

SKAGIT VALLEY BEEKEEPERS



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February 2010

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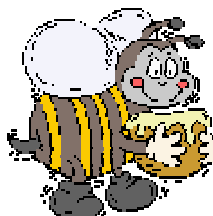
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The February meeting will be held on Thursday the 11th at 7:00 PM at the CENEX administration facility, our regular meeting space. Our speaker is Dr. G. Hollis Spitler a research associate at the Mount Vernon WSU Experimental facility where our association apiary is maintained. When I spoke with him he told me that his topic will be of critical importance to local beekeepers. As many of you know, we have very new soft fruit pest in the area, the spotted wing drosophila. This thing is an 'exotic vinegar fly'. They will soon be found on blueberries, cane berries, strawberries, cherries, peaches and other thin skinned fruits. Tomatoes? The farmers will be out spraying to kill this unfriendly insect. Are you a home gardener as I am? We all need to know about this nasty, very expensive critter. Wild blackberries for honey? Are the farmers and the county going to need to try to eradicate host plants? These pollinated crops directly effect us as beekeepers. Come the 11th and listen to Dr. Spitler.

There is an new, useful informational video on sampling to test bees for mites and disease at the WSU lab in Pullman, a great how to presentation for those who are visual learners. <http://apis.wsu.edu/> is the link and you should click on diagnostic lab. You should also download their improved registration form.

I contacted Eric Johansen with the Pesticides Management in Olympia about the new Miteaway Quickstrip. <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/docs/StatusMiteControlProds.pdf> is the link to current approved miticides in this state.

He says he has no information on that product so it is illegal. Literature shows it as being available in January this year, meaning now. Testers liked this product a lot in Hawaii having tested it in practical circumstances. Brushy Mountain shows it as Sold Out which I doubt. NOD, the maker shows nothing.



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I am watching the pussy willows in full bloom all around Pleasant Ridge and it looks like they will be bloomed out soon. The ocean spray is coming on and the bees are busy. I would bet you can find skunk cabbage blooming somewhere. We had many afternoons for bees flying in late January with the warm stretch of strong El Nino weather. I have talked with folks who have checked their bees and they are brooding up nicely. I am making pollen patties knowing that there HAS to be a dearth in our future. We will need to feed or watch our bees go backwards or die of starvation as pollen sources go out of sync with normal weather patterns. Warm weather is good but it has stirred up our bees and as responsible beekeepers we need to watch food stores closely. Remember starving bees consume larvae as necessary for protein and you will have allowed a huge hole blasted through your brood production process.

If you cannot take time to check your colonies, at least pick up the whole rear of the hive. If it comes up easily you could have problems. They should still feel fairly heavy. I have let more than one hive starve due to my own negligence over the years and it doesn't feel good. You can toss a big handful granulated sugar onto an inner cover and with the warm days, the bees will crawl up and use it hopefully. At the end of this month you can begin to use pollen or substitute patties and syrup to push your bees to brood up as you choose.

Just remember when you start you cannot stop or again, you may starve your bees.

I was just rereading some feeding information and was reminded that jars with several 1/16th inch holes poked in the lid are good spring feeders, except they break sometimes. You can buy leak proof 1 gallon buckets but they are spendy. With these you have a slow pretend honey flow without blasting your bees with feed like we often do in fall. They can be put right on/ over frame tops or on two sticks on an inner cover. Put an empty super over/around the whole thing and a cover on that. Instant 'honey' flow.

Also remember that a light syrup is appropriate as well, 2: 1 syrup.

I plan to clean my jars well then soak them in a 9:1 chlorine solution which is supposed to kill pathogens dangerous to bees, probably it kills EVERYTHING so be careful. I believe it would be a good idea to do this with ALL feeders. I did this with feeders and spare woodenware last summer then rinsed and aired things out. Chlorine dissipates well.. Do I know if it did any good? No. Did it feel worthwhile,? Yes!

I hope to see folks at the meeting. ED Markus