but they do not pay heating bills, nor do they have air conditioning.

"Do what you need to do to survive hard times; the rewards will come later..."

–Gus Rouse

They had an advantage in that varroa mites and small hive beetles waited so long to get to Hawaii. Gus is very grateful to his customers who proved to be fabulous sources of information for these issues. Within 10 days of confirming the mites and beetles, they had expert advice that had taken 15 years to develop. Reggie Wilbanks and Horace Bell in particular offered information that probably kept Kona

Kona Queens hard working staff

Queens Hawaii in business. Gus also hired a "mite czar" to teach them and to monitor their bees. A resounding statement that we hear from all commercial beekeepers is that varroa has taught us to be better beekeepers, and we have all increased our number of employees to accommodate our need to control these virulent pests.

Gus with a frame

I asked Gus about his global participation with Kona Queens. When he was growing the business, he had customers in 26 countries, but not anymore. Some were lost because of small hive beetle and protectionism in Europe, but nearly all of their queens now go to the United States and Canada. He employs around 35 people from the South Kona neighborhood, and many of them have been on the team for years. They are a queen breeding company. Their entire year is focused on producing queens. They have NO pollination income, some honey income, but the majority of their efforts are in raising queens, drones and bulk bees to support the queen operation. Their mite treatments, requeening, feeding and equipment repair must be worked into the schedule while they are still producing queens for us.

Gus has two great office representatives, Nancy and Linda, whom he calls the "voices of Kona Queens." They have tremendous knowledge of the customers' needs as well as Kona Queens' capabilities as a production crew. There are hundreds of man hours put in before a battery box of mated queens can be shipped.

Sandy and Gus have four daughters between them who live on the mainland from San Francisco to Washington State to South Carolina. They have a wonderful vacation spot in Oregon where they relax with pine trees and a river instead of palm trees and the ocean in Hawaii. In Oregon they love cycling, hiking and crabbing, but wish that they had more time to be there. They are looking forward to finding out what retirement looks like. Gus hopes to be more relaxed, get into better shape, travel to see the folks that mean so much to them and simply enjoy the years ahead, but he reminds me that he has thoroughly enjoyed the bee business; it was a good fit. He loves working outdoors, growing the bees and meeting property owners.

His lessons to pass on to the next generation of beekeepers include one that I have heard repeatedly:

1. IF YOU TAKE CARE OF THE BEES, THEY WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
2. Do what you need to do to survive hard times; the rewards will come later....
3. Think of how you would like to be remembered.
4. Do not piss off the IRS (Jim Powers).
5. Finally, have perseverance, as most good things do not come easily.

Winter location

I would like to thank Gus for his willingness to participate in this article at a time when I know that he is very busy in Hawaii, trying to keep us supplied with queens. One of the most amazing things that I have found with beekeepers is their willingness to talk about bees and the friendships that have developed between beekeepers in which you see a genuine concern for one another, rather than competition with each other. ALOHA!

Queen Committee Report

by: Anna Kettlewell
Honey Queen Program Chair

2016 continues to be a successful promotional year. We have had many firsts during the first quarter of 2016, many of which occurred earlier than they normally do each year.

Television and radio interviews typically trickle in slowly during the first quarter of the year, but this year, our Queen and Princess were blessed to each have significant radio and television coverage during some of their first promotional trips. Queen Kim's first television exposure came during her trip to New Mexico with ABF Board Member Jessie Brown. Thanks to Jessie's media experience in the area, she secured great exposure for the industry and for Kim during the trip to New Mexico.

Princess Tabitha's first television interview came during her trip to Connecticut in mid-March. Her exposure came during an established promotion, but her hosts and the Queen Committee thought that this would be the right year to expand the promotion and test the waters with the local media. It was a perfect example of how the Queen Committee and on the ground promotional coordinators can work together to make a promotion better! Collaboratively, Becky Jones did a tremendous amount of research, and I made some inquiries to stations, and a fantastic five-minute television interview was the result. If you are interested in trying to secure media interviews for the Honey Queen or Princess in your area and you aren't sure how to start, contact me and we can develop a plan on how to reach the media. It can be overwhelming and intimidating at first, but the Queen Committee is here to help you develop fantastic honey and beekeeping promotions in your local area.

Our social media channels have kept the Queen and Princess busy this first quarter of the year, and they have helped us reach new heights in number of followers and post and page views this year. Many of their posts have individually reached tens of thousands of people. It has been a first for the program to reach these heights so early in the year.

Finally, and possibly most specially, this year's royalty demonstrated a bee beard during the first quarter of the year. Typically, this isn't accomplished until the summer months during our fair season. Check out Queen Kim's article to learn about how she had this unique opportunity in March and how you can help her achieve a personal goal when she visits your state! You can see more photos on the American Honey Queen Program Facebook page, too!

Another first of the year already reached is that our August schedule is completely full as of March, but, thankfully, we have plenty of promotional time available for the Queen and Princess in late spring, early summer, and in the fall. Contact me at honeyqueen99@hotmail.com or 414.545.5514 to book an appearance with the American Honey Queen or Princess soon. Thank you for your great support of this ABF program!

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Texas Beekeepers Association will host its annual TBA Summer Clinic, June 18, in Conroe, Texas. This year we are proud to feature, as our Keynote Speaker, nationally-known author and promoter/educator of natural beekeeping, Ross Conrad! The Lone Star Convention & Expo Center is an all-indoors facility with over 54K square feet of classrooms and general sessions areas. The schedule will include 40 classes to choose from as well as a general session with Ross Conrad. More than 20 vendors and exhibitors are expected, bringing with them the latest and greatest beekeeping supplies and industry innovations! Registration is now open at www.texasbeekeepers.org

2016 Almond Bloom Spray Issues Survey

Recent reports indicate that many beekeepers have noticed significant loss of brood in their colonies about two weeks after fungicides and/or fungicide/IGR combinations were applied to blooming almonds. In many cases the hive entrances have been clogged with dead young fuzzy bees and pupae that failed to hatch. All beekeepers who experience such losses are encouraged to file a report of loss with the agricultural commissioner's office in the county where the loss took place. If no report is filed, there is a rebuttable presumption that no loss occurred.

If you experienced such brood losses in your colonies that pollinated almonds, please fill out and send in the following survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VJYD7DX

U.S. Honey Production is Down 12 Percent

Released March 22, 2016, by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Agriculture Statistics Board, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

United States honey production in 2015 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 157 million pounds, down 12 percent from 2014. There were 2.66 million colonies from which honey was harvested in 2015, down 3 percent from 2014. Yield of honey harvested per colony averaged 58.9 pounds, down 10 percent from the 65.1 pounds in 2014. Colonies which produced honey in more than one State were counted in each State where the honey was produced. Therefore, at the United States level yield per colony may be understated, but total production would not be impacted. Colonies were not included if honey was not harvested. Producer honey stocks were 42.2 million pounds on December 15, 2015, up 2 percent from a year earlier. Stocks held by producers exclude those held under the commodity loan program.

Operations with Less than Five Colonies Produced 720 Thousand Pounds of Honey in 2015

United States honey production in 2015 from producers with less than five colonies totaled 720 thousand pounds. There were 23 thousand colonies from which honey was harvested in 2015, with an average yield of 31.3 pounds harvested per colony. This yield is 27.6 pounds less than what was pulled per colony on operations with five or more colonies. Comparisons to 2014 are unavailable because no data prior to 2015 was collected for operations with less than five colonies.

Honey Prices Down 4 Percent for Operations with Five or More Colonies

United States honey prices decreased during 2015 to 209.0 cents per pound, down 4 percent from a record high of 217.3 cents per pound in 2014. United States and State level prices reflect the portions of honey sold through cooperatives, private, and retail channels. Prices for each color class are derived by weighting the quantities sold for each marketing channel. Prices for the 2014 crop reflect honey sold in 2014 and 2015. Some 2014 honey was sold in 2015, which caused some revisions to the 2014 honey prices. Price data was not collected for operations with less than five colonies.

IN MEMORIAM

Britt David Thomas, of Purcellville, VA, died January 6, 2016 in Fairfax Hospital at the age of 52. Britt was born March 27, 1963 in Ashland, Kentucky to Max and Dennissee Thomas. Britt was very active in his community, passionate about nature and was the President of the Loudoun Beekeepers Association (LBA) which he was a member of since 2012.

Britt is survived by his wife of 27 years Kathy B. Thomas of Purcellville, VA; sons Justin Thomas of Charleston, SC and Clay Thomas of Purcellville, VA; parents Max and Dennissee Thomas of Vienna, VA; brother Brad Thomas of Springfield, VA; and sister Kendra Rinke of Knoxville, TN.

A funeral service will be held on Wednesday January 13th at Purcellville Baptist Church beginning at 2 p.m. with Pastor David Janney officiating.

Memorial contributions may be given to American Beekeeper Federation-Research Fund: https://abfnet.site-ym.com/donations/donate.asp?id=11282 or American Heart Association

American Honey Queen Report

by: Kim Kester
American Honey Queen

Kim Kester
American Honey Queen

February and the first part of March were filled with a variety of events to kick off my year as American Honey Queen! It began with an interview with The Country Today, an agricultural publication in Wisconsin, as well as other media coverage of my selection as Queen. Residents of the Badger state were excited to read about their former student and 4-H member who earned a position as an educator for a crucial agricultural sector.

Next, I spent February 2-7 in Albuquerque for the New Mexico Beekeepers Association (NMBKA) conference. Jessie Brown, president of NMBKA and ABF Board Member, joined me in studio for my first live television interview, where we provided a preview of events at the conference and invited the public to attend. We also shared timely honey and beekeeping information with Albuquerque consumers! Between sessions at conference, I spoke with people about the benefits of becoming an ABF member with emphasis on the beginning beekeeper webinars. With New Mexico being a state that has not had a honey queen, I took the main stage to introduce the American Honey Queen Program and all that it achieves on behalf of the beekeeping industry. I also presented methods for successfully interacting with media and leaving them with a positive impression of our industry. Outside the conference, over 175 students in three different schools learned about honey bees and their contribution to our food supply through my presentations in their classrooms. Several of those students also visited the American Honey Queen Program's Buzzing Across America blog (www.buzzingacrossamerica.com) to ask additional questions about bees. I extend my deepest appreciation to Jessie Brown for arranging my appearances and to Sam and Shelly Lopez for hosting me during my stay!

Queen Kim taught kindergarteners in Albuquerque about the different castes of bees in the hive.

I was back in Wisconsin after New Mexico and went right back to work! I was interviewed by WRCO Radio in Richland Center, WI, and with the Wisconsin Honey Producers Association's Southwest District Chairperson, Sue Sharp, on February 17. We talked with our host, Ron Fruit, for nearly 30 minutes about honey bees and products of the hive, as well as the upcoming Southwest District meeting on February 20. At this meeting, I described the Honey Queen Program and told attendees about the free ABF membership that is available to first-time members. I was seated next to the organization's youth scholarship recipient, who received a hive and a mentor for the year, and I encouraged her to consider serving as a county honey queen to gain valuable speaking experience.

I was reunited with Princess Tabitha, February 26-28, as we both attended the Beekeeping in Northern Climates short course hosted by the University of Minnesota. Over 240 students were enrolled, showing just how many people are interested in beekeeping. The course was taught by Dr. Marla Spivak and Gary Reuter, and they were a wealth of knowledge. It was an excellent refresher for the year of promotions and educational presentations. Dr. Spivak offered a great way of describing how the honey bee population is affected by a combination of factors, which I am excited to incorporate into my future presentations. Thank you, Dr. Spivak and Gary Reuter, for giving Tabitha and me the opportunity to enhance our honey bee knowledge through your course!

Tabitha and I jetted off to sunny St. Augustine a few days later, March 2-6, for the Florida Bee College hosted by the University of Florida. There was a huge variety of fantastic speakers throughout the week. We assisted with the Junior Bee College, helped with awards presentation, and sat in on educational sessions. I also shadowed an attendee taking his Master Beekeeper practical exam. It was great to

see a state offering such a program that evaluates a student on their physical handling of bees as well as factual knowledge. Laurence Cutts and Dave Westervelt also helped me out with my first bee beard during the college! Laurence had demonstrated a bee beard with his son and grandson earlier in the college. One of my personal goals for the year is to demonstrate multiple bee beards to show the docility of the honey bee. He was kind enough to lend me a hand to reach my goal. Many attendees observed my bee beard; for some, it was the first one they had ever seen! It was amazing to feel all those tiny legs on my skin as they gathered around their queen, demonstrating that honey bees can be very docile creatures. A photo of my bee beard reached over 30,000 people on Facebook! I thank Dr. Jamie Ellis and Emily Helton for making our trip to this course possible and send a special thanks to Ursula Westervelt for working hard all week to keep everyone at the college well fed and hydrated!

Queen Kim demonstrates her first bee beard at the Florida Bee College.

Tabitha and I have been posting about our travels on the American Honey Queen Program Facebook page, and we have consistently been reaching a record number of people. We also boosted our total Facebook "likes" to over 3,100! This channel of promotion is a quick way to reach the younger generation and put our information right in front of them on their daily news feed. We have people sharing our posts to their own page and talking with their friends about preserving the honey bee. Positive results are always great to see! If you haven't already, please like our Facebook page, American Honey Queen Program.

I have just finished up several days in Texas for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. I started my March 9-14 trip by visiting T.H. Rogers School, which serves children who are gifted as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing. These students were overjoyed to learn that our pollinators also have limited hearing capabilities! With the help of Texas Honey Queen, Hope Pettibon, and Texas Honey Princess, Willow Lanchester, we spoke to over 500 students during our visit. The majority of my Texas trip was spent at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The Harris County Beekeepers Association had a honey bee booth in the AgVenture area, which showcases livestock species and farm products of Texas. The bee exhibit featured two observation hives, with one placed inside a giant walk-through skep. Many visitors said they felt like they

Queen Kim participated in a radio interview at the Houston Livestock Show with Texas Honey Queen Hope Pettibon.

were actually inside a beehive! Numerous children came through the booth asking to see the queen bee. During one weekend, the Houston Livestock Show brought in over 200,000 people, many of whom came through the Harris County Beekeepers' honey bee booth. I send special thanks to Elaine and Ed Michalik and the Harris County Beekeepers Association for hosting me for this event.

My next stops include Ag Day at the Capitol and other events in Wisconsin, along with trips to Wyoming and Virginia. I would love to visit your state, so to schedule me or Princess Tabitha for an event, please contact Anna Kettlewell at honeyqueen99@hotmail.com or 414.545.5514.

Member Milestones

Milestones for January & February 2016

5 Years
Kamron Koehnen, CA
Stan Yeagley, MS

20 Years
David Boise, NY
Steve Godlin, CA

American Honey Princess Report

by: Tabitha Mansker
American Honey Princess

Tabitha Mansker
American Honey Princess

These past few months have been so busy and a very exciting journey! I have met a lot of great people and so many new beekeepers. Each day I wake up on the road, I am still humbled to be in this position.

Not only do I serve the whole industry in the United States, but also I still have the opportunity to speak at my home beekeeping club. I attended the Collin County Hobby Beekeepers monthly meeting in McKinney, TX, on February 8. I gave an update on my ABF travels and plans for the year to the 235 attendees.

Starting February 9-16, I flew to Florida for the Florida State Fair. I spent just under a week informing fairgoers on the importance of honey bees in Florida with the Florida State Beekeepers Association at their wonderful exhibit. Over 8,000 people walked up to our booth while I was there handing out honey samples throughout the week. I had large audiences for my two cooking-with-honey demonstrations. I attended the Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame Annual Banquet one evening at the Fair. This was a unique opportunity, and I was honored to speak with some of the most influential people within the Florida agricultural community. During the week, I spoke at two of the local bee associations, the Tampa Bay Beekeepers and Ridge Beekeepers. Both clubs were very excited to learn about the opportunity to become part of the American Beekeeping Federation and possibly start local honey queen programs in their clubs. I also had the opportunity to tour Sadler's Honey Farm, see their process, and help to bottle and label a few hundred bottles of honey! I thank Noel and Marie Blanchet for being such friendly hosts, helping to get whatever I needed when I was under their care. In addition, thanks to another set of fantastic hosts, Bert and Caryl Kelley, who made time to take me to see manatees for the first time!

Princess Tabitha took children to see the bees up close during the Florida Bee College in March.

I met up with Queen Kim in Minnesota, February 26-28, for the University of Minnesota Beekeeping in Northern Climates short course. This event really explained how to keep bees in colder climates. Of course, being from Texas, I needed a little help in this area, so personally I found this course very useful. I now know the most popular and efficient ways to overwinter honey bees! Queen Kim and I staffed a booth promoting the complimentary ABF membership program between our workshop sessions. Willie and Marilyn Gorham were such wonderful hosts, opening up their beautiful home, driving us to our events, and showing us the sites. I send a big thank you to Gary Reuter, Dr. Marla Spivak, and the Minnesota Bee Lab for inviting us!

Next, Kim and I had the opportunity to go back down to the Jacksonville, FL, region, March 2-6, for the Florida Bee College. This was an energetic group of beekeepers with passion for helping new beekeepers get their start in the industry. We spent some time with the Florida bee inspectors and learned some valuable information on beekeeping laws in the south. I also now have a better knowledge of Africanized bees' behavior. Kim and I helped teach a Kids and Bees program, a special course specifically for younger children. They made many bee-related crafts and learned the basics of keeping honey bees. We even spent time taking them into the beehives! The kids were all very excited and had many great questions, such as, "Do the bees remember their beekeeper each time they go out into their hives?" Over 500 people attended the courses throughout the weekend, and this would have been impossible without the astounding work of Emily Helton and many other Florida beekeepers.

I went straight on to Kentucky through March 13 to spend a week in Frankfort for a special event called Bee Friendly Frankfort. Almost the whole city of Frankfort gets involved to support honey bee awareness. I started the week with my first radio interview of the year. We talked about the activities throughout the week and about buying local honey. I had a meeting with the Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture to discuss the importance of using public land in Kentucky for growing the beekeeping industry. This has been an ongoing project for the Kentucky beekeepers, and it looks like we made some headway with this meeting! I also visited the State Capitol. What an exciting opportunity, being announced on the House floor and representing ABF on a legislative level! Throughout the next five days in Kentucky, I spoke to over 600 students through

Princess Tabitha explained the importance of honey bee pollination to students over their lunch break in Frankfort, KY.

school presentations. The students were so excited about planting flowers to create more honey bee habitat and forage. Several high school students were interested in getting involved in beekeeping as a career. Throughout the week, there were many other bee-related activities around Frankfort. I participated as a judge in a Beehive Hairdo Contest, which turned out to be a fantastic way to reach the public on the importance of honey bees while having a lot of fun! I ended the week with the Bluegrass Beekeepers School, where I taught in two one-hour sessions. The first session was on products of the hive, and I discussed the different products you can collect and produce from your beehives. The second session was a Kids and Bees Q&A time, a chance for kids to ask any questions concerning the beekeeping industry. Over 250 people attended the school and left with a greater knowledge of beekeeping practices and techniques. A group of beekeepers made me feel at home in Frankfort, especially Marsha Bezold, who did an outstanding job coordinating all my activities.

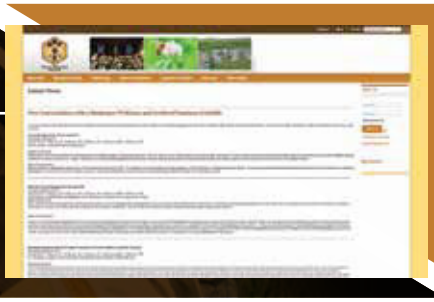
I headed straight to Connecticut, March 13-21, where I am writing this article. I started the week with my first television interview bright and early on a Monday morning. It was exciting to appear on Channel 8's "CT Style" in New Haven, CT. I was a little nervous, but I was truly amazed at how much my training in January had really prepared me for this moment. I promoted our wonderful industry for a full five minutes, publicity valued at over $6,000! We discussed the different uses of honey, specifically its medicinal uses. I also explained what the public could do to help the honey bees. On National Agriculture Day, I gave two high school presentations for local FFA students, specifically teaching them how honey bees tie together all aspects of agriculture. In addition to my honey recipe demonstration, the culinary students prepared lunch for me and used local honey in each of the dishes. It was all very delicious! I also attended Ag Day at the Capitol in Hartford. I spoke with the Governor and the Commissioner of Agriculture on the importance of honey bees in Connecticut. It is always such a great opportunity to spread the word about the beekeeping industry when speaking to such high officials. I have several more events this week, including more school and cooking presentations and a presentation with the Connecticut Land and Trust Company. I have to say thank you to my host family here in Connecticut, Ted and Becky Jones. They made me comfortable, relaxed, and ready for each presentation!

Princess Tabitha met with Kentucky State Representative Ken Upchurch about the beekeeping industry.

It has been a busy first few months, and I am excited to see how many more people Queen Kim and I can reach about the importance of our vital industry. If you would like to schedule a promotional visit, please contact Anna Kettlewell at 414.545.5514 or honeyqueen99@hotmail.com. Thank you for your support!

Log on and plug in today!

Make abfnet.org your home page and discover industry updates, ABF news and much more.



National Honey Board Launches New Online Catalog

The National Honey Board (NHB) announced that it has launched an online catalog for members of the honey industry. In a continued effort to provide materials to help promote honey, the NHB has made available to all industry members various materials that can be utilized to educate the general public about the story and benefits of honey. These materials are made available at little to no cost and can be displayed in storefronts, as well as at farmer's markets and other community events.

NATIONAL HONEY BOARD

The new online tool, found at www.nhbcatalog.com, brings the NHB into the modern digital age by simplifying the ordering process for industry members. This new catalog offers honey industry members a visual representation of materials available with clear product descriptions and photos. Some of the items available include educational brochures, promotional items and even a newly redesigned freebie.

"We are pleased to offer this online catalog to the honey industry," said Catherine Barry, Director of Marketing at the NHB. "By moving to an online system, we have streamlined the ordering process, making it as quick and easy to get materials as possible."

While previous freebies and favorite items are still available, the NHB started off 2016 with the creation of the completely redesigned Sweet Honey Recipes for the Everyday Cook. This vibrant, accordion-style brochure features eight delicious recipes that showcase the many functions of honey in the kitchen, in a sleek new design. Sweet Honey Recipes for the Everyday Cook is available to industry members at no cost in limited quantities.

In addition to educational materials and recipe brochures, the NHB's numerous promotional items, great for farmer's markets and festivals, have been made available for purchase. Items include the NHB's exclusive honey vanilla lip balms, honey bee stickers, spatulas, tumblers and honey tote bags.

Also available for the first time are the NHB's honey bear mascot costumes. These limited edition bears were created for the NHB in 2015 and are the top of the line in mascot design. Each unit includes a battery-operated fan in the head piece, as well as underarm vents for keeping cool and comfortable at any event.

The catalog will be updated as products sell out and new products become available. For first time ordering assistance, please contact Andrea Brening, the NHB's fulfillment coordinator at 303-776-2337.

The National Honey Board is an industry-funded agriculture promotion group that works to educate consumers about the benefits and uses for honey and honey products through research, marketing and promotional programs. For more information, visit www.honey.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

For Media Inquiries and Press Information:

Jessica Schindler
jessica@nhb.org
(303) 776-2337

NATIONAL HONEY BOARD
11409 Business Park Circle, Ste. 210
Firestone, CO 80504
Phone: (303) 776-2337
www.honey.com

ABF DONATIONS

The following individuals contributed to the ABF Funds during the months of January and February 2016. These donations enable us to fund programs and services that will benefit ABF members and the American beekeeping industry.

Foundation for the Preservation of Honey Bees, Inc.

Alabama Beekeepers Association
Peter Blann *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
Jason Conrad, California
Jacqueline Field *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
David Hackenberg, Pennsylvania
(In honor of Dennis Hanson)
Howard Hohnsen, Illinois
T. Lepp
B. Minkoff
John Morris *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
Barbara Phillips, Georgia
Kevin Rader, Florida
Margaret Reid, Ohio
William and Kendra Rinke and family
(In honor of Britt Thomas)
John Scheurer *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
K. Smith
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D. Hux
Margaret Knight and the Knight Family
(In honor of Britt Thomas)
Nathan Lamb *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
Daniel LaFrancois *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
Jan Francois *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
J. Mach
T. Meyers
Anita Minehart *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
S. Patrick
Margaret Reid, Ohio
Martha Schoonover
(In honor of Britt Thomas)
The Shaffer Family *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*
S. Somer
Charles Wysong *(In honor of Britt Thomas)*

Honey Queen

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Emily Brown, Arizona
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Carmen Conrad, Ohio
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From the Auxiliary

by: Beth Hackenberg
ABF Auxiliary President

What an interesting start to 2016 with crazy temperatures and lots of rain, at least here in the northeast. I hope everyone is having a good head start to spring. Many are starting over from huge losses, buying packages, nucs and requeening. Some are having good success preparing for the upcoming pollination and honey crop season, so let's keep our fellow beekeepers in thought and prayer and may the beauty of his creation and the renewing of spring be in our thoughts.

ABF **AUXILIARY OFFICERS**

President
Beth Hackenberg
799 Grange Hall Rd.
Milton, PA 17847
dbhack@evenlink.com

Secretary / Treasurer / Historian
Rachel Bryson
610 Strite Rd.
Chambersburg, PA 17202
brysonrachel@yahoo.com

Vice President
Louise Johnson
34147 310th St.
Guttenberg, IA 52052
louisej@alpinecom.net

Past President
Lillian Kelley
309 Ridge Creek Ln.
Troutville, VA 24175
lkandlk@ntelos.net

From the Recipe Box of Beth Hackenberg

Honey Roasted Almonds

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups whole almonds
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon almond oil

DIRECTIONS:

Spread almonds in a single layer on a baking sheet. Place in a cold oven. Turn oven on to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake almonds, stirring occasionally, until light tan and fragrant (12 to 15 minutes). The nuts will continue to cook after removing from oven.

Mix sugar and salt together in a small bowl; sprinkle about 1 tablespoon sugar mixture into a large bowl.

Stir honey, water, and almond oil together in a saucepan; bring to a boil. Add almonds; cook and stir until almonds have absorbed all the liquid (about 5 minutes).

Transfer coated almonds to the large bowl sprinkled with sugar mixture. Sprinkle remaining sugar mixture over almonds; toss to coat evenly. Spread almonds onto waxed paper to cool completely. Store at room temperature in a tightly-covered container or plastic bag.

Bee Connected:
ABF Facebook Fan Page

by: Regina K. Robuck
ABF Executive Director

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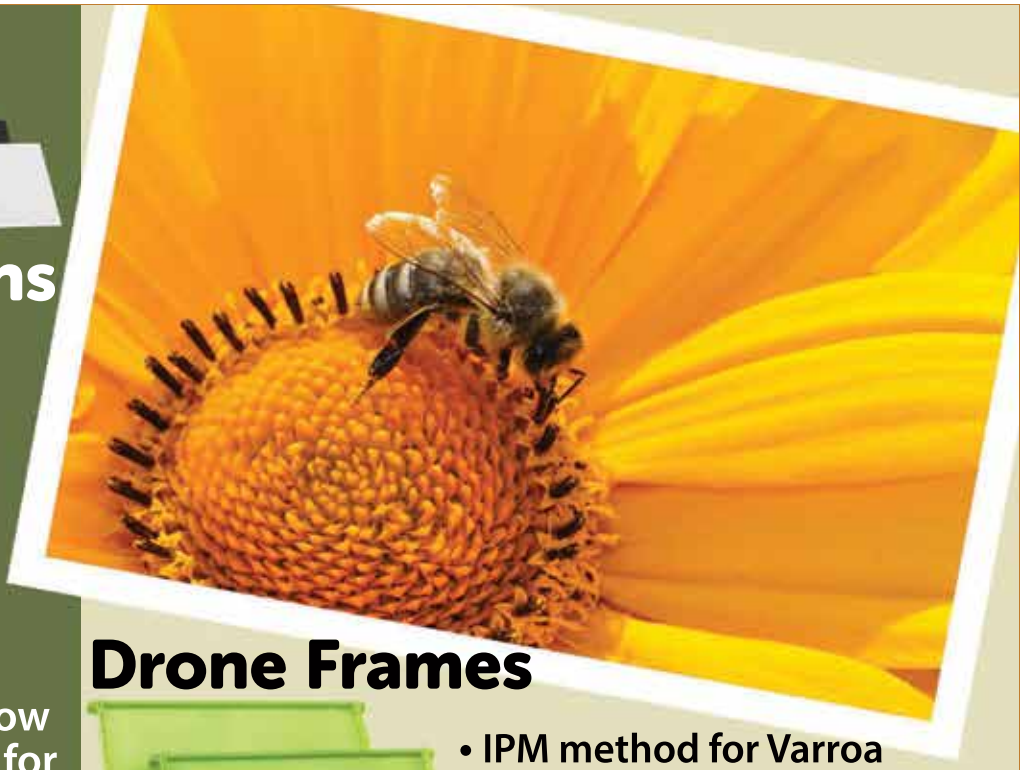

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