

From Joe:

My wife, Holly and I have just returned from COLD Texas. RAIN, ICE, more ICE, more RAIN! Friday night in the Austin area we had 7" of rain from midnight to 8 am. The rain never really quit while we were there. We attended the 2007 American Beekeepers Federation Convention. We went down early and stayed late. What a treat! There was an absolute plethora of classes, sessions, demonstrations, talks, expert panels, and more. I saw many friends and made new friends in the Honey Bee Industry. If I could have you schedule one thing for next year it would be the ABF Conference in Sacramento next January. It will be run in conjunction with the American Honey Producers Convention. I am excited about it now! It was good to meet Danny Weaver from B. Weaver Apiaries, Texas. Danny was re-elected the President for 2007. Zac Browning of North Dakota was re-elected the Vice President. I am an alternate Director and on the nominating committee for the ABF for 2007. Additionally Holly is working with the ABF Auxiliary. We need a strong voice for Alaska that is not confrontational but interested in the whole industry. I was very impressed in the unity and cohesiveness of the Convention. There were no braggadocios individuals or those with an "agenda"; (axe to grind). There were so many ideas and so much information that if you would just shut up and listen, you would have to be half dead not to walk away with an absolutely incredible wealth of new knowledge. With all of the PhD's and Doctorates in Apiculture and Apitherapy and Apiology represented it is foolish to open ones mouth when listening is much more profitable. I did not hear or see one individual trying to railroad their way on the masses. Bee keepers were represented from all over North America. Some families had three generations of bee keepers in attendance. We in Alaska with 5, 10 , or even 15 years experience think we know something about bee keeping in the winter and in the wintering techniques but we can't hold a candle to many of those present at the conference. I met and had long visits with men from [Saskatchewan](#), Ontario, Quebec,

Alberta, British Columbia, and Yukon Territory as well as Upper Michigan, Maine, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and beyond. These men have been raising and wintering literally thousands of hives with 97% – 98% success, for decades. One queen breeder and Honey producer three hours north of the U. S. border in Saskatchewan told me today that they have snow drifts over 8' to 10' with temps at -40C and they have only 2 to 3 percent dead outs and 5% would be a disastrous year. In my humble opinion, I believe we could learn a thing or two from them. I am bringing in Queens from one man that winters his bees in Canada where the temperatures and winter conditions are much harsher than we have in South Central Alaska. All the tips and information I got from them was fantastic. I would like to share some of the information in upcoming newsletters. I also spent a minor fortune on new equipment and strange/unusual equipment. I drooled over some other equipment as well.

If you read your Nov. 2006 Bee Culture, you would have seen the article on "Fat Bees or Skinny Bees". I spent over two hours with the author, Prof. Dewey Caron

discussing bee nutrition. Dr. Caron will be retiring next year and he said he would love to come to Alaska and spend some time with us at a meeting. What a wealth of information. I had him autograph his Bee Keeping text book for me.

I talked to Gus Rouse of Kona Queens and he told me there are now 5 carriers that are under contract to carry Honey Bees for the U. S. Post Office. That is great news. We have

them shipped directly to us through the Post Office via Fed Ex which is the contract carrier to Alaska. It was good to see Glenda Wooten of Wooten's Golden Queens in Palo Cedro, California (just down the road from where I went to College). They are shipping out literally thousands of queens each spring and summer. These are the old Parks line of Golden Italians which are renowned as the gentlest bees in North America. Dr. Vaughan Bryant, Texas A & M University taught a class on identifying pollen. Is your honey really Fireweed? Dr. Bryant could surely tell you. Al Ford, Texas Insurance, El Campo, Texas, 1-800-541-9849, is the new contact for those of you wanting insurance for your Bee keeping business. Holly had a class with him and they learned all the liabilities involved and how to be protected in your hobby or business.

The new 2007 American Honey Queen is Kelly Tjepkes from Minnesota. We could have her or the new American Honey Princess come to Alaska for very little cost to help promote Bee Keeping and this would certainly bring attention via TV, radio, and print interviews to our industry. If interested, we need to schedule soon as their schedule will fill quickly.

One area of interest to you might be the new way to monitor your hives long distance. Bee Alert Technologies has equipment to monitor the temperature and other conditions long distance via your cell phone. This may be a bit to high tech or costly for some but could be a benefit for those with colonies on the Kenai or out in the Valley that get snowed in.

Another area of interest to bee keepers is the Fall Dwindle Disease which has affected tens of thousands of hives in the lower 48. We need to be aware of it here as it could very well affect us as we import lower 48 packages. All of the industries experts were present at the ABF convention. Here is the latest statement from the organized experts: Yesterday, (1-17-07) group of us formalized a working group and named the current bee loss syndrome being seen in the U.S. As of this time, I have reports that major losses have been seen in the U.S., starting in the spring in places like Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. It's still ongoing in Florida, with major losses occurring in Oklahoma, and a number of reports from California over the last few days.

We are no longer calling this Fall Dwindle Disease -- it's not a fall phenomenon when looked at across the nation, it's a rapid collapse (often in less than 2-3 weeks), and it may or may not be a disease in the strictest sense. So, we're terming it Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). We, a group of researchers, extension agents, and

regulatory officials have formed a group to investigate this problem and will call ourselves the CCD Working Group. This group represents a diverse number of institutions including Bee Alert Technology, Inc. (a bee technology transfer company affiliated with the University of Montana), The Pennsylvania State University, the USDA/ARS, the Florida Department of Agriculture, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. We're planning on adding Eric Mussen to the group to represent California.

CCD Symptoms

Based on initial visits to affected bee yards, the CCD drew up a list of the following symptoms, typical of the disorder:

- 1) In collapsed colonies,
 - a. The complete absence of adult bees in colonies, with no or little build up of dead bees in the colonies or in front of those colonies.
 - b. The presence of capped brood in colonies,
 - c. The presence of food stores, both honey and bee bread
 - i. which is not robbed by other bees, and
 - ii. when attacked by hive pests such as wax moth and small hive beetle, the attack is noticeably delayed (days, weeks)
 - 2) In cases where the colony appear to be actively collapsing
 - a. An insufficient workforce to maintain the brood that is present
 - b. The workforce seems to be made up of young adult bees
 - c. The queen is present
 - d. The cluster is reluctant to consume provided feed, such as sugar syrup and protein supplement
- Initial results from the online survey (<http://www.beesurvey.com>) has revealed that beekeepers think that this started at least 1-2 years ago, in its present form. As this list has mentioned, similar syndromes have been reported in the U.S., dating back to 1896. It certainly looks identical to the disorder reported by Oertel in 1965 (from bee losses in 63-64).

Finally, if you've experienced this, please fill out the survey - regardless of how convinced you are that you know what caused it in your bees. Too many factors, too few returns to sort this out without the help of the nation's beekeepers. (From Jerry Bromenshenk)

The Hibernation Diet has been mentioned in the past but I need to bring it up again. This is a great way to bring attention to the health benefits of Natural Honey. I visited with Mike and Stuart McInnes from Scotland and the co-authors of the "Hibernation Diet". I have ordered 50 of the new US produced books. Mike is very willing to travel to Alaska and speak at our meeting as well as any other venue we could line up. I am absolutely sold on this idea of how honey promotes sleep and activates fat metabolism during the night fast.

Honey and Wellness

- Eating honey will lower fasting blood sugars, homocysteine, c-reactive protein and LDL cholesterol level.

When eaten, honey has been shown to stabilize blood sugar levels

Honey and Health

- Eating honey significantly increases antioxidant levels in the blood while quieting immune over reactivity.

- Oral honey stimulates antibody production during certain immune responses.

- Honey has antibiotic properties. When used as a salve or ointment, honey prevents the growth of many bacteria. Honey prevents the growth of the bacteria that causes stomach ulcers in humans.

Creamed Honey

Have you ended up some years with jars of honey granulated so hard that you couldn't even get a knife into it? Honey so hard it tore the bread every time you tried to spread it? Honey with gritty bits of sugar crystals in it?

It's still honey, of course. Nothing really wrong with it, other than inconvenience and the chance of putting some people off honey forever!

No foreign materials have been added to honey to make it granulate smoothly. No icing sugar, white sugar, flour, cream or lard (yes, I have been told that's what beekeepers add to their honey!) or any other such things.

There is no reason at all that you, as a hobbyist beekeeper, should not have a go at making your own creamed honey, rather than simply rely on good luck to get a smoothly granulated honey. Though the results might be somewhat variable, you'll have a good time learning a little more about your hobby.

Creaming honey is simply controlling the natural crystallization process. Almost all honeys will eventually naturally granulate, most within a few months while others remain liquid for longer. In England, such naturally granulated honeys are called 'set honey'.

The speed and the texture that the honey granulates is mostly a product of the ratio of the two main sugars of honey, dextrose and levulose. For a reason never clearly explained to me, sugars often have two names, confusing things very nicely, thank you. Dextrose is

also known as glucose and levulose is known as fructose. And just to add to the confusion, levulose is also known to many people as fruit sugar.

If a honey has a high dextrose to levulose ratio, it will granulate rapidly with a fine crystal. If it has a high levulose content, it will granulate slowly and often with crystals large enough that you can feel their sharpness on your tongue.

To 'cream' honey, the beekeeper mixes in a percentage of honey that has already granulated finely. This honey is called a 'starter', since its crystal structure will start the liquid honey to granulate in the same manner. In order to speed up the granulation, the starter needs to be thoroughly mixed with the liquid honey, and then the container needs to be kept cool. Not cold, not refrigerator style cold, but simply cool. The ideal temperature is about 14 degrees Celsius (57 degrees Fahrenheit).

Keeping the honey at this temperature causes it to granulate as rapidly as possible, and since it has already got a nice grain started, the entire volume will granulate the same as the starter you introduced. It should be stirred occasionally during the process. Once the granulation is well established, the now cloudy looking honey can be run into its final containers. Again, it should be kept cool to assist rapid granulation.

In practical terms, you begin the process by finding some finely granulated honey. This might be some from last season that you have kept back or you could even buy it from another beekeeper. I like to add as much as possible, even up to 10% or so for a Polypail of honey, but you probably don't really need this much. If you like, you can start out with a small amount of starter and bulk it up by carrying out the process twice.

Stir the starter honey thoroughly into the liquid honey. It won't be easy, but you need to completely spread the granulated honey thorough the liquid. Afterward, keep it cool by placing your bulk container (well covered, of course) in a cool room, such as a basement or cold closet.

Stir it several times over the next week. It should start clouding, as the granulation spreads rapidly through the honey. You can now run it into the containers in which you will be distributing it, and again, keep them cool. The honey should be nicely creamed, set with a fine, smooth grain, within a week or two.

Kiwi beekeepers have been carrying out this process for over 60 years. They figured out that long ago a practical scheme for controlling the granulation in honey.

Credit for the 'scientific' approach to creamed honey goes to an American, a Dr Dyce who was a beekeeping professor at Cornell University. He described a complex and detailed method to produce creamed honey that differs little from the basic description given above. He did meticulously give temperatures and amounts, such as the ideal temperature to heat the honey before adding the starter, to make sure there were no natural crystals present in it.

The way I understand it, Dr Dyce visited New Zealand and saw the process in action several years earlier!

As I mentioned earlier, your results may be somewhat variable. Its possible that, even after following all the directions, your honey might still set hard as a rock. Doing it as a hobbyist as you are, you can't control all the factors involved, but the odds are that you'll produce a better product than just trusting to natural granulation.

Creamed Honey with dried fruit.

I use 1# of dried fruit to 5 gallons of creamed Honey. This is all to taste. Take one gallon of your very warm honey and put that into a bowl then slowly whisk in the freeze dried powdered fruit. After the fruit is mixed in it can be added to the rest of the honey for the batch. After it all cools, add your starter and proceed to combine the elements. More detailed instructions will be handed out at the next SABA Meeting.