

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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February 2016

And Into The Light

The next meeting will be **February 11th, 2015 at 7:00 PM** at the Skagit Farmers Supply CENEX Administration building, located at 1833 Park Avenue, Burlington WA. Our **Seth Smith** will be talking about "Nosema, the Silent Killer".

Again To California

On January 26th, Seth Smith and crew loaded up his first trailer full of bees for a trip to California for the 2016 almond pollination season. They loaded 424 hives and plans to send 1200 or so hive this year. Each hive has to be a good healthy hive of bees covering eight frames or more.



On the trailer and just about ready for the trip to California

Thinking About Replenishing Your Bees?

At the January meeting Seth Smith started taking orders for nucleus hives. Nucleus hives, or "nucs" are a good way to start a hive. You get 5 deep frames of bees along with brood at various stages and a queen. Each nuc is

\$125.00 and compared to packages, a very good price.

For those who need to buy packages. Packages are about 10,000 bees with a queen. No brood, no comb. There are various places in which you can buy packages and the price keeps on rising. This year, I've found the following places selling packages:

Belleville in Burlington (360-757-1073). Belleville is not sure what the prices will be but should know soon. They think it will be from \$110.00 to \$115.00.

The Beez Neez, near Everett, Wa is selling packages for \$117.00.

<http://beezneezapiarysupply.1freecart.com/i/271246/3-package-italian-bees-with-queen.htm>

Tarboo Valley Bees near Port Townsend is selling packages for \$125.00

<http://tarboovalleybees.com/Pricing.html>

Ballard Bee Supply in Seattle is selling them for \$145.00.

<http://www.ballardbeecompany.com/service/honeybees/>

And Northwest Bee supply is selling four pound packages for \$135.00.

<http://store.northwestbeesupply.com/whidby-islands>

The prices for packages are making the price for the Nucs look really good.

If anyone has any other sources, please let me know.

Time to renew your SVBA membership!

Our annual membership is \$12.00. Please see **Scott Rhodes** to pay your dues. At the same time, you can also pay for your Bee Culture or ABJ subscription.

Things To Do This Month

- Check bees and check if they are alive. Clean entrances, scrape bottoms out and make sure bees are dry. Gently lift or weigh hives to get a feel for how they are doing.
- You might choose to feed pollen patties and feed honey or fondant/candy or dried sugar if needed. If you decide to feed, be prepared to feed as needed until forage is available.
- If you need queens, make plans for ordering. Order packages or nucs if you need to do so. Time is running out!
- Register hives with state, visit <http://goo.gl/IIZXBT> for the form.
- If you're interested in a specific activity like spring splits or queen rearing, etc., read and study those topics now in order to be ready when the need/task arises.

A Difficult Winter

Agriculture sure is a finicky fellow. Like gardening, you never know how things are going to turn out. Each seed different, producing weak plants, strong plants. Then there's fungi and spores and bacteria and nutrients and bugs that threaten a plant's life along the way. You never know what each year brings. Once year cabbages grow like nuts (or cabbages) and then next year, everything wants to kill them off.

Bees are a bit the same. I remember when I first wanted to raise bees, my biggest fear was that they'd just multiply and multiply and become a nuisance for me and my neighbors. At the time, I just wanted a couple hives in the backyard.

Then I took a bee class.

And found out that keeping honey bees alive was going to be the real challenge.

A lot of people are reporting higher than normal losses this year. At the January meeting, people were talking losses of 40% to 50% with lots of interest as to why. Nobody had any concrete answers. **Seth Smith** reported a lot of his losses came this year after doing an Oxalic Acid dribble, possibly killing off the older diseased bees much sooner than normal.

I myself do an oxalic acid dribble around the winter solstice as well - but I found my bees dwindling even before I treated (a treatment I've had much success with

previously). With the losses I've had, one seems to be nosema related. One seems to have a lot of residue indicating Varroa mites. The rest seem to be from queens that seem to have stopped laying.

It didn't matter where my bees were located. The queens just stopped laying.

Robert Price brought up an interesting thought at the January bee meeting. He mentioned (and I hope I understood him correctly) that the late summer drought might have brought on a pollen dearth, causing the queen to stop laying earlier than normal. The bees that normally survive from October/November and carry the colony to February/March died in December/January ..months earlier. With these bees gone, the cluster dwindles and can't keep things warm enough to sustain themselves and allow the queen to lay once late winter arrives.

That was something to think about. Very curious indeed.

Seeing The Future

I try to picture my bees now and how they're going to be when I will be wanting to raise queens. Or make splits. Or want to have a hive big enough that it will produce extra honey that I can harvest.

Bee Math helps me think about these things and I've been wanting to talk about this subject but I don't think I'm knowledgeable just yet to really articulate what I think is important to say.

I know my hives as they are now and I try to picture them in March, in May, in June. I want to know, barring problems with mites or disease what that hive (or hives) is going to look like when I want to raise queens. Are these hives going to be strong enough that I can steal a bunch of nurse bees and create a starter that will be big enough to start a bunch of queen cells and flood those cells with that wonderful royal jelly?

There's other examples too but with *Bee Math*, I know that what is happening now effects what happens later and I'm fascinated by the subject.

If you haven't already, read up on **Michael Bush's** web page that covers *Bee Math* ...it is just some basic information to have in your head to get a feel for how things may be based on what is happening now.

<http://www.bushfarms.com/beesmath.htm>

