THE MONTHLY PEEK into hive life

NORTHEASTERN INDIANA BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION – NOVEMBER 2024

Our objective is to promote the art and skills of beekeeping in Indiana and throughout the world. By doing so, we preserve and improve the general environment in which we live, assist in providing better crop yield, provide high quality honey, and we do our part to preserve bees.

What's new in the November issue:

- President's Minutes
- New Members
- Calendar of Events
- A Peek into Your Hive Life (Pictures from members)
- State Apiculturist – Jarod Spokowsky
- Beekeeping Around the World - Ireland
- Fall/Winter Management by Dana Stahlman
- List of Officers
- American Bee Journal Subscription
- Bee Culture Subscription
- Places to buy bees, nucs and queens from our members
- Advertisements

From the Desk of the President: *Dr. Chris Lasalle*

November Presidential minute

Well, this is the final meeting of the year. I hope that all who have attended our meetings and Field Day found that they were informative and fun. I am hoping to have another good year for the bee club in 2025. The planning meeting will be January 18 with the location to be determined. Please let me know if you are interested in attending. The meeting is for everyone who is interested in getting more involved in the club. This is the meeting where we set the agenda and timing for the rest of the year. If you did not like the meetings in 2024, this is your chance to be heard and make next year better. Complaining and not taking action improves nothing. I have only heard from one member interested in directorship. All officers and other directors will remain the same, so there will be no election. I plan to be your president for another 2 years (unless challenged) and that would put me at 10 years in the job. I would love to see new leadership and new ideas of how to teach and gain the public's interest in beekeeping. If we are not changing, then we are decaying. I would not like to see us succumb to "foulbrood."

Winter planning should be on everyone's mind. The weather has not been very cold and the bees may need food when it does. Candy recipes are everywhere and a great way to feed as temperatures drop. This is always my November job is to make candy for the winter. Remember to close off your entrances as mice love to make a home in your hive. If there is a warm day in January or February, this is a great time to vaporize your hives for varroa .

Again, if there are topics or things that you would like to see at our meetings, please send me an email.

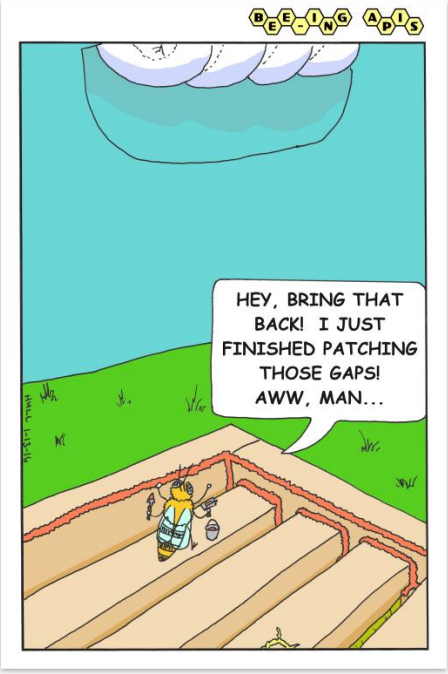
The last day to RSVP for the harvest banquet is November 14. Always a great meal and our last time for fellowship before the holidays. We will be discussing the different types of honeybees and their genetics. I hope to see you there.

I hope that all of you have a safe and happy holiday season. Stay healthy and keep the bees warm!!

Chris

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Andrew Fink
Fort Wayne



SWARM LIST:

IF YOU WANT TO BE ON THE SWARM LIST,

TEXT RICK STEPHENS AT 260-610-1040

PLEASE INCLUDE: NAME

PHONE NUMBER

ADDRESS (HE NEEDS YOUR LOCATION)

Upcoming & Current Events

November 21 – Thursday October NEIBA Club Meeting, 7pm @ Classic Café, Harvest Banquet

Topics:

Purdue to discuss bee genetics and bee types (Russian vs Italian)

Meal price is $16.00 per person

This can be paid on-line thru cheddarup app.

Please respond by November 14.

Greetings Fellow Beekeepers!
It's time for the NEIBA Harvest Banquet. The price is $16 per person. You can pay electronically at my.cheddarup.com/c/harvest-banquet. Or you can pay at the door. Please RSVP to David Mullins at BeeGreatCommpany@gmail.com. The banquet is Nov. 21 at 7pm at the Classic Cafe. Our speaker will be talking about differences in types of honeybees and bee genetics. The menu includes a salad, rolls, chicken, ham, vegetable, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and pie. The last day to RSVP is Nov 14 so Terry has time to order the food.
Thanks!
David Mullins - Treasurer

January 18 – Planning meeting NEIBA Club, to be announced.

A Peek into Your Hive Life

PLEASE SEND PICTURES OF YOUR HIVES!!!
TO: meanqueenhoneyfarm@gmail.com or reidenbachjp@gmail.com

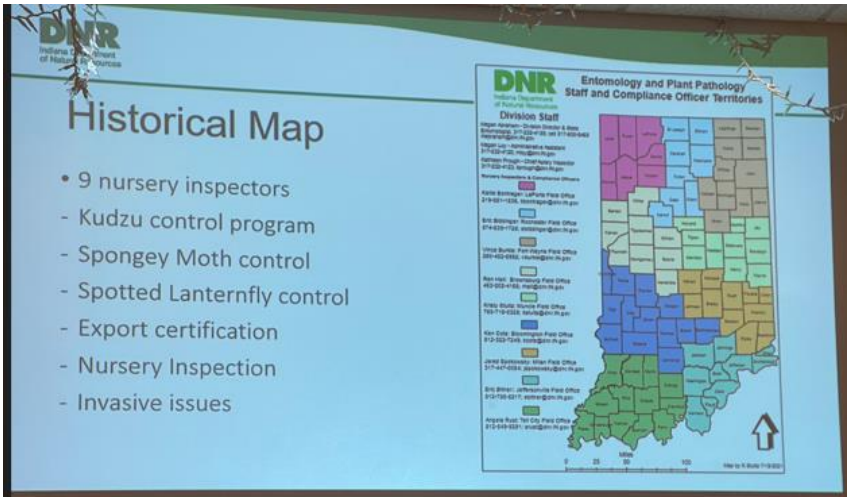
Picture contributed by Julie Beer!

I WOULD LOVE SOME RECENT PICTURES OF YOUR HIVES. PLEASE SEND THEM.

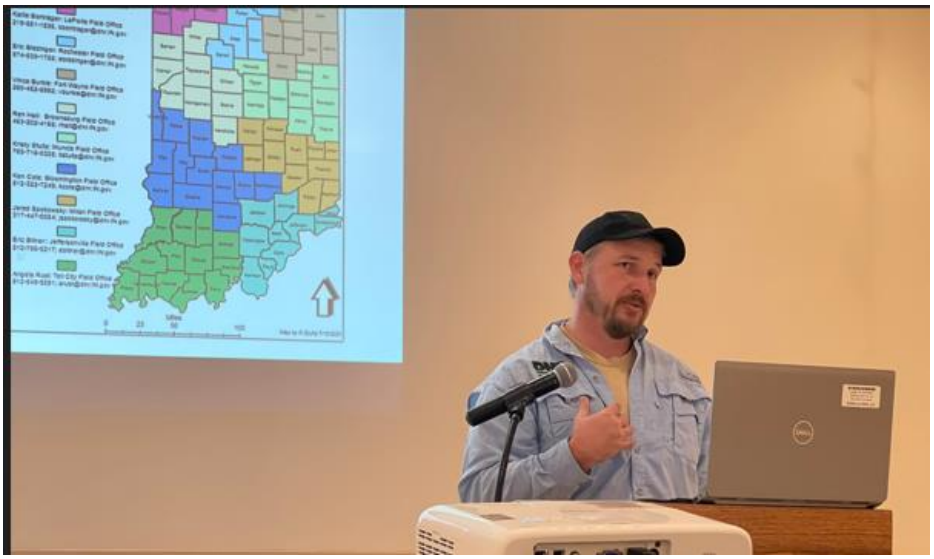
REIDENBACHJP@GMAIL.COM

October's speaker was Jarod Spokowsky

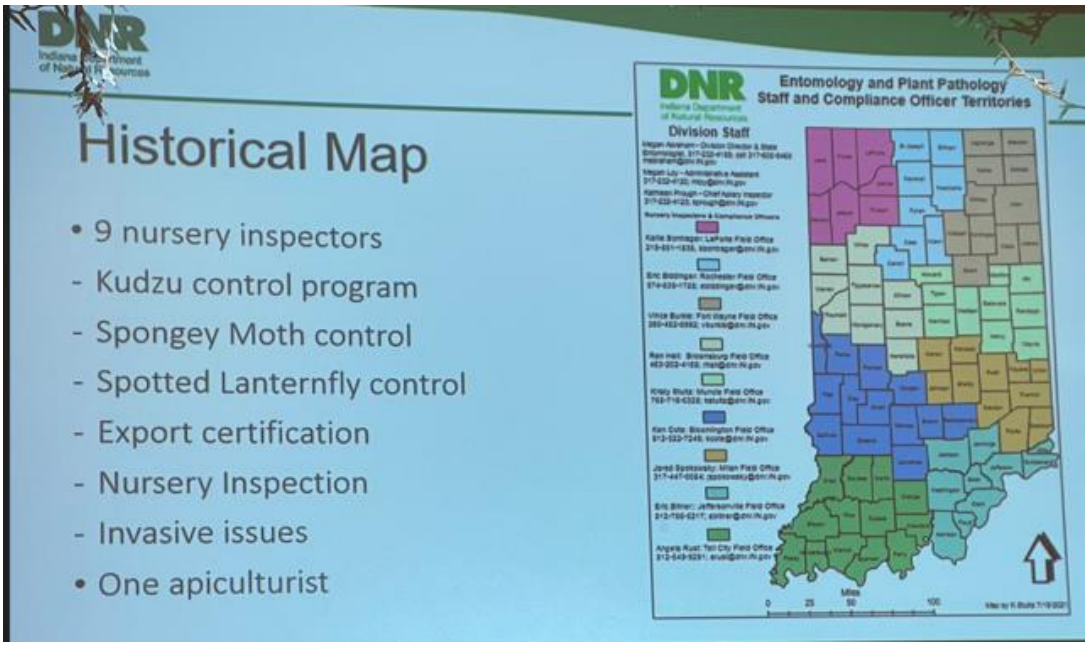
State Apiculturist



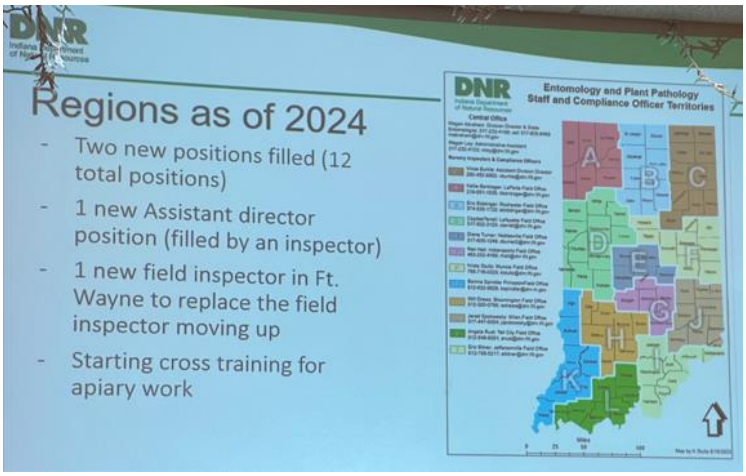
This picture shows how the state was divided for entomology issues.

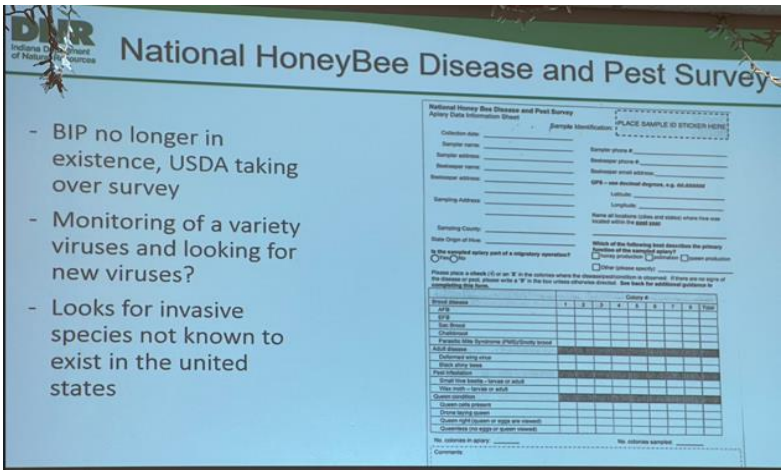


Jarod used to oversee any issues on the emerald ash borer control.

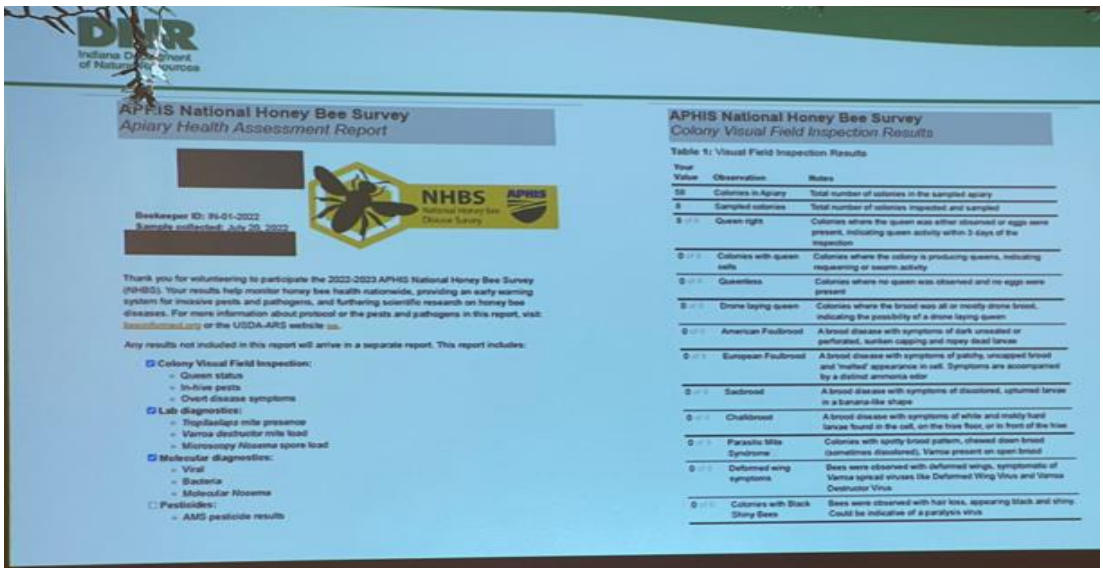


This is how the map is now divided and a new position of apiculturist was added.





Honey Bee Disease and Pest Survey.



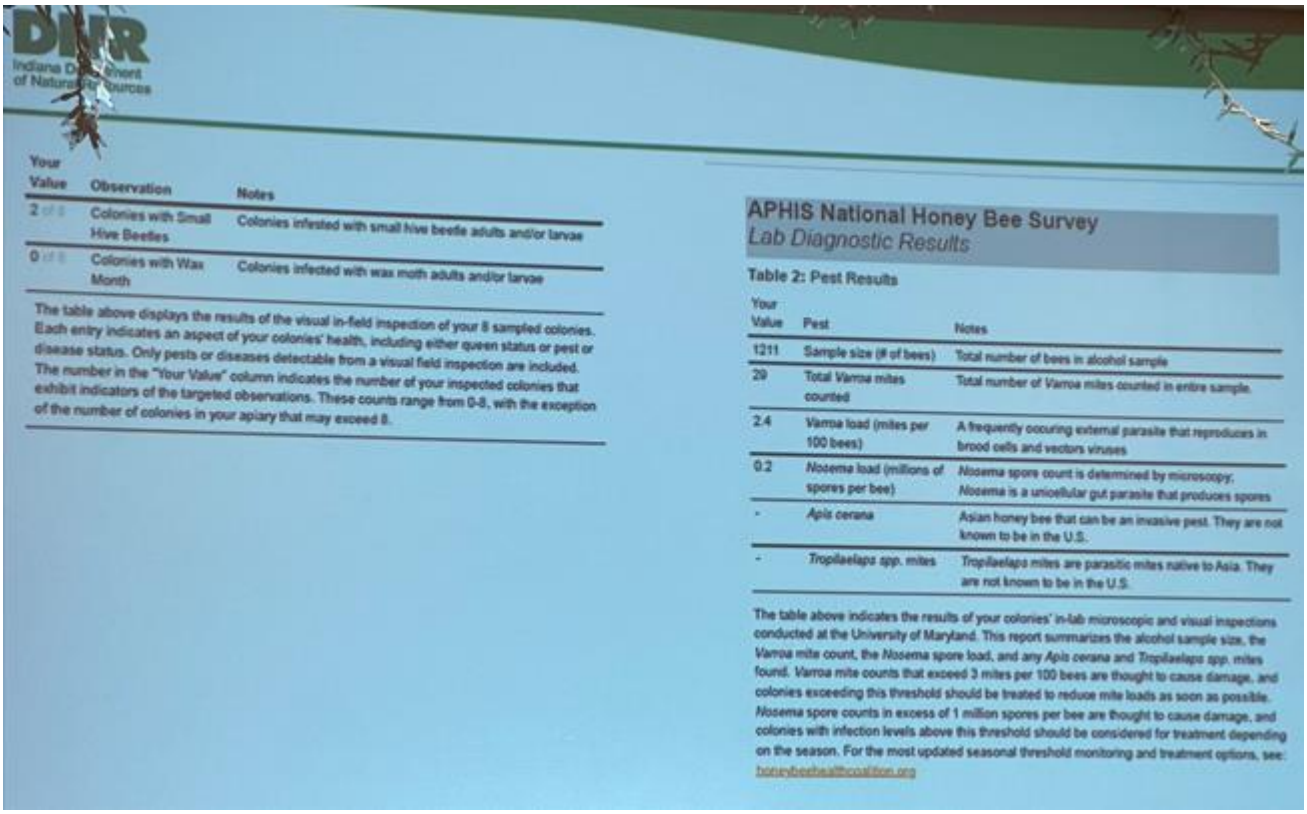
Survey Overview

The national survey continues to be the most comprehensive honey bee pests and diseases survey to date. The survey has three goals:

1. Detecting potentially invasive pests, such as the exotic mite *Tropilaelaps,* and problematic *Apis* spp., such as *A. cerana*;
2. Expanding the honey bee health surveillance dataset, which provides critical long-term historical perspective of colony health; and
3. Identifying risk and protective factors that predict colony health and operational success by connecting honey bee health measures over time and annual colony losses.

Here's how the survey works:

- The survey is open to all States and Territories on a voluntary basis.
- Beekeepers within the State or Territory volunteer to have their apiary inspected.
- Samples are collected by participating agencies or universities and processed by the University of Maryland.
- Surveyors will make 3 or more sampling trips to an apiary throughout the year to collect a total of 14 general survey surveillance samples.
- They will also sample five apiaries twice during the year– in the spring before or at the start of the honey flow and in the fall after honey flow–to more closely monitor factors that affect honey bee health seasonally.



Your Value	Observation	Notes
2 of 8	Colonies with Small Hive Beetles	Colonies infested with small hive beetle adults and/or larvae
0 of 8	Colonies with Wax Month	Colonies infected with wax moth adults and/or larvae

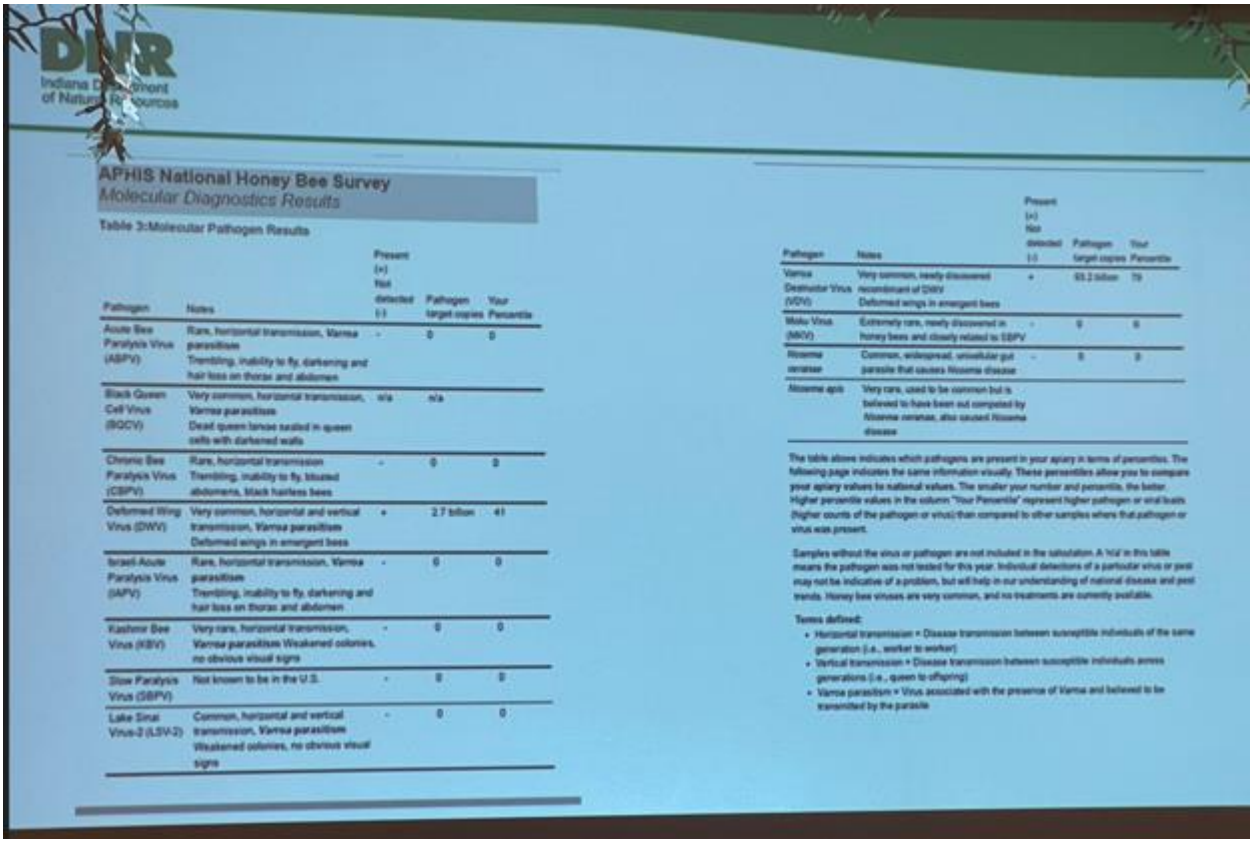
The table above displays the results of the visual in-field inspection of your 8 sampled colonies. Each entry indicates an aspect of your colonies' health, including either queen status or pest or disease status. Only pests or diseases detectable from a visual field inspection are included. The number in the "Your Value" column indicates the number of your inspected colonies that exhibit indicators of the targeted observations. These counts range from 0-8, with the exception of the number of colonies in your apiary that may exceed 8.

APHIS National Honey Bee Survey
Lab Diagnostic Results

Table 2: Pest Results

Your Value	Pest	Notes
1211	Sample size (# of bees)	Total number of bees in alcohol sample
29	Total *Varroa* mites counted	Total number of *Varroa* mites counted in entire sample.
2.4	*Varroa* load (mites per 100 bees)	A frequently occuring external parasite that reproduces in brood cells and vectors viruses
0.2	*Nosema* load (millions of spores per bee)	*Nosema* spore count is determined by microscopy; *Nosema* is a unicellular gut parasite that produces spores
-	*Apis cerana*	Asian honey bee that can be an invasive pest. They are not known to be in the U.S.
-	*Tropilaelaps* spp. mites	*Tropilaelaps* mites are parasitic mites native to Asia. They are not known to be in the U.S.

The table above indicates the results of your colonies' in-lab microscopic and visual inspections conducted at the University of Maryland. This report summarizes the alcohol sample size, the *Varroa* mite count, the *Nosema* spore load, and any *Apis cerana* and *Tropilaelaps spp.* mites found. *Varroa* mite counts that exceed 3 mites per 100 bees are thought to cause damage, and colonies exceeding this threshold should be treated to reduce mite loads as soon as possible. *Nosema* spore counts in excess of 1 million spores per bee are thought to cause damage, and colonies with infection levels above this threshold should be considered for treatment depending on the season. For the most updated seasonal threshold monitoring and treatment options, see: honeybeehealthcoalition.org



APHIS National Honey Bee Survey
Molecular Diagnostics Results

Table 3:Molecular Pathogen Results

Pathogen	Notes	Present (+) Not detected (-)	Pathogen target copies	Your Percentile
Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (ABPV)	Rare, horizontal transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Trembling, inability to fly, darkening and hair loss on thorax and abdomen	-	0	0
Black Queen Cell Virus (BQCV)	Very common, horizontal transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Dead queen larvae sealed in queen cells with darkened walls	n/a	n/a	
Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV)	Rare, horizontal transmission Trembling, inability to fly, bloated abdomens, black hairless bees	-	0	0
Deformed Wing Virus (DWV)	Very common, horizontal and vertical transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Deformed wings in emergent bees	+	2.7 billion	41
Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV)	Rare, horizontal transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Trembling, inability to fly, darkening and hair loss on thorax and abdomen	-	0	0
Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV)	Very rare, horizontal transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Weakened colonies, no obvious visual signs	-	0	0
Slow Paralysis Virus (SBPV)	Not known to be in the U.S.	-	0	0
Lake Sinai Virus-2 (LSV-2)	Common, horizontal and vertical transmission, *Varroa parasitism* Weakened colonies, no obvious visual signs	-	0	0

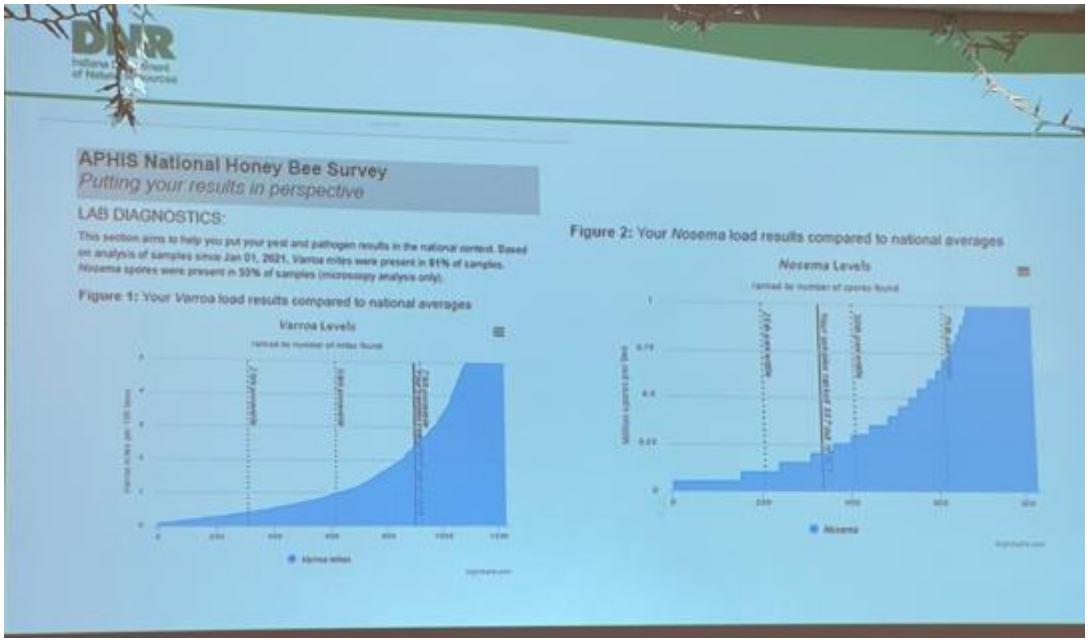
Pathogen	Notes	Present (+) Not detected (-)	Pathogen target copies	Your Percentile
Varroa Destructor Virus (VDV)	Very common, newly discovered recombinant of DWV Deformed wings in emergent bees	+	69.2 billion	79
Moku Virus (MKV)	Extremely rare, newly discovered in honey bees and closely related to EBPV	-	0	0
Nosema ceranae	Common, widespread, unicellular gut parasite that causes Nosema disease	-	0	0
Nosema apis	Very rare, used to be common but is believed to have been out competed by *Nosema ceranae*, also causes Nosema disease	-		

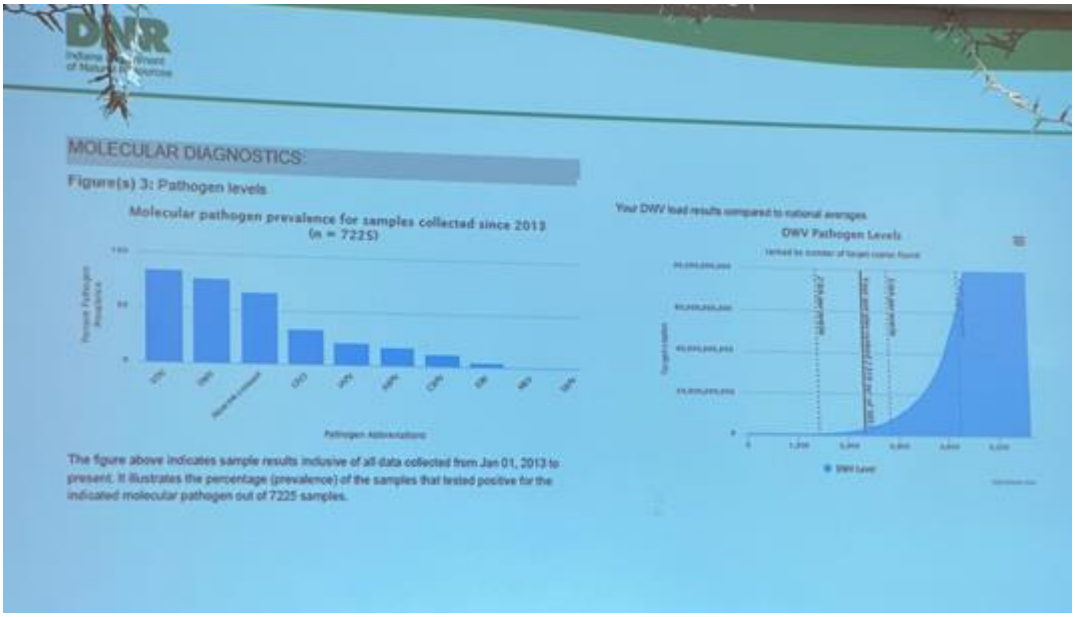
The table above indicates which pathogens are present in your apiary in terms of percentiles. The following page indicates the same information visually. These percentiles allow you to compare your apiary values to national values. The smaller your number and percentile, the better. Higher percentile values in the column "Your Percentile" represent higher pathogen or viral loads (higher counts of the pathogen or virus) than compared to other samples where that pathogen or virus was present.

Samples without the virus or pathogen are not included in the calculation. A 'n/a' in this table means the pathogen was not tested for this year. Individual detections of a particular virus or pest may not be indicative of a problem, but will help in our understanding of national disease and pest trends. Honey bee viruses are very common, and no treatments are currently available.

Terms defined:

- Horizontal transmission = Disease transmission between susceptible individuals of the same generation (i.e., worker to worker)
- Vertical transmission = Disease transmission between susceptible individuals across generations (i.e., queen to offspring)
- Varroa parasitism = Virus associated with the presence of Varroa and believed to be transmitted by the parasite


APHIS National Honey Bee Survey
Putting your results in perspective
LAB DIAGNOSTICS:
This section aims to help you put your pest and pathogen results in the national context. Based on analysis of samples since Jan 01, 2021. Varroa mites were present in 91% of samples. Nosema spores were present in 55% of samples (microscopy analysis only).
Figure 1: Your Varroa load results compared to national averages
Varroa Levels
Figure 2: Your Nosema load results compared to national averages
Nosema Levels


MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS:
Figure(s) 3: Pathogen levels
Molecular pathogen prevalence for samples collected since 2013
(n = 7225)
Pathogen Abbreviations
The figure above indicates sample results inclusive of all data collected from Jan 01, 2013 to present. It illustrates the percentage (prevalence) of the samples that tested positive for the indicated molecular pathogen out of 7225 samples.
Your DWV load results compared to national averages
DWV Pathogen Levels

Indiana Values

- Varroa Levels (NHBS)

2019 – average 4.13 (high 18.1)
2020 – average 2.69 (high 10.2)
2021 – average 2.16 (high 6.9)
2022 – average 3.625 (high 6.9)
2023 – average 3.075 (high 8.8)

- Nosema Load

Average 50% of colonies nation wide.

10 of 24 samples contained Nosema in Indiana in 2023.

None exceeded the treatment threshold.

Varroa Treatment Revision

Table 1: Treatment Thresholds by Colony Phase
(%=Number of mites/100 adult bees)

Colony Phase	% Immediate control not needed	% Promptly control
Dormant*	<1%	>1%
Population Increase	<2%	>2-3%
Peak Population	<2%	>3%
Population Decrease	<2%	>2-3%

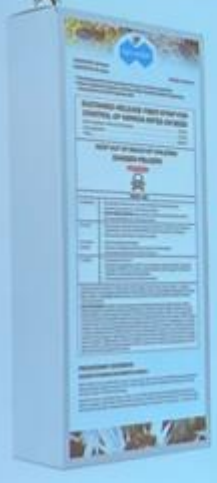
*Note, Sample just prior to clustering to determine whether bees are healthy going into dormancy.

New Varroa Treatments

Amiflex (RUP) – must have a commercial applicators license to purchase.

Varroxsan – Extended-release OA in a chipboard matrix

Varroa Treatment Revision



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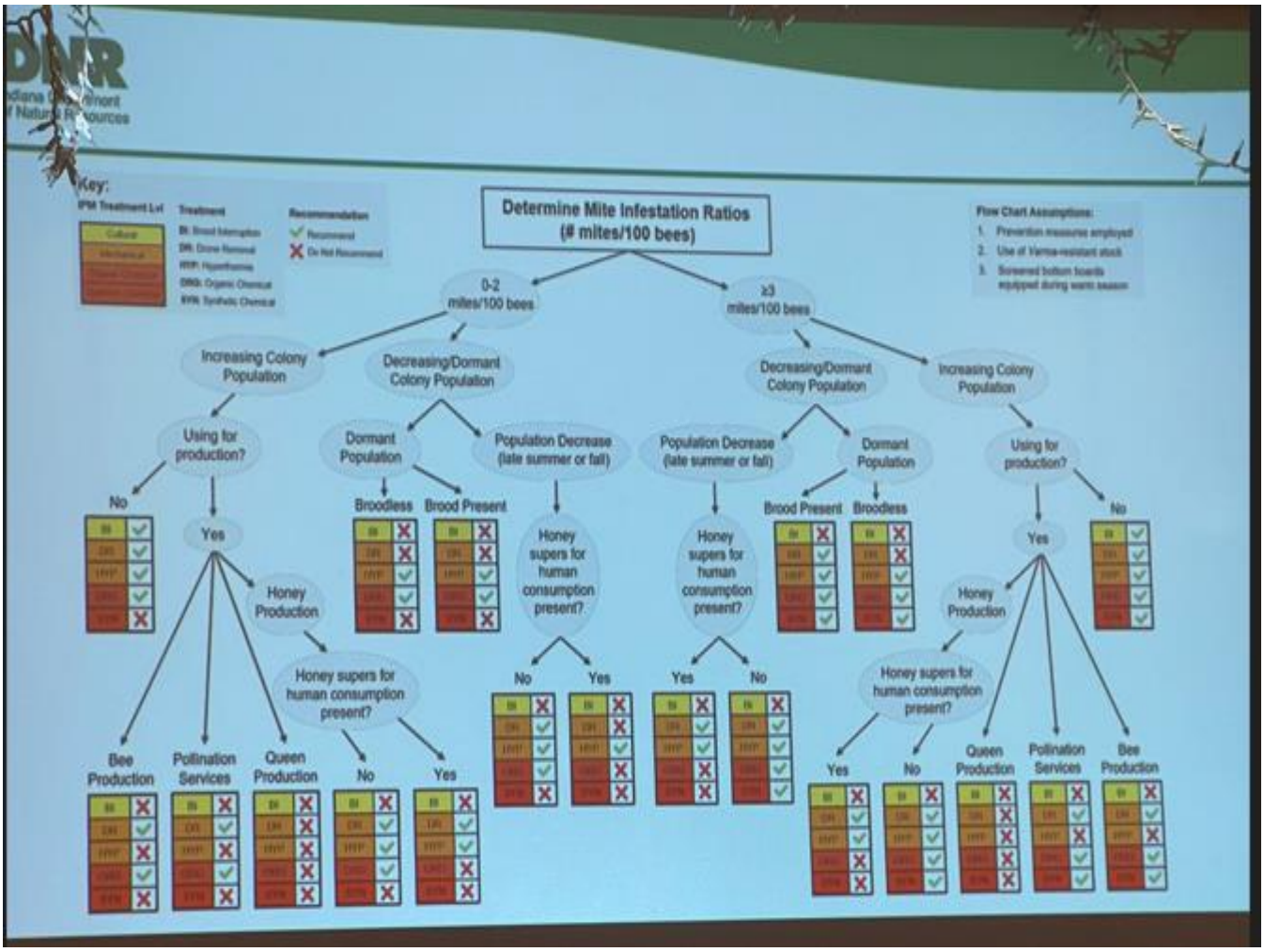
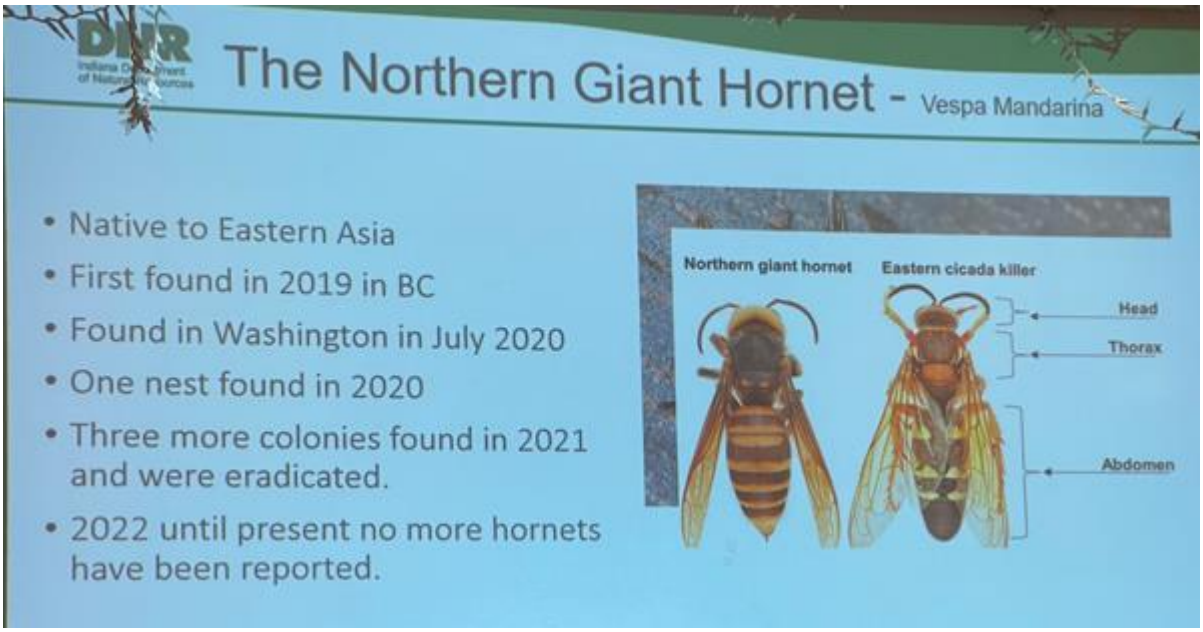
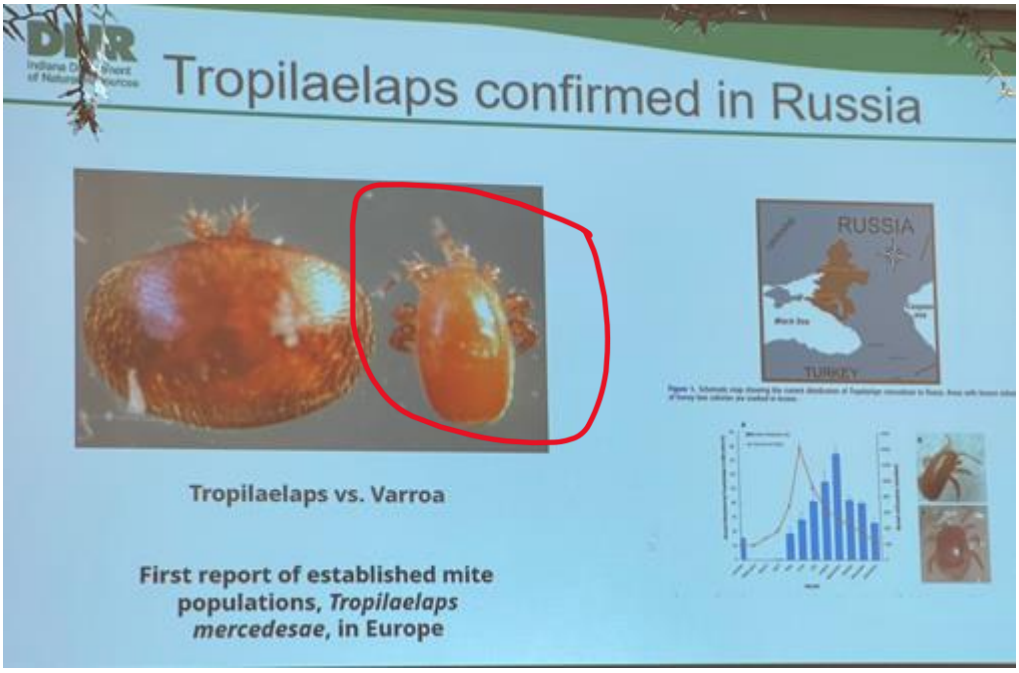

DNR
Key:
IPM Treatment Lvl
Treatment
Recommendation
Recommend
Do Not Recommend
Determine Mite Infestation Ratios
(# mites/100 bees)
Flow Chart Assumptions:
1. Prevention measures employed
2. Use of Varroa-resistant stock
3. Screened bottom boards equipped during warm season
0-2 mites/100 bees
≥3 mites/100 bees
Increasing Colony Population
Decreasing/Dormant Colony Population
Decreasing/Dormant Colony Population
Increasing Colony Population
Using for production?
Dormant Population
Population Decrease (late summer or fall)
Population Decrease (late summer or fall)
Dormant Population
Using for production?
No
Yes
Broodless
Brood Present
Honey supers for human consumption present?
Honey supers for human consumption present?
Brood Present
Broodless
Yes
No
Honey Production
Honey Production
Honey supers for human consumption present?
No
Yes
Yes
No
Yes
No
Bee Production
Pollination Services
Queen Production
No
Yes
Queen Production
Pollination Services
Bee Production

SHOWN BELOW ARE A FEW NEW HONEYBEE PESTS THAT ARE VERY DANGEROUS AND STARTING TO SHOW UP



Here is shown a nest of the yellow legged hornet that was found in Georgia.

New Mite to worry about.



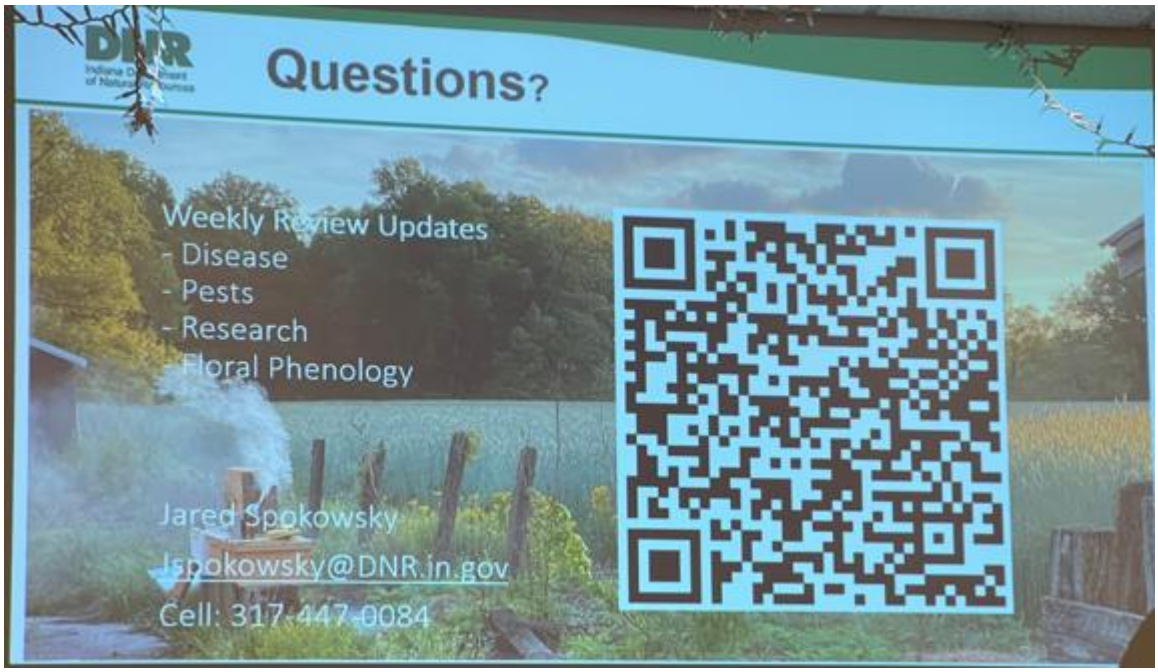
APHIS

National Honey Bee
Pest and Disease Survey

Varroa mite (left) and Tropilaelaps mite (right)

Photo by I.B. Smith Jr./ USDA-BRL

- Tropilaelaps, an exotic parasitic mite found in Asia and Indonesia, is one of the primary targets for this study
- This mite feeds on honey bee brood (both larvae and pupae) causing deformed bees, death and absconding, but unlike Varroa, it does not feed on adult bees
- Because Tropilaelaps mites have a quicker reproductive cycle, they can out produce Varroa mites
- Adult mites move very quickly on brood combs and can be seen moving in and out of cells; they are about 1/3 the size of Varroa mites, so they are just visible to the naked eye



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BEEKEEPING AROUND THE WORLD

STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING NOTES

Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina Email: stahlmanapiaries@aol.com
Published free as a public service to anyone interested in honeybees. Email me to be added to my mailing list. Published 10-5-24

A touch of Irish Hospitality

I have learned that I don't know as much about keeping bees as one would expect. Judi and I visited the county of Galway in Ireland this past week. Any of you who live in the U.S. most likely are thinking Langstroth is the father of Modern Beekeeping. His impact on the Irish and British world of beekeeping is important because of one thing: "The bee space" which he is given credit for observing and writing about it first. The hives used in Ireland are for the most part square and the terms used to describe hive parts are different. For example: A top cover is referred to as a roof, the inner cover is a crown board, the boxes are idenified as brood boxes or honey boxes, the bottom board is a floor, and the hive stand is the stand occupied by a single hive. The fence around the apiary keeps sheep out.

This is a typical Irish beeyard. One cannot imagine seeing something like this from a tour bus. It is a county of old history and what stands out is the lack of fields of corn, cotton, soybeans and large farm equipment. Farms are small and all of them are surrounded by stone fences - -hundreds to thousands years old. Livestock is the means of making a farm living in this part of Ireland.

There is so much I would like to share with you about the meadows and farm fields but honeybees is the story line. Most bees are not kept in towns and villages. Housing is compact and I mean compact. The heritage of Ireland is everywhere from fields surounded by stone fences centuries old to finding a place to live. A planning authority must give permission for any development and unlike our country, in Ireland a property might be protected because it has bats in its attic or has sat there for a 100 years. Thus roads are very narrow and shrubs grow right up to the road just inches away from passing cars. To get an idea of the vast sources of avilable food for bees, take a look at a picture I took from the airplane. The land you see here is owned by families passed from generation to generation. The Ministery for Agriculture, Food and Marine life has adopted a

policy of developing an organic agri-food sector. Thus chemicals are clearly on the outs.Why so many green areas in this picture? Cows, horses, pigs and sheep are raised in this area. And from what I was able to learn, most beeyards are small and kept well away from the public. A beekeeper I visited in County Galway lived in a house with very close neighbors. He explained he kept his bees out on the burrens. He sold honey and supplimented his living by catching swarms – a lot of them he said. His hives totaled 30 kept in two locations. I learned from him that Ireland has a code of conduct for beekeepers. You just can't place bee hives anywhere. Bees must be placed away from the public where they are likely to cause nuisance to neighbors or those in the vicinity to ensure the public cannot easily access them. Apiaries must be stock proof. I guess it means that they cannot be placed close to where livestock (bloodstock) is worked, trained or exercised.

I visited Kylemore Abbey run by the Benedictine nuns of Ypres. The nuns have their own apiary and earn a good amount of money from honey sales and bee pottery in addition to being a tourist destination.

They are very friendly and proper people. Their bees on the other hand are fairly aggressive as I found out. Many beekeepers in Galway County on the western side of the Irish Republic prefer black bees. These black bees are *Aphis mellifera mellifera* although not exactly pure because some beekeepers keep yellow bees (Italian). If you want to get into a good argument in this area of Ireland, move a hive of yellow bees into one of their territories. I don't have the space to discuss the Isle of Wright Disease of the early 1900's which resulted in the death of many of England's native bees, but these beekeepers find this bee to have advantages other than its vulnerability to disease. It's disadvantage is it is not exactly a friendly bee. Beekeepers dress appropiately when working this race of honeybees. I learned that it is preferred by about 90% of Irish beekeepers in this region. One of the best reasons is its willingness to work when weather conditions are poor and it caps honey cells. If you know anything thing about this area of Ireland, it rains a lot and it is rare to have a long warm season. Varroa mites are an issue. I was asked how U.S. beekeepers treat for mites. I shared a number of ways we treat for mites but that didn't seem to go over well.

One beekeeper, Arun Lobidhas, shared with me how he manages his bees so that varroa is not killing his bees. Again, this most likely would not be well accepted by U.S. beekeepers because it is very labor intensive and costly. During his honey flow season (mid summer for us) he removes full frames of capped brood – (both worker and drone brood) and **burns them.** He replaces frames with new wax foundation frames for the bees to draw comb and the queen begins to lay eggs. He indicated that since the forgaging bees are the only bees that leave the hive and gather honey, the amount of honey collected by the hive is not affected by removing the capped frames of brood. The queen is caged and isolated within the hive. (This cage holds 3 or 4 frames of new foundation) This he explained would produce the winter bees needed by the hive for survival.

Keep in mind that brood raised during the honey flow mature and eat honey stores after the honey flow is over. New wax comb is built because a honey flow encourages comb building. Varroa mites in capped cells multiply and constitute the largest population of mites in a colony. Burning the old comb is a benefit to the health of the colony. Thus, disease and mites became less of a problem and his hives always had good clean comb.

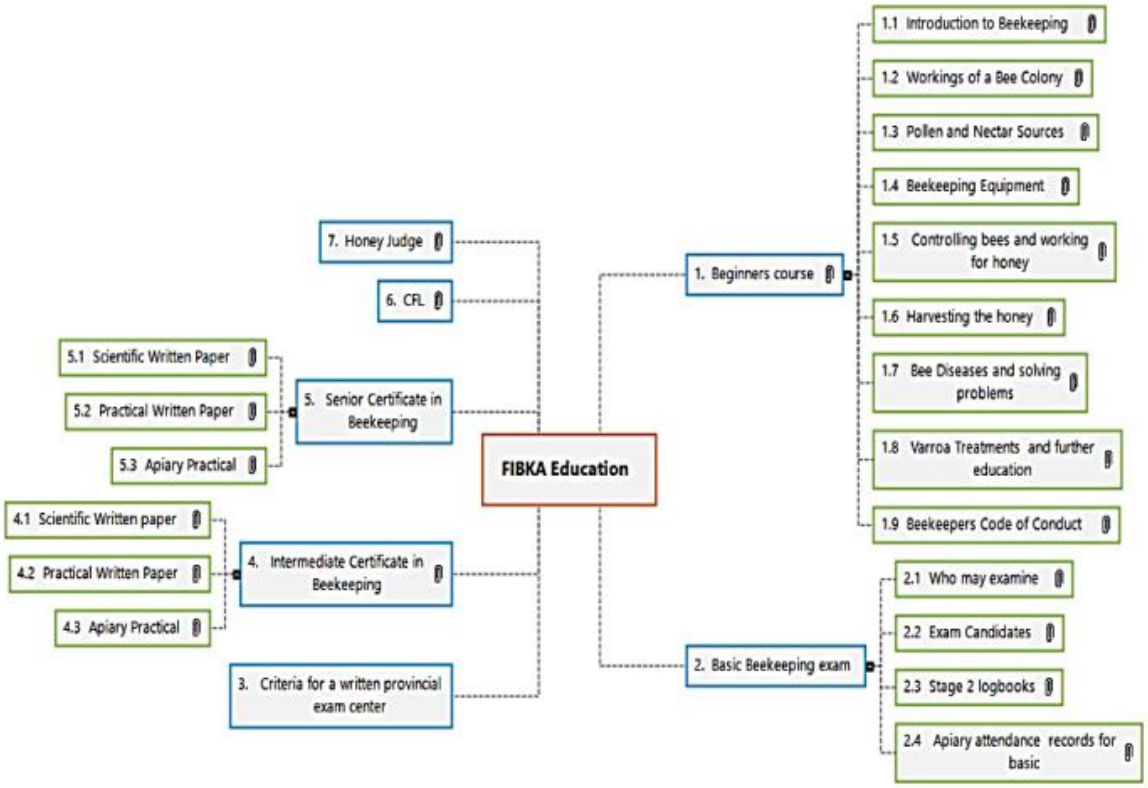
My mind had a tough time getting around this burning of frames and brood. I have never done that except when I faced an AFB disease issue. But it works for him and it gave me something to think about.

I would like to comment on the hives they use. It would be similar to what is called a garden hive in the U.S. Those pretty "A" shaped roofs that allow water to fall off the hives can be purchased in the U.S. as well. However the outside measurements are not that important. It is the inside measurments that count. The hive uses frames but these frames have lugs. Lugs are extensions to the top bar. The hives I observed were well insulated with a chamfered inner wall and frames were placed parallel to the front entrance. I was not familiar with lugs. This is what makes Irish hives different from the Langstroth frames we use.

Note the lugs on the frames shown here.

Due to cold rainy weather when I visited, I did not get a chance to see an open hive of bees. I did see bees and hives from the distance and I got close enough to get stung by a bee at the Abbey. I had a chance to talk and visit beekeepers but not go to their bees because the beekeepers here generally have what are called out yards. Aran, for example, indicated that he has harvested his honey, managed his hives for winter and will not be attending to them until spring. For me it was like stepping back to the 1950's and 60's. It is now the time to study for Aran, take classes, and work toward being able to take the test required to teach beekeeping to Level 1 students. He has to accumulate all kinds of records over a five year period just to reach Level 3.

There are many levels of rank in the beekeeping world in Ireland - starting at Beginning level 1 to level 7 Irish Honey Judge. The chart below will give some idea of the education and levels of what beekeepers in Ireland face if they want to be considered accomplished keepers of bees.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5.3 Apiary Practical
6. CFL
7. Honey Judge

Fall/Winter Management

Dana Stahlman

You know fall has arrived when: you see soybean and corn being harvested. Or goldenrod is blooming!

A new look at honey bee management!

Keeping honey bees' alive is a challenge during any part of the year. Winter survival has always been an issue.

Honey bees do survive without any management by humans -- A hive that survived for 10 years or more without any management.

Honey bee behavior changes as days grow shorter, food sources decline and weather conditions become more unpredictable.

Biology /Conditions that honey bees use to survive

Honeybees over centuries have adapted in the following ways to survive.

- **Consolidate (shrink) the brood nest.**
- **Slow and eventually halt brood rearing.**
- **Form the winter cluster**
- **Reduce the population (Older summer bees die and drones are no longer needed)**
- **Store food resources around and above the consolidated brood nest.**
- **And should I mention defend the nest.**

- **A brief look at traditional fall management. Nearly all honeybee books written have provided beekeepers with a list of task to be completed prior to the beginning of the winter season.**

Some books written included two phases of fall management [fall honey crops and getting ready for winter]. One of the more popular books published thru the 1950's was "Beekeeping" by Eckert and Shaw.

Fundamental principles that contribute to hive survival during the winter:

- **The presence of a vigorous, productive queen.**

Fall Management

1. Sufficient stores of good quality honey/food, properly placed, to provide the necessary food for the non-productive period

2. A population of predominately young bees in sufficient numbers to insure the survival of the colony in a productive condition.

Sound principles

Brood being replaced with honey stores

Freedom from injurious diseases

Up to the mid 1980's American foulbrood was the greatest concern.

Hopefully your honey crop has been harvested and you have had a chance to inspect your hive.

Protection from extremes of temperature in the colder portions of the country.

3. One practice beekeeper do not do much of any more is wrap hives for winter. Most books included an entire chapter on this subject.

Packing maintains a more constant temperature within the hive, conserves heat generated by bees, and reduced the amount of food used in winter. But good ventilation must be maintained!

Nucs covered for winter protection

Practical Principles

Practical Principles

A minimum of enemies and other disturbing influences

Task include:

1) **installing an entrance reducer to keep mice out of the hive.**
2) **Level the hive, raise the back a little to provide a gentle slope toward the entrance to allow water to drain out of the hive.**
3) **Make sure the hive has an upper entrance and good ventilation venting moisture out of the hive.**

4. Contraction of the entrance, the comb space being reduced to that which the colony can cover well before clustering, and the number of combs being sufficient to hold an adequate amount of bees.

Snow is a good insulator. Note the snow on the top cover in the above hive picture!

5. Provide barriers to prevent wind damage, and keep entrances clear of water, sand, mud or ice and up off the ground.

Give hives good sunny windless locations and locate in an area with good early spring pollen sources.

Honey bees do fly during winter when the day time temperature are high enough to allow for flight. These flights are very important for hive health. It will be normal to see dead bees on the snow in front of hives during winter

Woods and tree lines are good wind breaks. Many beekeepers build fences or provide some form of barrier such as bales of straw to reduce wind. Placing a rock or a brick on the top cover will prevent covers from blowing off hives.

Practical Principles

Before mites

6. Re-queen every other year or when necessary.

After mites and CCD

- Re-queen those queens that arrived in the spring packages! Queens seem to fail much quicker than in the past -- many hives are started in the spring with packages and those queens usually do not survive northern winters very well.
- Efforts are being made to develop queens bred for local climate conditions and carry genetics for hygenic behavior. We are seeing the movement by many states to encourage beekeepers to re-queen with local queens.

Queens must be considered as one of the important factors in the success of overwintering a colony of honey bees.

Fall Management

Before mites

7. Complete a thorough colony inspection.

- **Check hive health – looking especially for AFB.**

Close

After mites and CCD

- **Complete a thorough colony inspection**

Check hive health – Big change from the past however.

- **AFB still important but a beekeeper must now monitor Varroa mite thresholds, check for Nosema *ceranae* & small African hive beetles. Then determine a plan for treatment if found.**

What has changed: **Since 1985/86 a number of pest have been introduced into the United States. These include: Tracheal mites, Varroa mites, Small hive beetles, Nosema *ceranae*, various virus and new threats including changing farming practices --more land put into cultivation, mono crops, big Ag Business, GMO's and chemicals. And more will be coming!**

2013

Check honey stores (60 pounds needed) Most hives not only made 100 pounds of surplus honey or more, but could be depended upon to gather a fall honey crop and still have enough honey to survive winter.

Check honey stores -- hives still need 60 pounds of surplus honey to survive winter.

However, surplus honey crops have been declining since the 1990's rather dramatically. For new beekeepers with new foundation and new equipment – bees will be lucky to store just enough food to make it thru the winter and the beekeeper often is required to provide sugar syrup and pollen patties to supplement what they do not gather.

Pictured is a hot room full of supers of Ohio honey in 1999 showing just two days of removing honey from hives. Sadly this beekeeper is no longer in the commercial beekeeping business

Many reason have been mentioned –

- **But times have changed!** Small businesses have been replaced by big business – the often called Mom and Pop business have disappeared.
- For agriculture the small farm has been absorbed by large commercial farms.
- Gone are the small dairy farms replaced by mega dairy operations that milk 24 hours a day – the life of a cow has changed drastically – now raised in mega buildings with air conditioning, small loafing stables (cows don't see the sun), feed that is calibrated to provide the nutritional requirement for milk production, and when a cow's milk production begins to fail – the cow is replaced immediately.
- Crops are now mono culture – wheat, corn and soybeans. (Not much there for honeybees).

Why less honey?

- Have you noticed the increase in urban beekeepers?
- A recent study surveyed several urban areas for the concentration of honey bee colonies within given areas. The study reported that the number of beekeepers/hives within the study areas exceeded the ability of the area to produce enough food for the bees to gather the essential food for survival.
- Thus the bees required feeding in order to survive.

And add to this the use of various chemicals by home owners and farmers that are designed to kill insects.

And throw in urban growth with the corresponding reduction of foraging land and plants available to honey bees.

- Methods:
- Feed honey in the comb if you have it!
- Feed sugar syrup (2 parts sugar to one part water) while bees can still fly.
- If it is cold – putting liquid into the hive is not a good idea. In cold weather feed dry sugar, fondant, or a sugar candy.

It is becoming more important to feed pollen substitutes with sugar patties. Many brands are available and all can be of help – you can even find formulas to make your own.

- **There are many types of feeders.**

Boardman feeders used at the entrance can be used when weather is warm but are useless when the weather turns cold.

- **Division board feeders are placed inside the hive replacing a frame and usually placed against a side wall of the hive body.**
- **Top feeders of various design allow larger amounts of food to be given at any one time.**
- **One or two gallon buckets placed over the inner cover hole – quart jars will work as well.**
- **Candy boards of various designs and even plastic self sealing bags with holes cut into them.**

Not enough food – It is necessary to feed.

Mite levels in a bee hive reach their highest level in the fall of the year and often are responsible for what is called CCD. [Colony Collapse Disorder]

This is a problem that needed to be addressed much earlier – check out the material on diseases and mite control in the slide show.

CCD

A Dead Hive in February

It is a fact that many hives will starve even if there is honey in the hive. Make sure the food available is above and around the winter cluster.

You don't want to see your hive in this condition in the spring of the year.

And most important

Guide to a healthy hive

Outstanding queen + good hive nutrition + mite control + good management technique = the best chance at hive survival.

- **One: Know the condition of all hives all the time.** **Beekeeping is no longer – just put the bees out back and get to them when you feel like it. You need to open the hive and inspect its condition often.**
- **Two: Deal with things you can do – Monitor the mite levels in your hives and feed the bees if necessary.**
- **Uncap some drone brood to check pupa for Varroa mites.**
- **Use a sticky board to capture mites that drop off bees and check capped drone cells for Varroa mites.**
- **Know what food sources are available to your bees. Not all areas are equal for bee plants and some are over stocked. Finding a foraging location might not be an option.**

Start Fall Management earlier

A beekeeper can do a quick check for Varroa mites.

Sugar roll test - All you need is some powdered sugar and a jar to scoop some bees into. This does not kill the bees and will reveal a few mites if they are present!.

- **Why have I not mentioned Small hive Beetles and Chemical treatment for Varroa?**

- Small hive beetles are a problem much like wax moth. Strong hives seem to be able to control SHB and thus, they attack the weaker hives. If you have a small hive beetle problem, it is more likely a problem that should have been addressed far before you got to fall management. There are many traps to collect SHB and they are easy to use.
- Chemicals are widely used – and some beekeepers use them illegally. If labels are followed, chemicals introduced into the hive [remember that these chemicals are formulated to kill insects and doses are highly regulated to not kill the bees] should limit and help control Varroa mites. However, mites have built up resistance to some chemicals and misuse over the years have caused beekeepers to try one product after another to solve the mite problem.
- ***I can not make any recommendations because chemicals do not guarantee your hive's winter survival. Choices include: ApiLife Var, Mite Away quickStrips®, Apivar®, Apiguard, & Apistan Strips®.***

What happens if you do nothing!

Some honey bees are more resistant than other honey bees. Wild bees (feral colonies) do survive in trees and houses. However, how long they survive depends upon a number of factors.

I have spent over 25 years trying to find the perfect queen that is adapted to winter survival. I am still looking and if we look together, it might be possible that we will be able to find stock able to handle Varroa mites.

Figures of bee loses are published in the bee magazine in the spring and the trend has been that loses during the winter has been increasing sometimes reaching 50% of all colonies.

But if you do nothing and your bees do not have an adequate food supply, or a productive queen -- they are certain to not survive this coming winter!

- A list
- Fumigate stored equipment for wax moth if warm weather continues.
- Make sure all hives have good ventilation.
- **If cold:**

There is a danger of opening a colony to check or examine brood if bees are not flying from the hive. Wait until a warmer day to open the hive and pull frames to make sure honey stores are near the cluster of bees. This is most likely the most important thing you can do to save your bees from starvation.

- It is important that your winter hives have a good sunny, windless location, and that you make sure moisture-laden air in the hive can be ventilated out of the hive. If using an open screen bottom board, it is a good idea to make sure no drafts of air expose the colony to unnecessary air blowing up into the cluster. Many screened bottom boards have an insert for closing off the bottom of the bottom board. Use them if bee hives are located above ground level.
- Clean up and store away any equipment removed from the bee yard and order any package bees as soon as you are aware they are needed.

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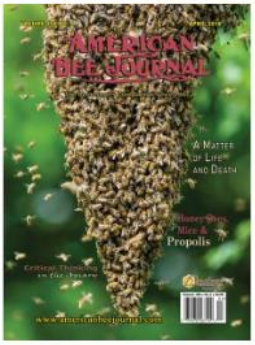

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