

2026 Stahlman Bee Notes

Published By-Monthly by Dana Stahlman

Issue # 18 Vol. 8 Mid-September Previous issues are available at www.ccbbee.org

Getting Ready for Winter in September

I am not sure how you're handling this hot weather, but it sure has had its effects on me. I have been feeding my bees almost all summer. This provided food for brood development and the hope that the bees would draw out new wax foundation in frames. I did make several splits but as the summer has progressed, I have had to combine them with my original overwintered colonies. My bees have not made much surplus honey this year. They were good during the spring, but this hot weather and lack of foraging opportunities has taken its toll this year. Over the next four weeks, I will be able to work bees in comfortable weather – I hope. I know that healthy bees are the key to hive survival.

I will be applying varroxsan® to the hives later this month or early October – strangely I have not had hive beetles or mite counts that I have had to treat or manage. Maybe the hot weather had an effect on those two pests. I am also aware that pollen shortages may have affected my hives health and I should have bought some pollen patties to give to my bees along with the sugar I was feeding them. I have never liked using pollen patties because they attract small hive beetles but my planning for next year includes buying some pollen patties. I can not go back to this past summer and fix that problem.

There is a great article in the September issue of the **American Bee Journal** called "**Not A Great Year**" written by Charles Linder. He is a commercial beekeeper and reading of his problems, I more or less am very happy with the things happening to my bees compared to his problems. He writes about his mistakes. He points out that "*the bee season is really only three months long. After that, it's just feed and maintenance.*" He shares what can happen if things don't go right in those 3 months! And he adds this, "**Beekeeping is like dominoes. When one falls it's a cascade of problems.**"

This is a photo from a beekeeping friend's dead hive. Just a week or so ago the bees were flying from this colony. When the hive was opened just the other day, all the bees were dead! I was being asked, why?



Why? Note the lack of food available to the brood on this frame. There were no honey stores in the other frames in this colony. Why did it die so suddenly when things looked good just a week or so ago?

Like any animals, bees need food to live at all times of the year. This queen was doing well. No formic or oxalic acid treatment caused this die-off. Lesson learned – Bees need food!

Walking around a hive with bees flying is not a sign that everything is okay. I am sure this colony would have had a good bee population to overwinter this fall.

The reason I feel the hive died from starvation is supported with the absence of food, young larva had been cannibalized, and bees head first in the empty cells among the brood. The beekeeper asking me about the cause was almost certain it was a chemical kill. Most of the bees had dropped off the surface of the comb and littered the bottom board in large numbers- rows of bees located as they fell between the frames.

I do want to point out what one can do in emergency feeding situations.

- **Don't worry about sugar/water ratios.**
- **If you have a container (bird feeder, water fountain, just a bowl) mix up some water with sugar and set it out away from your colonies – lets say just a short distance away, and observe what the bees do when they find it.**
- **If they go crazy swarming the food (bee on bee) and with in 15 minutes you have a major issue with bees in the air and around the container, this is evidence that the bees are hungry.**

The choice of choosing a feeder is vast. I think each beekeeper must decide which is best for themselves. I have been using Miller type top feeders to feed my bees. The advantage is I can give the bees at least a gallon of syrup at each feeding without disturbing the colony by opening it. Jar and bucket feeders placed above the inner cover hole accomplish the same thing.

Bees should not be given sugar syrup during a honey flow – and they don't need feeding during a honey flow.

A complete hive inspection this month is required.

A good check for hive weight is the old try to lift or tilt the hive – lifting from the rear bottom super hand-hold. But nothing beats the inspection of honey stores and brood development at this time of the year. This is not the time to put off hive inspections.

Linder's comment about the “**dominoes effect**” is valid at this time of the year. Time only moves forward. I have never seen a summer like this one! My get up and go almost says “to hell with it.” I try to get to my bees early in the morning. They seem more aggressive now, but a check for (food levels, brood rearing, and equipment needs) are essential for successful overwintering. **I will note that I didn't see one drone during my inspections this week.** Does that tell us anything?

Wax moths are having a field day this year. It is a bit too late to warn you about what they can do but if you have stored comb in frames or colonies that are very weak, it is important that you check the comb for wax moth damage. Wax moths do not like light but find the dark interior of a bee hive during warm hot summer days an ideal place for them to reproduce. Remember light and low temperatures suppress bee moth development. Stored comb is a target. I have an old refrigerator that I store comb in and it prevents moth damage to combs. The worst place to keep drawn comb is in a poorly lit storage area such as the basement of your home. Old comb with pollen or honey present is going to attract the moths. The best defense is strong populated colonies. If you have

extracted honey from comb and stored the honey supers, check them now! Wax moths can do a lot of damage quickly.



This is something you do not want to see when you check your hives. Recovering wax from frames like this might be possible. If you have plastic comb foundation, the wax cells can be scraped off the surface of the wax foundation.

One tip, don't place plastic foundation

frames out in the sun for long periods of time. The plastic will begin to warp and become disfigured. It only takes a few minutes in the hot sun for this to happen. If you want to remove wax moth damaged comb from plastic foundation, I have found that just a few minutes in the sun will allow you to use your hive tool to easily separate comb from the foundation. One can then process the old comb for wax by

melting it down in a solar wax melter. The foundation can be reused by power washing the frames and with a light layer of wax applied to the clean plastic foundation; it is almost as good as new.



This photo shows a paint roller being used to apply wax to plastic foundation. I might suggest that this is one important reason to save all the bees wax you can.