



STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

NOTES

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Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina Email: stahlmanapiaries@aol.com
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Old bee books are interesting to me. Over the years I collected bee books and I digitized a number of them in the early 2000's. Thus, I am able to read them on my computer without all the room in my office and closets filled with books. Many of these old books provide little for the modern beekeeper. In fact, I have given many of them to friends as gifts. I have tried to get signed copies of books that for the most part are prized possessions in my current library.



However, they come in handy when I need to research beekeeping topics. The topic wax moths came up this week. And is one topic that comes up over and over again. The wax moth is a pest of long standing in American beekeeping.

This is what a beekeeper found when the inner cover was removed from a hive. No bees were flying from the hive and the beekeeper told me that he inspected his hives on a regular basis. I have no idea of how long it took the wax moth to destroy this hive but it was not overnight. Not only did this hive not have bees, the investment in equipment and a hive to put new bees into it was just out of the picture.



The frames in the hive looked like this or worse.



Wax moths are insects of opportunity. They search for dark wax with brood raised in the comb and pollen stored in cells. Comb of this sort is a magnet for them. Once they enter a hive, they can do their

damage quickly. But first, being a beekeeper requires inspections and with the modern hive, it is possible to inspect for signs of problems. I am asked why did the wax moth pick on my hive?

This is simply a matter of hive neglect. It happens every year to beekeepers who neglect hives. Low flight activity at any hive requires a special check for wax moths. Stored supers after removal of honey are targets for wax moth. The answer is this: **Make sure your colonies are strong and inspected often.**

Do not store supers with drawn comb in dark sheds or garages. Moths love dark and warm storage which is ideal for reproduction. I know of several situations when stored comb was placed in plastic containers and stored away in the basement. The beekeeper expecting to find the comb ready to use found instead a container full of destroyed comb.

Most often the damage is so great that little can be done. Melting down comb in a wax melter is one way to recover much of the wax left in frames. If the damage is slight one can freeze comb. Wax moths do not like light. Thus, put frames with comb in well lighted areas.

I am including a chapter on the wax moth as beekeepers would read from a bee book written in 1838. It was a serious problem for those keeping bees in hives that could not be inspected. In fact, wax moths were considered the number one problem for keeping bees alive. They have not gone away. The one thing a beekeeper has going for them today is the Langstroth hive or any hive with movable frames. Inspections for wax damage need to be made continuously during hot weather conditions. Stored comb is really at risk. Weak hives are at risk for not only wax moth, but small hive beetles and robbing bees.

I am including a chapter from a book written by John Weeks in 1838. The information in it may be of interest. It will not help you know more about wax moths, but it will roll back the pages of time to share that beekeepers 185 years ago considered this the biggest issue with keeping bees. It is rare to find an old book that devoted an entire chapter to wax moth. In fact, a number of beekeepers were trying to find solutions on how to deal with them. When you think about what is the one thing you have that they did not. **“It is the simple fact that you can go out to your bee hive open it up and pull a frame out of it for inspection at any time.”**

The attached document to this issue is a digitized copy from his book on the moth. If you would like to see more material such as this, let me know.

See the attachment as research on Bee Keeping History and Wax Moth in 1838.

This additional document will require 5 additional pages to print if you print these notes.