



STAHLMAN

BEEKEEPING NOTES

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The Positive Side of Beekeeping

I am seeing many new beekeepers just starting out. They have a lot to learn and I remember the saying, “It is like drinking from a fire hose!” For many of you, that phase is over. I also look back at many friends who have passed. They live on in me because they taught me what I know. They shared experiences. Everyone keeping bees has a story to tell.

One story I share over and over is the optimism that beekeepers have when faced with a hive that died out over winter. One must pick up and in some cases start over again. In life, things sometimes go wrong. I had a good friend in Georgia by the name of Billy Engle. He shared with me his story of how he got into beekeeping.

He farmed land that had been in his family for years. He grew various crops and complained that the deer ate more than he could harvest. (I am sure that wasn't exactly true but he saw someone keeping bees selling honey.) His thought turned to “why fight the weather, deer, and cost of getting the ground worked up and planted.” There must be an easier way.

As a young man, Billy served his country by entering the service. (82nd Airborne). He had all kinds of stories and always seemed to have positive comments to make. He could turn negative thinking into positive thinking. I noticed that he had two finger tips cut off at the knuckle on his left hand. His comment was “if you are going to make your own equipment, sooner or later that saw blade will get you!” It didn't stop him from working with his saw – it taught him that there is a right way and a wrong way to use it.

And he talked about jumping from an airplane and compared that experience to starting beekeeping. If one keeps bees there is always someone interested in “what you do and how one handles the stings.” In fact, the most common question asked of me is: “How many times have you been stung!”

The fact is honey bees do sting. Sometimes even thru the veil when your nose touches the protective screen or when the back of your neck or ears get close to the screen of the veil. The positive thing about keeping bees is one can buy protective equipment. And then like Billy, use the experience - there is a right way and a wrong way to work bees.

If bees die out in a hive, think of it this way. One has already spent a lot of money on equipment and protective clothing. The cost to replace the bees is the easy part. Varroa mites can do a lot of damage to live bees but on the other hand, when the bees die, they die.

Varroa Mites do not destroy comb or leave the equipment unfit for further introduction to new bees.

American foulbrood on the other hand is spread by a bacterium that is spread by the spore stage of the disease. Spores from infected larvae remain in cell wall or honey and is easily passed on to bees introduced in to equipment of a hive infected by bee activity of previous bees. This is a danger when buying used equipment. Fortunately, the bee inspection programs in the U.S. have brought this disease pretty much under control.

Moving on:

I bought a new copy of “The Hive and the Honey Bee” published by Dadant. I own an older edition published in 1993. I refer to reference books a lot just to make sure my thinking and facts are as near to the truth as possible. Research is more than just reporting something – it requires follow up and repeat results. In gathering material for articles I am always amazed to find new material that give me an up-date on what I should be writing about. The introduction of various pest like varroa mites and viruses have set my beekeeping knowledge up-side-down. Without good research source material I am lost. Thus, finding books written by reputable experts should be a goal for all of us.

My Hive and the Honey Bee book from 1993 is out dated. The cover of the new edition is almost identical. The new edition is a bit larger and includes more color pictures. The information in the new edition follows the pattern set over many years. The authors – It take two pages to acknowledge those authors and the institutions they represent. It is a little of Who’s Who in the beekeeping world.

Now is the time to read up on beekeeping topics. With weather conditions still cold and bee work delayed, I am doing some study of what I can do while things are changing so rapidly. The 1993 book has very little about Nutrition and this is a big issue today with so many issues over land use and land development. How many of you know how important (Lipids) are? Sterols? Wow, a whole new vocabulary to learn for the Master Beekeeping test if one is planning to take it.

I have reported on the basic things to get your bees thru the winter. The time honored management of bees for winter have always been:

- Preparation for winter started in late summer!
- Ventilation is important!
- Dry and sheltered hives are important!

- Honey bee health is important!
- Honey reserves are important!
- Treatment for disease and pests are important!

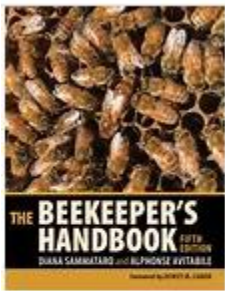
We are now in winter and have some weeks before Spring officially begins.

So what are you doing now?

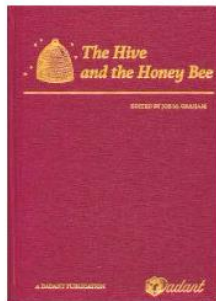
I would suggest any of the following books to read while the weather keeps you away from your bees.

The Two Best in My Opinion:

- **The Beekeeper’s Handbook 5th edition with the foreword by Dewey Caron written by Diana Sammataro and Alphonse Avitabile published by Comstock Publishing Associates an imprint of Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.**
[It is not expensive – Easy to read and information is up to date. Many state beekeeping Associations use this book for testing purposes.]
- **The Hive and the Honey Bee edited by Joe E. Graham Second Printing 2018 published by Dadant & Sons, Inc. Hamilton, ILL. Printed in the U.S.A. Many co-authors (experts in their field of knowledge) contributed to chapters in the book. A bit more difficult to read because -- the scientific language and detail explain complicated topics. Also sold as a hard back and much more expensive than paper back issues.**



The
Beekeeper's
\$27.85
Amazon.com
★★★★★ 285



The Hive and the Honey Bee
2015 Edition
M00010
★★★★★ 3 Reviews
\$56.15

Both books get 5 star ratings from readers.

Beekeeping requires a beekeeper to look ahead to what “colonies of honey bees” should be doing and determine what management tools and techniques one should use.

Start this bee year right! Put pessimism in the past and look to tomorrow! Warm weather will get here before you realize.

Dana