



**2024 Vol 6  
issue # 16**

Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina Email: [stahlmanapiaries@aol.com](mailto:stahlmanapiaries@aol.com)  
Published free as a public service to anyone interested in honeybees. Email me to be added to my mailing list. Published 4-20-24

# **STAHLMAN**

## **BEEKEEPING NOTES**

### **Honey Flow Part II**

Issue 15 covers colony strength and hive locations. A honey flow is defined as a period when nectar plants are in full bloom and a time when bees gather the maximum amounts of nectar to convert to honey. Location is important and I would like to share what is going on in my area of the country. Last week a friend from Indiana emailed me with the fact that he just returned from California with bees that were pollinating almonds. He is not putting honey supers on his bees in Indiana. He is splitting bees and building them up for the honey flows at his locations in Indiana and Michigan. Every location has unique weather conditions that do not fit weather conditions here in North Carolina.



gather nectar and pollen.

Many of the early blooming trees in my area have bloomed. But tulip poplar trees are just coming into the prime blooming period. My bees have already gathered an early spring wildflower honey crop. We had a very good honey flow here in Raleigh. It is extracting time and also a time to put more supers on the bees for the special tulip poplar flow. Before I get into next weeks topic of when to extract and when to take advantage of a special honey flow which can be identified to a particular source, I would like to share some of the things that lead bees to

I am aware that honey bees have a strong instinct to gather food. Even a strong swarm of bees will get to work immediately building comb and filling it with nectar and brood. And when nectar is not available they will begin robbing from weaker colonies unable to defend themselves.

Anytime temperatures are such that honey bees can fly, they will be searching for food. There is a strong relationship between flowering plants and all pollinators including honey bees.

Some points I would like to share:

- I have seen honey bees fly during a full moon. I am not sure where they were going but they returned to the hive with pollen.
- Honey bee flights start very early in the morning and continue until night fall.

- It has been interesting to me how hives that swarm do so usually prior to the major honey flows. Very little swarming occurs following the major honey flows.
- Cool or cold springs delay the honey flow, thus the date of an expected honey flow can be delayed by a week or two.
- It is common to see bees bearding on the front of hives during hot weather when honey flows end.

I just saw a bee swarm on Thursday of this week. Hives that swarmed:

- Some of the honey gathered by the colony prior to swarming is taken away with the swarm.
- I listened to a talk about swarming this week that discussed the importance of scout bees seeking a home for the bees that leave the hive. Maybe 300 scout bees all older bees guiding the swarm to a new home. What about the hive the swarm left. Scout bees also search for the best foraging locations.
- The loss amounts to a great deal for the bees left behind. They are without many of their scout bees.
- Thus, the colony left behind will lose a number of days of the honey flow because:
  - It's bee population will consist of younger bees and the brood left behind.
  - A virgin queen will take time to mate and mature to begin laying eggs.
  - And only after its work force has aged, will it again be able to plunge into honey gathering. New bees will not be available for at least one brood cycle.

By the time the bees are strong, the honey flow is over! A beekeeper now must deal with the possibility that the hive that swarmed may not survive because of starvation. This is the reason fall honey flows are so important.

Several other points I would like to make about a honey flow once it is over:

- During a honey flow the bees have plenty of food and they secrete a lot of wax. They are eager to build comb.
- But when the honey flow is over, the bees stop drawing comb and do not build out foundation on frames.
- Without a honey flow, the bees will search for other food sources. I have seen bees fly over a super full of honey on their way to plants producing nectar during the honey flow. But when it is over, that super full of honey will become a mass of bees fighting for every drop of honey they can get. This is called robbing.

Everyone that keeps bees has a story to tell. We learn from mistakes.

Take for example a beekeeper that harvests three medium supers of honey. They are full and capped over. The day is hot and the beekeeper might feel a bit exhausted carrying the supers back to the garage. It might be good to sit down and get a good cold drink of water inside the house, and then the return to the garage is delayed by say an hour. The honey supers are not going anywhere are they? The garage door was not closed.

**A neighbor was concerned because a lot of bees were attacking the house and called the beekeeper. Rushing to the garage the beekeeper finds it filled with bees. Heavy honey supers are now light and filled with bees. The garage door is finally closed. Bees are flying around all over and near a window trying to get out.**

**On the outside, bees are still trying to get in. Pandemonium a scene of wild disorder, noise and confusion both inside the garage and outside.**

**Add a spouse to the picture. The car is covered with yellowish brown sploches of dung as is the floor. Bees are still arriving at the garage door and many of the bees inside follow the supers if they are moved. If one wants to find Hell! This is it.**

**The beekeeper learned that the drink of cold water could wait. By night fall the garage door can be open for the bees in the garage to leave and one can expect scout bees to check out your location for several days. The healing of relations with the spouse may take some time and I assume the beekeeper will have the task of getting the car washed and the garage cleaned.**

**My mind is filled with so many thoughts about honey bees. But I would like to share how I spent this past week. For about 40 hours, Monday thru Friday, I was on the campus of North Carolina State University. I participated in a class about honey bees presented to students in the Veterinary Medicine program. The course syllabus covered the subject from 8:00 in the morning until 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. I was present for all days and participated and interacted with the 20 selected students.**



**All I can say is that I got an education into beekeeping that I had never encountered in my life. Some of these students will not become beekeepers but they will know far more about honey bees than most of the veterinarians in your local communities. Prior to 2017 most beekeepers like myself never gave a second thought to going to a veterinarian about a honey bee problem nor did they. But Congress passed a law concerning food safety. Antibiotics had become a big issue with animals being fed antibiotics products like terramycin (oxytetracycline, tylosin, and lincomycin).**

**As shown here, a beekeeper was treating hives for mites and American foulbrood. I took this picture some time in the late 1990's. Oxytetracycline was mixed with powder sugar by the 5 gal. bucket full. Note the cup sitting beside the smoker. When then rules for using Terramycin (oxytetracycline) called for a teaspoon of power sugar/Terramycin, beekeepers were applying far more into bee hives. This not only resulted in bees becoming resistant to mites and foulbrood treatment, but it also contaminated honey in hives. Terramycin could be purchased at farm supply stores at an exceptionally low cost prior to 2017.**

Thus, the law not only affects beekeepers, but it also put veterinarians directly into the cross hairs of having to work with beekeepers who want to treat for American and European foulbrood. The problem now is that in addition to bee inspectors (who can not write the prescription) we must collaborate with the veterinarian who can.

I lifted the two items listed below from a google search for VFD.

The FDA changed rules for food producing animals in January 2017. This rule change was implemented to prevent antibiotic residues in the human food chain and the development of antibiotic resistance in important human antibiotics. Now beekeepers must obtain a veterinary feed directive or prescription from their veterinarian to treat their colonies for European Foulbrood with antibiotics. The veterinarian has to establish a veterinarian-patient-client relationship (VPCR) just like for any other animal needing antibiotics.

[The Veterinary Feed Directive \(VFD\) is a federal directive that requires farmers to work with a licensed veterinarian when using a VFD drug, such as an antibiotic, in animal feed<sup>12</sup>. This directive also applies to honey bees<sup>1234</sup>. Antibiotics for honey bees and other food producing livestock are now available only through a prescription or through a veterinary feed directive \(VFD\) order from a veterinarian<sup>34</sup>. Beekeepers must obtain a veterinary feed directive or prescription from their veterinarian to treat their colonies for European Foulbrood with antibiotics<sup>4</sup>.](#)

That is the law of the land! Do you think that a veterinarian is going to get rich working with beekeepers? That is the big question! Veterinarians are trying to figure out how to fit into the picture. If you think you have problems, consider the situation a veterinarian is being put into.

Hopefully, a few of these students will become beekeepers. But beekeepers are going to have to consider their bees livestock. We have no problem at all taking our cat or dog to the vet. Inviting the vet to your bee hive is like the old-time practice of having the family doctor visit when you were sick. Consider your bees as pets and when they are sick, you have a choice. I think any bee school should include a mention that bees are more than wild creatures and if one is to keep bees, money spent on bees and equipment should also include spending money for treating diseases and mites.

I would love to get feedback on what you feel about involving a veterinarian in your beekeeping life. Veterinarians are asking this same question. They know the resistance that beekeeper have about having to pay for their services. Bee inspectors working for state governments are paid to do inspections. Bee clubs often have mentors that volunteer to help beekeepers (FREE).

But I am looking at the position that veterinarians have placed into. Veterinarians are expected to have a doctor/client relationship. Something like you have with the auto dealership that sold you a car. The dealership may offer to service the car, but they make a living providing those services to you. It is not going to be free.

I will get off my soap box for now.