

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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January 2014

Happy New Year!

Here's to an exciting and rewarding 2014!

The next meeting will be **January, 9th 2014, 7:00 PM** at the Skagit Farmers Supply CENEX Administration building, located at 1833 Park Avenue, Burlington WA. The speaker will be Joe McConnaughy and the topic will be winter survival and emergency feeding. He will also talk about spring-time splits and what to do and look for before splitting.

Bruce Bowen and Seth Smith will be planning to make nucs this year for the club the price will be \$120 for 5 frames and new queen - the date is not sure yet but mid-April seems feasible. Queens should be available in May (depending on the weather) for \$20.00 each.

Coastal Farm & Garden Supplies at [2021 Market St in Mt. Vernon](#) has announced that they will be selling beekeeping supplies. This will provide an additional source of beekeeping supplies with Belleville Honey & Beekeeping Supply at [18898 Dahlstedt Rd in Burlington](#).

Things To Do This Month

- If the weather warms up enough, you might consider popping a lid or two to see how your bees are doing. Queens could be starting to lay.
- There's a lot of talk about winter treatments against varroa mites. That might be something you should check into.
- Lift the back of the hives to check their stores. It needs to be hefty or you might want to consider feeding. If you need to feed, use dry sugar, a fondant or other non-liquid feed.
- Check your woodenware and other equipment, build or order those hive parts that need replacing.
- Consider starting another hive and ordering new queens, packages of bees or nucs.
- Catch up on your bee magazines and read books about bees and beekeeping.

Key Strategies For Effective Varroa Control

1. Monitor the infestation in your hives. You need to know if the mite population is building up faster than you thought or your treatments are not proving effective. Don't just treat and leave it to chance.
2. Talk to other local beekeepers about the Varroa problems you experience and the control strategies you are using. It may then be helpful to work together – for example in coordinating treatments.
3. Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) using a combination of varroacides and bio-technical methods. This will give the most effective control.
4. Slow the development and spread of resistant Varroa, and minimize the risk of treatment residues by treating no more often than is necessary – monitoring will help you decide how often this should be.
5. Use Washington State authorized varroacides. These have proven efficacy against Varroa, and proven safety for bees, beekeepers, consumers and the environment. Always follow the label instructions.
6. Where possible rotate the use of two or more unrelated varroacides. This is an effective strategy to slow the development of resistance. Avoid using the same varroacide year after year.
7. Remember that the use of unauthorized chemicals in your colonies or the misuse of authorized varroacides may leave harmful and detectable residues in your bee products.
8. Be prepared to check for Varroa resistance. Learn to test for resistance and gain experience of using other controls. When resistance arrives you will have to stop using those medicines to which mites are no longer susceptible, and rely on alternatives.
9. Be flexible and adaptable in your control of Varroa. Methods that work well in some circumstances may not work well in others.

10. Keep up to date with new developments in the control of Varroa – as the situation develops you need to make sure you have the latest information to help you respond appropriately.

11. Select for and retain bees that appear to show increased tolerance to Varroa.

Editor's note: I've been seeing a lot more information about treating Varroa in December/January. The idea is that there's a very small amount of brood and treating at this time would be most effective with the biggest reduction possible. I've even seen information on uncapping any brood and treating to ensure there are no mites sealed with brood. See <http://goo.gl/GhxKUP> where they are using oxalic acid but we can substitute with treatments authorized here.

Strategies used with permission from the UK's Food and Environment Research Agency's Managing Varroa leaflet, Copyright 2010, the Crown. The leaflet can be found at <http://goo.gl/Q6fHpE> Slightly altered for U.S relevancy,

Time To Renew Your Membership!

Remember to renew your membership with the Skagit Valley Beekeeper's Association! The following link is for our membership form. For new members, please complete and turn in with your membership payment. For renewing members, **only fill out any information that has changed.**

<http://skagitvalleybeekeepers.org/SVBAMembership.htm>

Thank you!

Winter Inspections

I was interested in getting a perspective of winter inspections from an operation that isn't too small nor too big, so I met up with **Brad Raspet** of BingalingBees.com (who is also our SVBA secretary) to do a winter inspection at one of his bee yards. In his yard, he had four hives, each tied down with rope in a way that they could be quickly untied. He likes to tie down his hives not only to secure the top but may also keep the hive intact even if it is knocked over.

Each hive had two deep brood boxes with one medium (western) super on top.

It was too cold to open the hives up, about 35 degrees and

cloudy, so the plan was to be as minimally invasive as possible.

We inspected the front of the hive, saw a few dead bees and in front of some of the hives, a few yellow jackets. Many people reported that yellow jackets were quite numerous this year. The dead bees at the entrance were not so many that they clogged the entrance. This was good as we didn't want to disturb the bees trying to clear an entrance. We were looking for any signs of vandalism, signs of scratching or clawing by racoons or skunks, and to make sure the mouse guard was on well.

Next, Brad weighed the first hive by lifting the hive at the rear using a digital luggage scale (which can be found for around \$14.00 at Walmart or Amazon). While

he doesn't get a true weight of the hive, he can use the readings from each visit for a comparison and it might provide hints about what is going on inside the hive. In the winter, the weight of the hive should be going down. In the spring during the build up of brood, bees, pollen and nectar, one should see the weight going up.

After the first hive, he weighed each of the remaining three hives and compared those weights with his measurements taken in mid November (Brad keeps a very nice hive inspection sheet/checklist).

Each hive had dropped about 2 lbs except for one, each currently weighing 46 lbs, 47 lbs, 49, lbs, and 54lbs respectively. The third hive hadn't dropped in weight and Brad had a feeling that the hive had possibly died. So he carefully opened the top and lifted a piece of burlap that covered the hole in his inner cover. No bees. Then he lifted the inner cover, looking down into the medium super. No bees. We could only see empty comb but it was nice and dry - no moisture. Next, he lifted the super and did find bees, a small cluster in the upper deep. Very small but the colony was still alive. Maybe the hive will make it. Difficult to say.



Luggage scale used to weigh hives



Weighing the hive

So each hive was in decent shape with some concern about the third hive. I asked when he feels the need to feed the hive and Brad tells me that he feeds fondant that he makes if he takes a reading and his scale is showing a "tipping weight" below 40 lbs.



Making fondant

Photo by Brad Raspet

It was a very simple inspection and didn't take very long at all but a winter inspection is important. It is good to check on your hives during these colder months, looking for damage and to gauge how your bees are doing.

It was quite interesting to see Brad's inspection sheet, inspection guide based on temperature, and his beekeeper's activity calendar. If you're interested in seeing these, email Brad at brad.raspet@gmail.com.

Making Your Own Woodenware

As I'm sure you know, winter is the perfect opportunity to inspect your woodenware and to ready new covers, hive bottoms and everything in between. Each person's skill level is a little different - along with the type of tools they may have, but for the adventurous (and/or frugal) there might be all or a portion of woodwork that you can do yourself.

Ed Simon has had a few great articles in *Bee Culture* these last few months covering hive stands, bottom boards, and even entrance reducers. The Michigan Beekeepers' Association has a section on their web site called *In The Beekeeper's Workshop*, which contain great step-by-step instructions and some of the tutorials even have videos that walk you through the process. Hive covers, inner covers, hive bodies and everything down to the bottom board. You can visit *In The Beekeeper's Workshop* at: <http://goo.gl/wghyV9>

How many fluid ounces for 1 pound of honey?

1.5 ounces of honey by weight equals 1 fluid ounce. For 1 pound of honey, you need 10.67 fluid ounces (approx).

Honey Syrup Recipes For Colds

I'm not going to say that these honey syrups will cure a cold but they just might sooth a sore throat and cough. Besides, they taste wonderful!

- **Lemon, Ginger & Honey Syrup:** 1-2 lemons, 1 teaspoon ground ginger (or 2 tsp. grated fresh ginger), 1/2 cup honey.
- **Orange, Clove & Honey Syrup:** 1/2 orange, 16 whole cloves, 1/2 cup honey. Optional: 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon also may be added.
- **Clementine, Cardamom & Honey Syrup:** 1-2 Clementines, 1 teaspoon ground cardamom, 1/2 cup honey.
- **Lime, Mint & Honey Syrup:** 1-2 limes, 6-8 fresh mint leaves, 1/2 cup honey. Remove mint leaves from jar after 1 week to prevent spoilage.
- **Lemon, Rosemary & Honey Syrup:** 1-2 lemons, 3 sprigs fresh rosemary, 1/2 cup honey.

Slice citrus into rounds and half or quarter the slices as needed in order to fit in 1/2 pint (1 cup) jars. To the jar, add 1/2 the citrus, 1/2 the spice, and half the honey. Stir gently. Add the remaining citrus, spice and then honey. Stir gently. Top off with more honey if needed to fill. Place in refrigerator for 4 hours, then stir gently and it ready to use. As syrup is used, top of with more honey as desired. It should keep for 1 to 2 months.

Warning: Never give honey to a child younger than age of one due to the risk of infant botulism, a rare but serious form of food poisoning.

Adapted from The Yummy Life. Read the full article and see some delicious pictures of these recipes at The Yummy Life by visiting <http://goo.gl/TFKUaK>

Do you have any suggestions?

Story ideas? Something you would like to know about or an article that you would like to write yourself? Please submit them to robert@yakima.net. We'd love to hear from you! **For the February 2014 issue, Please have any articles to me by January 30th, 2014.**

