

Presidential Musings on Winter



Now that we are finally experiencing some winter weather it is time to think about spring. Now you should be taking inventory of what you have and what you will need to grow your apiary if you so desire, or be considering what it is you need to replace. Now is the time paint the woodenware, or better yet get it put together for wax

dipping which is the next service your club is working hard to offer. This treatment lasts at least as long as paint and is much less work. It penetrates the wood so it protects it from all sides and is completely safe for you and your bees. You'll hear more about this as we move forward. Now is also the

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MCBA Motto: "Beekeepers Helping Beekeepers"

2016 DUES

Have you paid your dues?

Dues for 2016 are due in January and it will still only set you back \$15.

NAMETAGS!

Have you been wearing your nametag at our meetings? We all want to be able to call each other by name without the embarrassment of telling someone you don't remember their name. PLEASE WEAR YOUR NAMETAGS, PLEASE.

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MCBA Winter Calendar of Events

Jan 28- General Meeting - 7pm, 4-H Center, Maple Room, **Topic:** Preparing the Apiary for Spring

Feb 2 - Beginner Beekeepers Course 6pm, 4-H Center

Feb 9 - Executive Board Meeting, 7pm, 4-H Center

Feb 25 - General Meeting -7pm, 4-H Center, Maple Room, **Topic:** Queen Breeding and Genetics

Mar 1 - Beginner Beekeepers Course 6pm, 4-H Center

Mar 3 - Second Year Beekeeping, 7pm, 4-H

Center, Beech Room

Mar 8 - Executive Board Meeting, 7pm, 4-H Center

Mar 24 - General Meeting - 7pm, 4-H Center, Maple Room, **Topic:** Evolutionary Biology, also MCBA's Queen Cell Program and Nucs for Members

March TBD (Weather Permitting) - Package Pickups - Worcester Honey Farms, 2011 Shearer Road, Lansdale. Package pickup starts at 12 noon. Installation class at 2pm. To pre-order please go to the [MCBA Marketplace](#) page

Colony Disappearance by Vince Aloyo and Mark Antunes

Have any of your colonies disappeared since you inspected them in the fall? Some of us have experienced a phenomenon that I have never seen before at this time of year – the complete depopulation of a colony that had a good population of bees shortly before that. This is not a die off with dead bees on the bottom board or dead bees stuck in the comb with their abdomens protruding out having gleaned the last bit of honey. What has been seen are hives where there are no dead or living honey bees in it at all!

Hives that were known to have a reasonable to good population of bees in September and October were found to be completely depopulated by November and December. This is what absconding looks like, but that generally happens during the summer.

On January 21st I spoke to the New Jersey Mid-State Beekeepers Association. I described this to the group and was astonished to find that 48% of those in attendance had experienced the same thing with one

or more of their colonies. Like me, No one there had an explanation or had seen this before.

Dr. Vincent Aloyo has been in contact with Dr. Dennis vanEngelsdorp about this and his reaction is that mites may be the causal factor triggering these events. Vince and I are convinced that further examination of this should be undertaken and would like to pass on any data we can to Dr. vanEngelsdorp for his consideration.

Toward that goal, we would appreciate it if any of you who have experienced this would let us know about it. Please send Vince and I an e-mail with your contact information, the number of colonies this happened to, when you last knew there were bees in the hives, and when you found the hive to be completely absent of bees. Our e-mail addresses are Vincent.aloyo@gmail.com; and honeyhillfarm@verizon.net

We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Hive Irradiation by Mark Antunes

If any of your hives died this winter or you bought used equipment last season you plan to use this spring; before you put over a \$100 worth of bees in that potentially contaminated equipment you should consider taking part in the hive irradiation sterilization event this spring. The annual spring hive irradiation sterilization event will be taking place on April 21, 2016. For less than \$4.00 per box you can make sure that your new honey bees don't get sick from whatever disease, bacteria, or pathogen may have weakened or killed the previous inhabitants. Your hives will come back to you safe and ready to use right away with no further preparation.

Go to www.montocobeekeepers.org and <https://vimeo.com/131667581> for complete information on how to prepare hive equipment for treatment. To take part please contact Mark Antunes at, honeyhillfarm@verizon.net.

Feel free to combine equipment with other beekeepers and organize to maximize the capacity of your pallets. If we get 8 or more pallets of equipment we will achieve the best pricing possible of \$164.38 per pallet which makes cost less than \$4.00 per box including frames and comb on a full pallet.

The Varroa Tsar by Myrl Stone

Reprinted from the Chester County Beekeeper Association
December 2015 newsletter with permission of author

Welcome to a new CHESCO monthly newsletter column. This column is a kickoff for a new task group that is being launched by your club. The focus of this endeavor will be aiding members in the continuous battle with the varroa mite scourge. Two objectives are paramount. The first requirement – this project must yield workable, in the bee yard, useful guidance and advice. Generating charts, data sets, and graphs will not be a goal. The second requirement – the project must be useful to all club members. The beekeeping community includes many subsets, a number of which are represented in our club. The hobbyist, the sideline, the beginner, the skilled, the traditional, the natural, and more are sitting at our club's table.

The mite has been with us for roughly thirty years. Where do we now stand? Answer – treading water would be the most optimistic assessment. Earlier this summer at the Western Apiculture Society conference held in Boulder CO, Dr. Marla Spivak commented on the Varroa problem. The reports are she stated that varroa has gained the upper hand. I'm sure the listeners expected to hear a declaration on pesticides or loss of forage base, but varroa? Haven't we been working and moving forward against varroa for almost 20 years? Working, yes – advancing, no – winning the battle, a resounding no! The hum in the bee world could be likened to the reaction of a hive struck with a hammer. Dr. Spivak's work places her in the absolute top echelon in the bee research field. When Dr. Spivak speaks, the bee world listens.

Recently, Bee Culture magazine hosted a symposium "The Four Pillars of Management". I attended this meeting, and I have been home just two days as I sit writing this article. The group consisted of approximately 150 attendees holding in aggregate roughly thirty thousand colonies.



Keynote
speakers

included Dr. Dennis vanEngelsdorp and Randy Oliver, and family names holding thousands of colonies, Miller, Card, and others. Included in the group were small commercial operations and sideliners like myself. Rounding out the crowd were folks holding only a few colonies. This symposium will be the subject of a club meeting report that we will fit into a future meeting schedule. Until that time, I am presenting some key points from the event.

The data keeps flowing in, year after year. One can analyze the collection criteria; parse the numbers but the news remains bad - very bad.

An unmanaged or untreated colony has a life expectancy of one to five years. If one ignores mites, the colony will die.

Queen genetics may aid in control of the mites within a colony, but it being a solution to the overall problem is not clear. One speaker who runs thousands of colonies is participating in the sponsored Russian bee project. He was reluctant to offer an opinion of success. Dr. vanEngelsdorp did make a comment, which caught my ear. The mite will reproduce six to nine generations for each queen's effective laying life. My conclusion is that the mite's reproduction rate has aided in its ability to adapt. The resistance to certain chemicals developed quickly. As we breed queens for resistant traits, will the mite not adapt with a corresponding evasive behavior or characteristic? Another factor working in

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PSBA Meeting Report by Vince Aloyo



Dr. Marla Spivak

The Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association annual meeting was held November 13 and 14, 2015 at the Country Cupboard in Lewisburg, PA. This meeting featured several outstanding speakers.

Maryann Frazier, Sr. Extension Associate at Penn State, will be retiring at the end of this year. Maryann's passion has been on pesticides and honeybees. She presented points about how to talk to the general public and reporters about pesticides. Her main point was that we should not talk about that which we don't know. Her advice is to educate ourselves before making blanket statements.

Dr. Marla Spivak gave two presentations. On Friday she described her studies on propolis and honey bee health. Feral bees coat the inside of their nest cavity with propolis to reduce fungal growth. In

addition, honey bees self medicate by collecting propolis, which boosts their social immunity and assists bees in their fight against AFB and chalk brood. However, not all sources of propolis have equal antimicrobial activity. On Saturday, Dr. Spivak spoke about honeybee forage especially in urban areas. She advocated educating homeowners about plantings that can benefit honey bees and other pollinators. She is exploring types of plants that can take mowing and still bloom, mentioning White Dutch clover as an example. She favors setting the lawn mower cutting height as high as possible.

Dr. James Nieh described his research on honeybee communication (see http://labs.biology.ucsd.edu/nieh/evolution_of_communication.html). The honeybee waggle dance can be inhibited by 'stop signals' from other bees, and explained that bees give the stop signal when the source indicated by the dancer is a dangerous place.

Clare Densley, Head Beekeeper from Buckfast Abbey (home of the famous Brother Adam and the Buckfast bee), related interesting facts about Brother Adam. She explained that they no longer breed the Buckfast bee at the Abbey. Her style of beekeeping is more laid back than Brother Adams' apparently was.

Erin MacGregor-Forbes, Master Beekeeper from Maine, described her method of artificial swarming as both a way to prevent swarming and, more importantly, an aide for Varroa management. See <http://overlandhoney.com/> for a handout describing her method.

MCBA Fall Banquet by Ann Breinig

On Saturday evening, November 7, 2015, our club celebrated our annual MCBA Fall Banquet. It was a scintillating and delicious affair, featuring incredible food by the Continental Deli and our Vice-President, Tim Cherry, presiding over the business meeting.

Kimberly Baccari discussed the process that she headed to obtain 501c3 for our club. This means that the club is now officially a non-profit organization and can accept tax-deductible donations. All members of the MCBA Executive Board have committed to give and can accept tax-deductible donations. Kim has worked tirelessly over more than the past year to successfully obtain this status. She was awarded an entire beehive box (photo 2), made by our own Don George (photo3), for her outstanding work!

Bill Bushnell, district chief of staff for State Representative Marcy Toepel, presented a citation to the club (photo 1) for the Vita Award that we won in the fall of 2015 (see October 2015 newsletter). He also announced that our club members are the keepers of 5% of the state's 63000 registered bee colonies.

The auction, presided over by Mark Antunes, auctioneer extraordinaire, was lively and successful. Three buckets of honey sold for \$8.00 per pound to Paul Gargus of Telford, Dan Hurlock of Blue Bell and Con McNutt of Hatboro. A nuc box made by Don George was auctioned to Jane Wang of Jenkintown for \$200.

Finally, several club members told personal bee stories, Priscilla Bonsell won the Bee Photo Contest (see her winning photo on page 6) and the raffle went very well with many happy winners.



Presidential Musings (Continued from P. 1)

time to order queens and packages for next year if you are looking for early spring delivery. Many queen breeders are sold out until May already. I'll try to let the membership know when the beekeeping supply houses are having sales so we can take advantage of the discounts. The queen cell program will continue this year offering quality cells to our members at a very low cost so you can start a nuc/split and have a ready reserve to sell, make increase, or back up the dreaded "dead outs" that even the best beekeepers have to deal with.

One thing to keep in mind is that the warmest December on record and my bees flying as late as today (01/16/16) means you need to pay attention to the honey stores your hives have and feed them if needed. If not, your bees will starve in early spring as they begin raising brood or sooner. This time of year liquid is not an option. Fondant, winter patties (Mann Lake and Dadant sell these), sugar ("mountain camp method" <http://www.indianahoney.org/2013/02/Mountain-Camp-Method-of-Feeding-Sugar.cfm>) are all options. This is very important! If your bees made it to this point in the season, don't let them starve.

Our next meeting is January 28th at the 4H Center at



7:00 PM. We will be having Randy Oliver via remote media speaking to us. If you do not know who Randy Oliver is you should. Check out his website at <http://scientificbeekeeping.com/>. I consider him to be the foremost expert on varroa and he is a commercial beekeeper as well. He puts what he says into practice so he knows it works. I hope to see all of you there.

The Varroa Tsar (Continued from P. 3)

the mite's favor is rooted in the method of reproduction. For readers with much spare time on hand, I suggest researching arrhenotokous reproduction.

The mite transmission mode is now reasonably well understood. The mite moves from colony to colony attached to wandering drones and worker bees. Any mite infested colony in a fellow beekeepers yard or feral habitat within three miles of another colony (your colony) has a very high chance of infecting that colony (again, your colony). During the summer months this may be only a trickle of mites. However fall brings on a new behavior – oh, how our bees love to rob! If a heavily mite infected colony is dwindling or dead, vicious robbing will often ensue. Bees, being bees, will discover, rob and scour the sick colony clean of honey within hours. The mite population will take advantage of the opportunity and hitch a ride to their next host's home. The assumed clean colony quickly becomes grossly overloaded with mites and will most likely die during the upcoming winter. Dennis dwelled on this subject making it one of the key points in his address. The term "mite bomb" has been entered into beekeeping lexicon. Are mite bombs falling on your colonies? I do know that I will be keeping a very close eye on my colonies as the fall progresses. I must add, the three-mile number noted above is a soft figure – closer increases the odds of transmission, further lessens the odds.

Parasitic Mite Syndrome (PMS) was another topic discussed. We can expect more attention given and research devoted to the virus transmission aspect of mite infestation in the future. Comments indicated that many commercial operators are already working on mite diagnostic and response models based on PMS observations.

We, as a club, can expect a call to action in the upcoming months. Bee journalists will not let this symposium go unnoticed. A cry for better education, better colony oversight and better colony management will go out.

I began keeping bees in 1965 - some would say in the good old days. The good old days, you may ask – the pre Varroa mite era. Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, however often misleading. I helped dig the burn pits into which hives were placed and witnessed bee inspectors overseeing the burning of complete colonies infected with American Foulbrood. If one peruses early bee literature, one will discover that disease, pests, and other calamities have been endured by generations of beekeepers. We have not escaped this repeating pattern; our challenge is the varroa mite.

MCBA

Marketplace

Would you like to advertise in marketplace? If you have beekeeping-related products to sell or services to offer, please send your advertisement to the newsletter editor at: annbreinig@me.com



2016 Nucs for Sale

For 2016, I will have several kinds of nucs available, each consisting of five medium depth frames of adult bees, including three frames of brood of varied ages (all of which are offspring of your queen), as well as pollen and honey. You will take the nuc home in a waxed cardboard nuc box (\$10 deposit), from which you can transfer them to an eight or ten frame medium depth box.

- Overwintered nucs containing a locally raised 2015 queen, brood, pollen and honey. By definition "survivor" since it will have come through the 2015-2016 winter to Spring, the five frame medium nuc has a queen raised from my local survivor stock, the queen mother having survived one to four years in SE PA. These nucs are more expensive due to my work caring for them in late Summer, Fall and Winter. They will be available as soon as brood rearing is well underway and populations are increasing in Spring, which is weather dependent. These will be the earliest nucs I have available, likely the end of March. \$350
- Nucs with 2016 Carniolan queens from Hawaii. Five frame medium nucs with Carniolan queens purchased from Hawaiian Queen (<http://www.hawaiianqueen.com/our-queens-1.html>).

[1.html](#)). Three frames of her brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is the end of April. \$155

- Nucs with 2016 New World Carniolan queens from Northern California. Five frame medium nucs with Carniolan queens purchased from Strachan Apiaries (http://www.strachanbees.com/about_us.html). Three frames of her brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is the end of May. \$155
- Nucs with locally raised 2016 queens bred from local survivor mothers. Queen mothers may be of Italian, Carni, VSH or other desirable stock; all queen mothers have survived one to multiple winters here in SE PA. Five frames of bees, three frames of your queen's brood, as well as nectar and pollen. Likely availability is June-July. \$155

See the following sites for a discussion of the pros and cons of starting a colony with a nuc vs a package:

<http://www.centrecountybees.com/2011/02/where-to-get-bees-for-your-first-hive.html>

<http://extension.psu.edu/business/start-farming/news/2015/obtaining-honey-bees>

I am PA licensed (C2015-75, through September 22, 2016) to sell Queens and Nucleus colonies. As part of this program, my queen rearing apiaries are inspected by the PA Department of Agriculture twice a year, typically at the beginning and end of the active beekeeping season. I use no antibiotics in my beekeeping operations.

To get on the nuc list, go to my web site: <http://vincemasterbeekeeper.com/contact/> I do not take advance deposits, as I cannot guarantee availability in advance. Requests are honored on a first come, first served basis. Thank you for your interest!

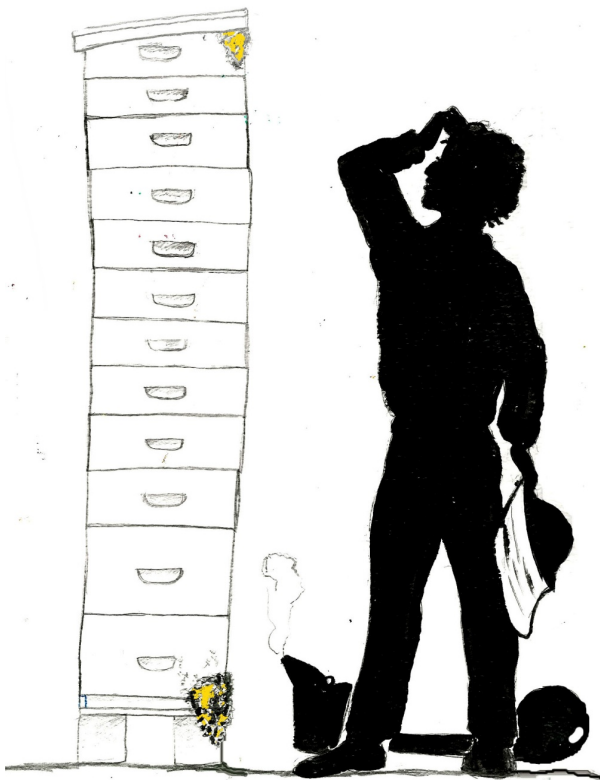


SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

SPRING PACKAGES

Available for Pickup Saturday, April 2*
or Saturday, April 23*.

(* Actual date depends on weather.)



Order your packages now for pickup after 12:00pm on Saturday, April 2* or Saturday, April 23*. At 2:00 P.M. on the day of pickup, see a demonstration on installing package bees. Conveniently located in the exact center of Montgomery County near Valley Forge, Norristown, and Lansdale turnpike exits. Package includes 3-pound workers with Italian queen. For more information or to download a package order form, visit www.pabeekeeper.com, email packages@pabeekeeper.com, or call 610-584-6778.

Worcester Honey Farms, 2011 Shearer Road,
Lansdale, PA 19446

PENNSYLVANIA MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

2016 Beginners Beekeeping Course

Are you interested in beekeeping but have never done it before? Have you started raising honey bees and want to learn more? Perhaps you have been raising honeybees for a few years and just want some refresher techniques. If so, then the **Montgomery County Beginners Beekeeping Course** is just the right thing for you! It offers classes that are timely to your seasonal beekeeping needs with a hands-on session in the apiary followed by lessons full of beekeeping insight and information in a classroom.

WHEN: The course consists of 8 classes from February to September. March to September there will be hands on activities in the apiary that start at **6:00pm** followed by classroom activities starting at 7:00pm. *Please note - the first class will be entirely in the classroom so no veil or equipment is needed. It begins at 6:00pm in the 4-H Center.* After the first class veils will be **mandatory** at the apiary. Anyone who does not have a veil will not be permitted near the hives.

WHERE: The Montgomery County 4-H Center, Route 113, Creamery, PA.

COST: A single student receives membership to the Montgomery County Beekeepers Association, membership to the Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association, one ticket to our fabulous fall banquet, educational materials, and eight great classes with hands on apiary experience for only \$120. The "couples" rate is for two adults living at the same address and includes all of the above plus an additional banquet ticket for a total fee of \$160. Class size is limited and enrollment will be allotted on a first to register-first enrolled basis. Do not expect to walk in and be seated.

MCBA New Beekeepers Course

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email Address _____ Phone Number _____

Make Checks Payable to "M.C.B.A."

MCBA LEADERSHIP TEAM 2015-2017

MCBA Leadership Team 2015-2017

President	Dan Boylan	dpboylan@comcast.net
Vice President	Tim Cherry	zendiver4@gmail.com
Secretary	Kimberly Baccari	kimberly@baccariprowriters.com
Treasurer	Cindy Yaskowski	cindy@yaskowski.com

MCBA Board of Directors 2015-2017

Newsletter Editor	Ann Breinig	annbreinig@me.com
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Hive Steward	Walt Fitzgerald	fitzgerald106@comcast.net
Website Liason	Elinor Spring	T5Springer@aol.com
Queen Rearing Project	Dr. Vince Aloyo	vincent.aloya@gmail.com
2014 PA Beekeeper of Year	Harold Jenkins	no e-mail
Communications	Rachel Newby	buchanan.1978@gmail.com
Others on the Board:	Chris Mancinelli	mancinc@gmail.com
	Charlie Breinig	CharlieNoSpam-Bee@yahoo.com

**Send in your Dues today for
Montgomery County Beekeepers Association**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Dues are applied on a calendar year basis. January 1st to December 31st

New membership _____ Renewing membership _____

MCBA DUES \$15.00 per household* per year \$ _____

PSBA DUES** \$20.00 for one person per year or \$25.00 per household per year \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

**** We recommend:** that you also pay dues for PA State Beekeepers in order to encourage research on bee health, and promote efforts to dissuade local township and boroughs from restricting beekeeping. You will also benefit from the 10 annual state newsletters and information sharing. (*household = 2 adults and all children living at one address.)



NEWSLETTER

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association
PO Box 903
Skippack, PA 19474

[Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4