

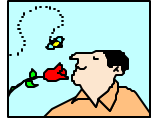
THE BEE HERDER

A Publication of the Medina County Beekeeper's Association
www.medinabeekeepers.com

January 2009

Meetings are held at 7:00 pm every third Monday at A. I. Root meeting room at 623 W. Liberty Street, Medina, Ohio (at the end of the West Liberty Commons Bldg). Check the website for any changes to our regular schedule.
www.medinabeekeepers.com

Next Meeting: January 19th, 2009 7:00 PM Speaker: Bob Brachmann Russian Queens



"You keep Russians different than other bees, but you will keep those Russians."

The following is an article on Bob Brachmann reprinted from the December 2007 edition of Bee Culture Magazine. This is a meeting you don't want to miss.

The best way we know to lick *Varroa* isn't a new chemical, isn't an old chemical used a new way, isn't an illegal chemical or a legal chemical used illegally. The best way isn't a mechanical method - removing drone comb, or screened bottom boards either. It's not powdered sugar, electric foundation, garlic powder or magic. No, the best way to beat *Varroa* is to raise bees that resist the attacks of this devil mite, or to tolerate, without harm, their presence in a hive.

Even if that tolerance, or resistance isn't 100%, reducing the need to treat a colony with any chemical, or using any mechanical method is only money in a beekeeper's pocket. Paying for treatments and the labor to apply them has become the number one expense for many commercial beekeepers, and certainly has added to the spend column on all of our spreadsheets.

So when we hear about bees that are showing this admirable trait, we take notice. Moreover, we want you to take notice because a potentially resistant bee means money in your pocket, and, more importantly, bees in your boxes.

That's why we continue to be interested in Russian bees. Russians are not a race, or a breed, but a mix of several strains brought to the U.S. from eastern Russia several years ago by the Baton Rouge USDA Bee Lab. Since then several lines have been released, crossed, eliminated and used. Today, Russian bees can be bought that are Russian/something-else hybrids. They tend to be unpredictable. However pure Russian - that is, Russian x Russian - production queens are also available.

Getting pure Russians has been time consuming, and less than perfect, but some Russian queen producers have been quite successful because of isolation, and stocking local beekeepers with their stock so when virgins fly, they meet with only drones their queens have produced, or drones from queens they shared with other beekeepers. This is about one of those Queen Producers.

Bob Brachmann moved to southwestern New York in 1993 after working for commercial queen and package producers in California for several years. He liked the area.

Tracheal mites were a problem early on in his operation, as were *Varroa* mites. But treating with hard chemicals went against the grain. Selective breeding worked quickly for Tracheal mite resistance, but large losses each year from *Varroa* was hard on the business plan.

So, in 2000 Bob switched to using Russian breeder stock from the Baton Rouge lab. This was a fundamental change in beekeeping practice, and this change is the most difficult part of moving from the bees our fathers kept to a new and productive line that is resistant to both Tracheal mites and *Varroa* yet still makes honey and is easy to work.

**Use Common Sense:
If Medina Schools are closed, we will cancel the meeting or beginner's class that night. If your roads are bad, ours probably are too. Stay home and stay safe. We need our beekeepers. Your bees need you.**

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Russian bees operate under a different set of rules, and if a beekeeper is willing to change the switch will work. If, on the other hand, you try to keep these new bees by the old set of rules, the switch will most certainly fail.

The first thing Bob did was begin flooding his area with pure Russian drones, so his pure Russian virgin queens would mate with only Russians. Russian hybrids, that is Russians x Italians or Carniolans – have been spectacularly poor performers and given the generic term ‘Russian,’ a bad name. And that’s too bad.

Now, after seven years of selection and breeding by USDA and other cooperators he has a reliable line that meets his specifications of hygienic behavior, gentleness, Spring build-up, production, wintering ability and mite resistance. And they’re pure.

It’s mite resistance that is the primary goal with raising these bees, so that mite treatments can be reduced or even eliminated. The biggest problem with mites and Russian bees comes when Russian colonies are in the same yards as non-Russian bees. They will become fantastically infested with *Varroa*. This pressure, then, is still more than even the best Russians can handle and a once-a-year, or once-every-other-year soft treatment is required. Bob uses an organic acid treatment with good results when a colony of Russians becomes infested.

But, in an all Russian apiary, the possibility of not having to treat even once a year is probable. This has helped the bottom line for beekeepers using these bees, and definitely reduced, or eliminated the need to use hard chemicals.

An added benefit is that Russians winter on far, far less honey than traditional lines, thus more honey can be removed at harvest. This, too helps the bottom line.

But there are differences, and to successfully manage Russians beekeepers must make some management changes. Foremost is that they are extremely resource oriented, thus are slow to build in the Spring. But, when both nectar *and* pollen are available they grow explosively, so supering early, and more than normal is the rule, not the exception. If that rapid buildup starts before you do, swarming is a likely occurrence. So make supering early and generous.

Small populations, when compared to Italians are also the rule, but rapid buildup to take advantage of Summer or Fall flow’s should be anticipated. These aren’t the bees of old, but they work.

Bob produces about 1000 pure Russian queens a year for sale through his business Cold Country Queens. He also prepares about 100-150 four-frame nucs to sell headed by his queens. Plus he raises more nucs for his own use. He continues to bring pure Russian stock into his system that he gets from Charlie Harper, who works with the USDA. Charlie is a Russian breeder who sells only breeder queens. So Bob’s stock is being constantly upgraded and improved by improvement from the USDA and cooperating Russian breeders, but with only Russian blood.

This next season Bob will be actively engaged in the Russian Bee Program that is just taking off. This means he will be maintaining two lines of Russians, plus using drones from an additional 12 lines.

To make all of this happen he runs about 700 queen mating nucs in three-way mediums, four-way shallows, about 100 Styrofoam mating nucs and about 400 two-way eight-frame deeps. The three- and four-ways can go to nuc mothers or full colonies during the latter part of the season.

He uses typical queenless cell builders, adding brood every eight days to the colony that holds a maximum of 45 queen cells.

This past year was particularly productive for a honey crop, considering his location and the weather. The Fall flow is the main flow in southwest New York, and this season he produced nearly 25,000 pounds of honey. About 17,000 of those go to Really Raw Honey in eight ounce jars, but the rest he retails directly. He has a crew of three who extract, bottle and label, and his son Trevor helps part time.

The honey part of this business is straight forward and well organized.

Supers to extract are brought into the honey house, which is part of a large garage. Uncapping is done with a Guinness machine, wax is captured in a Maxant spinner and then put in a melt box, and frames go into either a Dadant or Hubbard 60-frame extractor.

The extractors and wax sinners drain into a sump, then honey is pumped to a raised bottling tank. No heat is applied anywhere in the system, and the Really Raw product isn’t filtered. The retail honey produced is, however.

Retail sales are all local and a roadside stand has come onto the scene also.

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Cold Country Queens has found another way to raise bees without constantly being on the chemical treadmill. It took a lot of sacrifice early on, and it meant learning to keep bees with a new set of rules. And it’s working.

Treasurer's Report By: Mike Rossander

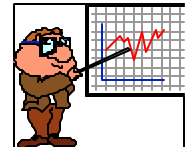
It's end of year and again time to look back at the budget. We had expected to break even for the year but ended up putting about \$1,300 in the bank. That variance was primarily the result of a far better than expected sales season at the Medina County Fair. Thanks again to everyone who participated.

Other major variance lines included equipment (primarily replacements for the equipment that we had to burn when the AFB was found) and the gift of the refrigerator to the AI Root company for their gracious hosting of our meetings for all these years. Those expenses were offset by some underspend both for speakers and some miscellaneous expenses like a new sign that didn't get ordered in time to post in this year's expenses. The Directors will be auditing the club's financials over the next few weeks. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please contact me at your convenience.

Note: As part of membership renewal, please let me know if we have your address wrong or if you didn't get a newsletter.

MCBA Financials through December (excluding the library fund) are:

	Dec 2008	YTD
INCOME		
Sales	0.00	9,470.69
Cost of Sales	0.00	(6,340.02)
Education Fees	0.00	955.00
Member Dues	0.00	1,260.00
Other Income	0.00	535.00
TOTAL INCOME	0.00	5,880.67
EXPENSES		
Advertising	0.00	150.00
Bees	0.00	204.00
Charity	0.00	300.00
Education	0.00	400.00
Equipment	0.00	582.29
Fees	0.00	170.00
Gifts given	0.00	534.90
Insurance	0.00	500.00
Licenses and Permits	0.00	5.00
Meals & Entertn	418.91	262.07
Miscellaneous	0.00	89.16
Newsletter	30.52	499.71
Repairs	0.00	126.15
Speaker Honorarium	250.00	525.00
Supplies	0.00	241.84
TOTAL EXPENSES	699.43	4,590.12
OVERALL TOTAL	(699.43)	1,290.55
MCBA Balance as of 31 Dec 2008:		\$4,417.22
less Sales Tax Payable:		(40.41)



Library Fund financials thru December:

	Dec 2008	YTD
INCOME		
Gifts Received	0.00	1,730.00
TOTAL INCOME	0.00	1,730.00
EXPENSES		
Education	0.00	195.00
Equipment	0.00	176.96
Repairs	0.00	232.75
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00	604.71
OVERALL TOTAL	0.00	1,125.29

Library fund as of 31 Dec 2008:
\$1,125.29

MCBA footnotes:

- The Meals & Entertainment line reported in Dec is net of the payments made in December.
- Two members have prepaid their 2009 dues. Those payments will be posted in January.

Library fund footnotes:

- none

Membership Application or Renewal
Medina County Beekeepers Assn.

Name _____

Check here if this is a renewal and all information on the roster is correct. Otherwise, fill out the section below:

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone # _____

E-mail _____

Help MCBA keep costs low.

Yes

Can you receive the newsletter by email only? No

(Optional) # of Colonies _____

Dues for 2007 are \$20 for individual or family. Make checks payable to **Medina Co. Beekeepers Assn.** and send to care of: ike Rossander, 1871 Settlers Reserve Way, Westlake, OH 44145

News about Refreshments

The executive committee has decided that every other month the club will buy and provide the refreshments for the meeting to give the members a break from all their fine cooking they do every month. This will start in February. We ask that everyone try to participate for our January meeting because we expect a large crowd with our excellent speaker we have lined up. Thanks for your help and participation !!

BEGINNERS CLASS



Don't forget to sign up for the beginner's class starting Feb 23, 2009. If you want we ENCOURAGE you to attend our Jan and Feb meetings just to get a feel for our club and what you can expect from us. There's no charge and you can even partake of the goodies that Gwen is arranging. Meeting dates are Jan 19, and Feb 16, all at the A.I. Root Company meeting room, 623 W. Liberty Street, Medina. Look for the sign on the sidewalk on the south side of the street.

The class will begin on Monday night, Feb 23, 2009, and run for 9 consecutive Monday nights from 7 PM until 9 PM, finishing on April 20, 2009. We'll get you familiar with the equipment you'll need early on so you can get it and introduce you to all the places to get bees so you can get those ordered in time. Our classes will cover the equipment you'll need and why, honey bee biology, spring, summer, fall and winter management, what are the important honey plants you should know, harvesting and processing your honey crop and a whole lot more on how to successfully keep honey bees. Official registration will be at the first meeting, but pre-registration notification is strongly, very strongly encouraged so we know you are coming, and how many will be with you so we can have enough packets prepared. Reserve your spot as soon as you can. Registration this year is \$50.00 for an individual, and \$60 for a family. A single packet will be given to an individual or a family, but consists of The BackYard Beekeeper, An Absolute Beginner's Guide to Keeping Bees in Your Yard and Garden, magazines, catalogs and additional information to aid you in getting started. To pre-register, contact Kim Flottum at Kim@BeeCulture.com, or call 330.725.6677 days, or 330.722.2021 evenings.

Beginning Beekeepers Class Itinerary

The Medina County Beekeepers will hold their annual Beginning Beekeeper's Class at the A. I. Root Company meeting room, 623 W. Liberty Street (south side) on nine consecutive Monday nights, beginning Monday, Feb 23, 2009, running until April 20, 2009. Classes begin at 7:00 PM, and run until 9:00 PM. Tuition is \$50/individual, or \$70/family, any number. Fees include a First Rate Beginner's Book entitled The BackYard Beekeeper, by Kim Flottum, and a collection of catalogs, magazine and other handouts, plus a year's membership in the Medina Beekeeper's Association. Free coffee will be available during class.

Class Agenda

Jan 19 - Regular meeting of the Medina County Beekeepers
Bob Brachmann is the speaker, addressing the Russian Bee Breeding Program, and raising Russian honey bees. All are welcome to attend, including to-be students in the Beginner's Program

Feb 16 - Regular meeting of the Medina County Beekeepers
Dana Stahlman is the speaker. All are welcome to attend, including Beginning Students

Feb 23 - First Class
Getting Started
A bit of beekeeping history, an overview of the beekeeping industry at the National, State and local levels, and a review of the resources available to beekeepers including books, the web, University and State Agriculture Dept resources and more.

March 2
Before Your Bees Arrive
Good neighbor practices in depth
What hardware will you need - boxes, tools, hive stands, and what kinds should you get
How to assemble beekeeping equipment

March 9
Bees
What kind of bees are best for you - Italians, Carniolans, Buckfast, hybrids, Russians
How will you get your bees - packages, nucs, colonies, and which is best for you

March 16
Regular meeting of The Medina Beekeepers, same location, same time
Joe Latshaw, commercial queen breeder will talk on basic queen biology and raising and using queens in your operation

March 23
Beekeeping Equipment,
Protective gear that's best for you
All about how much forage your bees will need, and you'll need to know
Learn to light your smoker so it stays lit - field demonstration

March 30
(meeting may be at the Medina Country Library to work with the observation hive)
Honey bee biology Workers, Queens and Drones and everything you need to know to care for each, and how each plays a role in the colony as a superorganism

April 6

Summer Management

Weather Depending we will install a package in our beeyard, after which we will return to the classroom for an overview of...

Honey bee pests, predators and diseases, and how to manage them in spring and summer for honey production and good health

April 13

Harvesting, and Fall and Winter Management

Harvesting honey demonstration, along with extracting and beeswax management, along with fall management and getting ready for winter

April 20

Regular meeting of the Medina County Beekeepers in our Beeyard on Smith Road

Outside meeting for all members where we will open all of our hives, go through them and examine them for problems, for pests and diseases, find the queen, look for signs of swarming, learn to use the smoker and hive tool, how to move boxes and everything else you need to do when working bees.

Future Speakers:

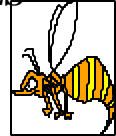
Dana Stahlman will be our speaker for our February 16th, 2009 meeting. As you know, Dana has been instrumental at many levels of Ohio beekeeping and he is a wonderful speaker. The topic will be on Robbing and other issues. This is a topic for all members to enjoy as well as our beginners.
HAVE A GREAT NEW YEAR.

Larry Arbogast,
V-P Program Chair

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUES ARE DUE!!

It seems like we just did this, but it is a new year already. Enclosed for your convenience is a membership renewal application. Keep up with the latest in beekeeping and keep your membership active!! If you are still receiving your newsletter via U.S. Mail and your complimentary e-mail version or web site retrieval is working well for you, please consider getting it via computer all year. Thanks to all of you who have signed up for this. The association was able to save a lot of money last year, enabling us to save our funds for speakers and education efforts. Please renew your dues using the application enclosed in this newsletter and check off e-mail if you can! Thanks ☺

PACKAGE BEES



#3 Italian \$71
#4 Italian \$80
#3 Russian \$75

#4 Russian \$84

\$3 discount on paid package orders before March 20th.
Queens are where they raise the price, so this is a little different for 2009.

Italians queens = \$16.00 ea
Russians queens = \$19.00 ea.

Queens clipped = \$1.50 each by themselves or if in packages.
Queens marked = \$1.50 each by themselves or if in packages.

Tom Jefferies - Phone # 1-440-236-5994 (Best way)
Email: tjeffhwb@aol.com
Snail mail 24564 Squire Road
Columbia Station, Ohio 44028
Or in person at a meeting

Thank You from the Medina Library

Dear Kim,

I had hoped to stop by the banquet in December to express my thanks to you and all the members of the Medina County Beekeepers Association, but I wasn't able to make it. I hope that you will share my appreciation for all you and Kathy and other members of the group have done to make our observation hive such a success! The hive is something truly unique to our library and it means so much to our community. I have never seen so much joy and amazement—children and adults alike come to the library especially to visit our bees. We also hope we are helping to spread the word about how important bees are. I truly appreciate all the research, homework and upkeep you have done on this project, and we all look forward to seeing our bees again in the spring.

Happy holidays,

Christine Gramm, Manager, Medina Library

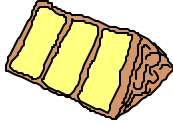


Medina County Beekeepers Association - Meeting Minutes - December 15th 2008

By: Gwen Rosenberg

The Club's annual Christmas party was a smashing success! We beekeepers really do Christmas right- in fact, this party was so big it wasn't just a Christmas party but it rocked Hanukkah and Kwanzaa as well! The food was fantastic- and I'm not just saying that because I'm still so delighted that I didn't have to frantically bake something at the last minute. There were prizes (that I didn't win), and a host of great speakers. The first speaker was a commercial beekeeper, then a little old lady beekeeper and one more but by that time I was three sheets to the egnog. Strangely enough all the speakers bore an eerie resemblance to Larry Connors. Larry put on a great show for us and made the entire evening all the more merrier.

A good time was had by all and Kim Flottum melted all our hearts when he proclaimed from atop Kathy's shoulder "And God Bless Us Everyone!"



Meeting Refreshments

By: Gwen Rosenberg



Speaking of food, our next meeting is fast approaching and barring any colossal snow/ice storms we should be getting together soon at the ol' Root building. We're going to need some provisions for two reasons: 1. to rouse us all from our hibernation with the promise of good food and 2. to keep us all alive in the likely event that we get snowed in and can't make it out of the parking lot. Let's be generous with the snacks people- we don't want future generations reading about us with the same horror that we recall the Donner party. Once the city of Medina thaws it would be a shame if they found us all clustered in some far corner of the building while only several feet away was a plentiful supply of food. What a shame for the Root Co. to have to scrape us all on to the compost pile and have the trouble of repackaging the place with new beekeepers. Let's avoid that disturbing scenario with some good food.

I suggest that we think some warm thoughts and bring things that remind us that "there really is warm weather in Ohio, Virginia." Bring your picnic-time favorites. Lemon bars, brownies, cupcakes- whatever says summer time food to you. Let's drink lemonade and pretend that it's approaching fair time and we're worried that it will be too hot! The human species has a long and colorful history of delusional group thinking. Let's channel that bizarre human attribute and put it to some good use. Think summer at the snack table because we're going to need those calories to survive if we get stuck in a snow bank on the way home!

The Bee Herder

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