



# STAHLMAN

## BEEKEEPING NOTES

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Small hive beetles are hideous plunderers of a bee hive. They were first detected in the U.S. in 1996 near Charleston, South Carolina. They are found in the northern cold areas as well as the southern states. As far as I am aware, our honeybees have no immunity to them. The only defense is for a strong bee population that could control them, often herding them into the far reaches of the hive.



I often see them clustered above the inner cover and running about on top bars. They hide in open cells in comb. Adult beetles are a nuisance, but when the larva begin feeding on food stores and pollen they will make drawn comb stinky and slimy, eventually driving the bees out of the hive. A large outbreak can consume a hive in just a few days.

SHB larva are smaller than full grown wax moth larva. Note the size of the larva compared to cell size. 4 or 5 larva can occupy a single cell.



This is a comparison of a wax moth larva above and the small hive beetle larva below. The wax moth larva will be about 3/4 inch in length while the small hive beetle larva will be just about 1/8 of an inch in length.

Wax moth and small hive beetles can infest a hive at the same time. Honey comb that is exposed to the small hive beetle is unfit to use. I am waiting on one beekeeper who is trying to power wash badly damage comb for reuse by the bees, but from what I have seen it is a waste of time.

Here is what I learned from a web posting by the Mississippi State University Extension Service (Publication number P2825 and it is available as a download pdf file.



*“The larvae contain a specific yeast in their guts, *Kodamea ohmeri*, which is excreted in the feces during feeding. The yeast rapidly ferments honey and pollen, creating a slimy, malodorous mess that is repulsive to honey bees but*

*attractive to adult beetles. The volatile odors produced by the yeast fermentation draw other adult hive beetles from nearby hives and newly emerged beetles from the soil around the apiary.”*

*“The result is”slimeout” which almost always coincides with the collapse of the honey bee colony.”*



Recommendations for slimeout frames:

- You can freeze the frames if the damage looks like this example of comb damage. The picture shows only a small patch of larva damage. Make sure the damaged area is cleaned of any evidence of wax moth damage.
- If extracting frames with some small hive beetle damage you might contaminate an entire batch of honey.
- Slumgum left after processing cappings can be a serious problem. The best action would be to melt capping wax before wax moth and small hive beetles find it.

Once adult beetles are spotted place beetle traps into the hive. Since SHB pupate in the ground, the area around a hive should be treated with GuardStar only when they are detected in the larval phase. Larva can crawl some distance from the hive to burrow into the ground. Adult

beetles can fly and enter hives some distance away.

There is a lot of information about avoiding Small Hive Beetles!

- Do not feed protein or pollen patties during periods when SHB’s are active.
- Clean up the bee yard – do not throw or drop burr comb on the ground in the apiary.
- Make sure hives remain strong. Weak hives can not defend themselves against this threat.
- Pick up and clean up any dead-out hives in the apiary. If left in place expect the wax moth and SHB to have a feast.
- Do not transfer supers or frames from a hive with SHB to other colonies. They may contain SHB eggs.
- If you remove honey from hives make sure the honey is extracted almost immediately. If one puts off extracting honey supers they may be surprised to find the honey comb crawling with SHB larva.
- Store honey supers in a cool room. This will help with wax moth as well.
- And most important: do not brush any off onto the ground. I was speaking with a friend the other day who put the small hive beetles into a burn barrel with an active fire burning.

**I also picked up a neat way to capture small hive beetles.**

Buy a small keyboard vacuum and instead of trying to smash them when they are running, the vacuum will suck them up -- even out of cells they are hiding in. Beetles can not outrun it.



These are not large and operate on batteries. Many can be found on line in various price ranges and Amazon will have one to you the next day.

I can say that the one I have comes in handy. I just dump the contents of the screened bowl that traps them into my smoker. Just make sure you have a good draft and fire in the smoker.

It is a small hive beetle BE GONE Device. Disclaimer – I haven't tried it on larva.

I had a chance to make a quick trip to Ohio this week to look back to 20 years ago.

Let me say that very few people have the chance to feel the love of a bee club and volunteer effort put forth. Something I helped start is still going strong 20 years later and I would like to point out that many people were responsible for that effort.

It has always been a thought that bee schools end too early and provides a diving board for new beekeepers. But what happens when bee school is over. COBA (Central Ohio Beekeepers Association) with 600+ members does something which sets them apart from all others.

20 years ago I was asked to put honey bees in the orchard at The Ohio State University Waterman Farm complex. Barbara Bloetscher, a staff member in the entomology department contacted me about it. Celeste Welty and Dave Shetlar, member of the OSU staff and others became friends. In return OSU offered COBA facilities and room to place a bee yard on the west campus. Currently the bee school is conducted on the OSU campus next to the bee yard. In fact, COBA was able to build a storage building in the bee yard. COBA this year had four separate groups take bee school there. When I say bee yard, COBA has four bee yards scattered in central Ohio. This yard at OSU was the first.

COBA is the only bee club that I that I am aware of that continues bee education **weekly** thru the spring and summer months. It takes a dedicated group of volunteer beekeepers to carry out an effort like that. Imagine meeting every week in the bee yard with a picnic and an opportunity to work with experienced beekeepers. They get help to answer their beekeeping problems and how to deal with issues all the way from April thru fall. This is a family affair – beekeepers bring spouses and children. Even friends are welcome.

I was honored to help OSU and COBA celebrate this 20 year relationship. We had TV coverage, food, and so many old friends to return to share this great opportunity and to give thanks to OSU and COBA to host this event.



This is hallowed ground for me. So many have carried the torch and to go back made me realize that life passes so quickly. New beekeepers are the future and the rocks (the people) who made all this possible were able to gather and appreciate what the new generation of beekeepers are doing to carry on the work that some of us old timers look back upon.

I am reminded of all those who passed that torch to me – Louie Haines, David Casdorff, Vic Thompson, Florance Bethard, and Holbart Fulton. They are now gone but not forgotten.