STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING NOTES

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I had a chance to visit with David Heilman (Ohio Honey Farms) this week. I am asked often about my connection to Ohio. David has been a friend and I have depended upon his help a number of times. We are both aging somewhat. Dave was at one time the honeybee technician at OARDC working for Jim Tew. Dave found an interesting way to make money from beekeeping. But first, allow me to share a bit about Dave.

I was involved in the Ohio State Beekeepers Association and became aware of Dave on the speakers circuit where he and I often met. Dave was Jim Tew's assistant! No university honey bee program can exist without someone to do the necessary work. Thus, over the years I have watched and followed Dave. He is what I call "a guy with a heart!" He has long been associated with the Boy Scouts and church work. This past week found him working in Kentucky helping the Samaritan's Purse building homes for those who lost homes in the Mayfield, Ky tornado in 2021.

I have been anxious to buy honey from the various places he keeps bees. Dave specializes in varieties of honey. His honey is produced from crops pollinated from Florida to California to Michigan. His honey is separated out and extracted to be source specific. He is particular about the quality of honey and often works with one of the top honey judges in the U.S. When I buy honey from Dave, I know the moisture content as well as the location where the honey was produced. Wildflower honey from Ohio is quite different from wildflower honey produced in other regions of the U.S. If you buy honey from a large grocery outlet, it may be labeled as clover. However, it will be light in color and will be a blend of various sources with the mild taste expected of clover honey. Dave's honey will be labled Ohio Clover and often identified as to the kind of clover. Yes, there is a difference in clover varieties.

Bee work is Dave's life but he does one thing that is very specialized. Some of his income comes from honey sticks. Of course, his bees gather the honey and he receives pollination fees but if you want honeystix, he has many varieties. Much of what he produces goes to retail outlets.

My first load of the year for Honeystix production. 4 Drums and 48 buckets (5520lbs) of Liquid Gold going to be packaged into more than 442,000 Honeystix.

I caught him at a busy time. He was shipping 4 drums and 48 buckets (5520 pounds of honey) out to be made into 442,000 honeystixs. My request was for one gallon buckets of as many varieties of honey I could get that I did not already have. He made a special effort to fill my order.

Dave shares a lot on facebook about his formulas and honey varieties that he uses in developing his product lines and admits to being a "Mad Scientist." His newest batch is the 442,000 Hot Honey stix which he says will replace his BBQ sauce. His lines include flavored honey stix along with specific varieties of honey.

If you want to maximize your profits with the honey you are currently selling in bottles, consider this product of the hive. Events where the public meets allow people to buy honey and enjoy its rewards. It is a way "no mess or fuss" to get honey into the hands of children and their parents. YouTube has a number of presentations on how to make your own honey sticks. If you produce a large amount of honey, there are companies that will fill sticks with your honey – usually in 5 gal. bucket lots.

I have seen other companies selling their version of hot honey using the standard foam tamper evident seals, which the Capsaicin oil and other essential oils will dissolve. I am currently searching for the right compatible seal so I can bottle it in the containers I use for my other honey. I always love to develop products.

This is a picture I took from a Facebook post Dave made available.

The photos below are some packs of his natural honey stix packages I bought several years ago.

Maybe I should point out that I often put on a little honey tasting event when I am asked to make bee presentations. I don't use a lot of honey but beekeepers are always amazed at the different taste and colors I have on hand. It often breaks the ice of being a new guy showing up at a bee meeting. I do not sell honey! But the beekeepers present often have something to say about the taste and color of honey. It is educational.

If you are not aware, there are over 300 recognized honey varieties. The source of honey can be idenfied by checking the pollen grains found in the honey sample. Wild flower honey will have a number of pollen grains from a wide assortment of sources. Pollen in honey can be identified and the location often determined by the amount of identifiable pollen grains in the honey. By the way foreign honey is often filtered to the point that pollen grains are not found.

A great deal of honey comes into the U.S. from imported honey sources -- selling for far less than a local beekeeper can produce local honey.

If honey is local honey sold by the beekeeper or as many beekeeper do, sell to a retail outlets, a honey label sharing information about where it is produced is value added to the product. Being

able to make it special as your product is value added and puts money into your pocket. I have a friend selling honey – She labels her honey as "German Village Honey". Not wildflower – but honey produced in her back yard in a special area in Columbus, Ohio.

My bees are located in Wake County, North Carolina. I get a honey I call Tulip Poplar – it is a dark amber colored honey but under the microscope other pollen grains are present as well. I have been told that if more than 50% of the pollen grains in a honey sample are present then I could call it Tulip Poplar honey. But maybe it may be more identifiable if I would call it "Coachman's Trail" honey. It is a special area that locals could easily identify.

I find that the individuals tasting honey all have an idea of what is good and what is undesirable. Favorites will vary from individual to individual. Most prefer light amber colors rather than dark honey colors.

Generally speaking we try to associate the taste of the fruit of a tree with the expected taste of the honey. It doesn't work that way. Buckwheat in bloom is snow white. The honey is a very dark redish color (not transparent) and the taste – it has a kick somewhat along the lines of molasses. Black Locust on the other hand is water white, mild tasting, and very transparent. (One can read newsprint thru a jar of black locust honey).

I have strong preferances to several sources of honey. It is an indivual thing. My choices of a lifetime of tasting various honey sources:

#1 Kadzu Honey – very tasty and redish in color. From Alabama
#2 Sourwood Honey – light in color with an outstanding taste -- North Carolina Mountains
#3 Persimmon Honey –Light in color and a bit spicy --From Georgia
#4 Tupelo Honey - Light in color Fine tasting maybe a slight hint of cinnamon – Florida
#5 Star Thisle - Light in color – Rich unique flavor – Northern Michigan

As this winter season ends, I am thinking about honey. Those of you <u>with a surviving hive of bees</u> need to be thinking about what you need to do to get honey this year.

We have time right now to plan what we need to do with our bees to get a honey crop. I will be addressing that topic a lot over the next month.

Much of the early nectar and pollen is being used by the bees to feed all the new larvae you will find in your hives. It is those young bees you need to raise to collect the honey you will harvest in late April thru summer.

So you need to inspect your hives when you can – when weather temperatures are over 60 ºF. and bees are flying.

Make sure you have a laying queen. I have seen a number of problems with queens this winter. A hive will have bees but no brood and a queen no where in sight. One might think taking a frame

of brood with eggs might solve the issue of no queen and no brood. I think that solution does not work well until you see drones flying so any queen raised will be mated. One problem with buying early queens is they are often poorly mated. Thus, queen replacement in late summer is required.

Queens may be available from bee suppliers soon especially if they are getting queens from Hawaii. California queens are usually available early -- they have been having problems with rain and flooding. That affects good mating results for queens raised under those conditions.

The food supply is a big problem for some hives. Last fall I set some frames of honey back and I have done something completely out of charater this week. Rather than open the hives, I set out two frames of capped honey for my bees to rob. I went to Ohio and when I returned yesterday (Wednesday) I found bees working those frames. The frames were less than 10 feet from the entrances of my hives. They were covered with bees seeming to come and go from my own hives. This is called open feeding. The downside of open feeding is other bees from other hives nearby will be getting some of the honey as well.

Topics to look for early this year:

Swarming, making splits, controlling small hive beetles and that honey crop that I want.

I just received my copy of Bee Culture Magazine in the mail. The March issue is filled with important information . Especially how EPA and EPA registration of products used in bee hives will affect those that sell honey. I have witnessed beekeepers using unregistered products in bee hives. A good example is the use of Oxalic Acid which is cheap and available at almost any paint supply store. It is sold as a wood bleach. Oxalic acid can be detected in honey samples. Wood bleach is not registered to be used as a control for varroa mites. There are products registered using oxalic acid which are legal to use such as Varroxsan and Ex-OX Tablets and three registered as (91266-1, 91266-1-73291, and 91299-1-73291) which are Oxalic Acid Dihydrate.

The article points out that Section 408 of FFDCA authorizes EPA to set tolerances, or maximum residue limits, for pesticide residues in foods. I hear beekeepers saying they can buy products having ingredients that kill mites much cheaper than the products sold at your local bee supply outlet or bee supply catalogs. Many greenhouse products and animal products contain Fluvalinate, formic acid, Amitraz and various chemical products that kill mites, white flies and other pest. The internet is filled with suggestions of soaking paper towels in "such and such liquid", place them in the hive and get the same kill rate that one might get using registered products such as Apistan, Api Life Var, Mite-Way Quick Strips, Formic Pro, Apiguard, and Hopguard all registered to be used in bee hives. If excessive amounts of any of these chemicals and products are found in honey, EPA under the current law can step in. Jerry Hayes the author of the article points out "there are no exemptions under FFDCA (Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act). If you are selling honey, and or honeycomb, wax, propolis, royal jelly, or pollen) your product will be considered adulterated and would be a violation of the act if higher concentrations of registered chemicals are detected.

If you are selling honey or any hive product, I would highly recommend you read this article. All it would take is a bottle of honey turned into someone connected with regulating food products to send it off for analysis. States regulate apiary activities, plant pests, and food production. EPA and the law under FFDCA regulate food safety.

I also took note of Jim Tew's article titled, "What New Beekeepers Should Know About Old Beekeepers". He said, … "in many ways, we are ALL new beekeepers." Jim has hit the nail on the head when he describes us old beekeepers and new beekeepers facing the things happening in the new changing bee world. He says, "We are all in the same boat and for all of us, it's a new boat."

The entire world is changing from old to new. I just bought a new computer – the one I have used for the past 15 years has slowed down and I have had issues with it. My monitor is old (2014 model), and I gave no thought to changing it. That old really hit hard when I got home to hook up the new computer to the old monitor. Nothing was wrong with the monitor. But the cable from the monitor to the computer would not work. The computer doesn't have a port with the ability to accept my current cord—you know the one colored blue with a lot of little pins lined up in rows. In fact, I wanted a computer with a cd drive. The kid (maybe 20 years old) working behind the counter looked at me, and said we only have one computer we sell that has a cd drive. We have plenty that have no cd drive at all and would be a better choice. Cd's are not used now!

Wow, I have a bunch of cd's. And <u>then add the feeling of being stupid and dumb</u>, I said something like I don't want to be on the "Cloud". He said something to the effect, "If you want this computer you need to have access to the cloud. We will need to load the software if you want us to do a complete install for you. I will need to set up an account with (name omitted). I will need a password and an id." He was a nice chap, clean shaven and well spoken.

I quickly realized I fit right into Jim Tew's definition of "old beekeeper!" The technology available today allows me to sit in my easy chair, pick up my cell phone and check out the sensors in my beehive. From that data, I can tell how much weight a hive is gaining on any day. What is the hives internal temperature? And if the temperature is rising, I can interpret that as the hive is about to swarm. If the temperature drops drastically, something is wrong in the hive.

There is nothing wrong with progress. As I grow older if the kids take my driving privileges away, I will have a car that drives itself, by golly!!!