

Stahlman Beekeeping

Notes for 2022

It's Spring Checkup Time



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As every spring rolls around, many of us are faced with cleaning and yard work. Washing windows, cleaning the garage, checking fluids in the family car, planting grass seed and hopefully the leaves are already raked.

Things are happening very quickly in the bee yard. I was told that Wake County had three swarm reports given out by the swarm captain one day this past week.



Bee activity has really picked up. So much in bloom.

I stopped to take pictures of the Red Bud trees in bloom and tried to capture the bees buzzing all over this group of trees.

I suggest one inspect bees every 9 days during this balmy weather. A quick easy check for queen cells built on bottom bars is to tilt hive bodies up so the frames can be inspected.

If you haven't done any spring work in the apiary, you don't have much time to keep putting it off.

Some suggestions for things to do in the bee yard now!

- Check hive stands --- They should be sturdy and level. The entrances of hives should slope toward the front to allow any moisture or rain water to drain from the hive.
- Check for anything such as sticks or other objects that might trip someone walking near the hives.
- Weeds are just starting to grow around hive stands. Now is a good time to put down a barrier to prevent weeds. I like to use a weed barrier – dark black material that allows water to drain thru it. It can be dressed up with a layer of mulch or if you know a tree service company, they often will dump wood chips free of charge.

- Pick up trash in the apiary. You may have a very clean apiary but I notice a lot of things we beekeepers throw on the ground and never pick up.
- Then for the hives. Do they need to be repainted? Bees don't care if a hive is painted or not, but the cost of hive bodies make it possible for wood to last longer if painted.
- Now is a good time to replace old dark comb frames with new foundation frames.
- Now is the time to recognize problems going on in hives! Do you find dead drone pupa or what looks like chalk mummies on the landing board or on the ground in front of the hive? This is not unusual during cold periods – pupa and larvae get chilled and die. The bees in the hive are just cleaning and getting dead bees out of the hive.
- One of my pet peeves is beekeepers who must see and find the queen each time the hive is opened for inspection. This takes a lot of time and one can assume a queen is in a hive if one observes all three stages of brood development. Seeing eggs is most important. Knowledge of bee development – the egg (3 days) -- If eggs are present a queen has been in the hive at least during the last 3 days. If no eggs are present but young larva are observed, one needs to consider; there may be an issue with the queen. No eggs and no larvae but capped brood – there is a problem. This might be the condition of a hive that has swarmed and the hive may have a mated virgin queen that has not begun laying just yet.
- Know your equipment needs. Do you have spare equipment? Now is the time to make sure you have something to put bees into if you get a swarm call.
- Do a survey of the honey plants blooming in your location. Honeybees need a lot of food to raise brood! Many beekeepers have learned the hard way – thinking that because trees and plants are in bloom, the bees can find plenty to eat. Feeding stimulates brood production in a hive. It may be a balancing act between keeping a hive alive or creating a congested brood nest that will lead the bees to swarm.
- And that brings up the question, do you have equipment to place on the hive to provide the bees room to expand?
- One cannot just walk around a hive to determine what is going on. Now is the time if it hasn't been done – **INSPECT THE FRAMES FOR FOOD RESERVES, HEALTH OF THE BEES, and THE ABILITY OF THE BEES TO GROW INTO A THRIVING COLONY!**

Beekeepers need to **FOCUS** on the reasons why they keep honeybees!

I think it is fair to say buying honey from a local beekeeper is far less expensive than buying bees and equipment to produce honey. Often new beekeepers will have to wait until next year to get some honey. I am seeing some interesting trends on the beekeeping blogs I have been reading.

One such item appeared on a club web site.

“My husband bought me a “Flow Hive” and I need someone to help me set it up. I don’t have time to go to a bee school!”

The responses generally were of the nature that it takes effort and time to manage a hive of bees. Information was provided to this person about local bee clubs.

Maybe it is true that the person should have been made aware that work is involved in managing a hive. But negative comments have no place on a web platform.

My take on this post: How many of you are aware that A.I. Root sent a helper to capture a swarm that passed by his window. Up to that time his profession was as a jeweler. He had no classes but he did have books and an inquiring mind.

I appreciate a husband that gets his wife a hive to start beekeeping!

I appreciate a wife that seeks out help.

New beekeepers need encouragement.



I copied this post from a commercial beekeeping Facebook blog site. So what – you don’t keep hives on pallets and you don’t own a skid loader – what’s the big deal?

The language of the commercial beekeeper is far different than the language of hobby beekeepers. The equipment, inventory, buildings, and demand in time differ. But all must understand and learn how to keep bees. I have been asked over the years, “What does it take to become a commercial beekeeper?” My answer – Go

work for one.

I am not sure many beekeepers even have an idea of the day in the life of a commercial beekeeper. Do you know what 49 CFR § 391.15(e) and (f) or swinger refers to? Not a problem if you are a hobby beekeeper!

No one works as a commercial beekeeper without enduring the long hours, constant worry about 26,000 pound loads, CDL’s, collecting pollination fees, and (if you don’t have bees – you don’t have an income).

I live in both worlds of beekeeping. Why are we having this discussion at all!

It appears that sometimes we see ourselves as better than someone else. In my world, a beekeeper is a beekeeper! I was taught that one earns respect! Everyone is created equal! If I failed to show respect, I got my mouth washed out with soap. (My mother saw to that!)

The greatest respect for a beekeeper I have is for an old beekeeper by the name of Granville Yeomans. We called him, Tyce. He was the foreman for Swords Apiaries located in Moultrie, Georgia. He was a man of small height and had a swagger that you did not want to mess with. He did not give a care in the world to what you were except that you worked hard in the beeyard. He had a clear dislike for anyone wearing a clean white suit. When I joined the crew, his first words to me were, "I am going to get your ass stung off!" "We don't wear gloves." I became their token "Yankee!"

He was right! I had to take a stinging every day. But what amazed me was everyone on the crew got stung as well – every day. I saw day after day, individuals working bees in all kinds of weather - including Easter Sunday. The crew gathered at the shop and got their assignments. Work was given only to those considered worthy to carry out the tasks. No matter what your background, one started out at the bottom – doing grunt work. As one demonstrated the ability to take a continuous amount of stings and master the work could mean being a "Tyce". No one in that crew was considered a Master beekeeper. But they knew bees! They worked bees! They lived bees!

So why am I on this topic?

I like to be positive not negative when sharing information. There are beekeepers who take pride in criticizing and belittling new beekeepers. I find this disturbing. I don't think any of them would survive one day working for Tyce! If they decided to quit – they would have had to find their own way back to town.

No one keeping bees can really know what is going on in a hive without seeing eggs in cells.



The success of a newly started hive requires the queen to lay eggs. Every day a certain number of old bees die. Without eggs, there is no future for the hive. This one skill – finding eggs – is critical to the success of any hive.

This is a challenge when eggs are laid in new foundation cells. If one has problems seeing them, I am going to suggest buying a magnifying glass to help see them. Black plastic foundation makes them easier to see. This photo is reduced to almost the size of real comb. [Are eggs present?] This is very important information when queens are installed in hives. New beekeepers using package bees to start hives do not need to find queens if eggs are present. Eggs indicate the queen was accepted by the bees and has started laying. There is one exception to this!



Sometimes one might find several eggs in a cell. Young queens sometimes do this but a check a few days later may indicate she is okay because one egg is centered in each cell. If the condition continues, then the beekeeper needs to consider the possibility that the queen (if one is found) is a drone

laying queen and needs to be replaced. There is also a possibility that a laying worker is laying eggs. Look for my take on laying workers in the next issue.

This chart should be in the memory of every beekeeper!

