



The **BEE CAUSE**

*The Official Publication of the Red River
Apiarists' Association*

<http://www.geocities.com/ve4tg/>

February 2003

Free to Members

Volume 7: Issue 2

Important Dates:

Next Meeting Date is:

11 February 2003

7:30 PM Upstairs Meeting Room

Program: Small Hive Beetle: BIG or small pest for Manitoba beekeepers. A presentation by Rhéal Lafrenière.

Meeting Location:

River Heights Community Centre

1370 Grosvenor St.

(Intersection of Oak & Grosvenor

Door Prizes will be offered, Guests are welcome and free coffee will be available.

The Bee Cause Newsletter is published by the **Red River Apiarists' Association** eight times per year excluding June, July, August and December.

Membership in the **Red River Apiarists' Association** is \$20.00 per year and includes a subscription to the **Bee Cause**.

Web Site at: <http://www.geocities.com/ve4tg/>

President's Comments

Lively discussions continue to be the encouraged norm, with about 18 people attending our Annual Meeting, which is also our first of 2003! As I reviewed the history of RRAA from 1963, I was reminded about the social aspect of our organization. We do some business; yet have time to help each other through the relationships at coffee time. This was emphasized for the two guests who were welcomed to join our group.

Your leadership team for 2003 is identified on page two of the newsletter. Thanks to Rhéal and the members of the Nominations committee for helping with this task. We look forward to a SUPER bunch of people to lead the RRAA's Fortieth year.

We elected a committee of two, to plan a Special Social to celebrate during April. Ken and Chris will be determining ways to commemorate our 40th.

During our business session, we reported our bank balance has again dropped slightly to retain a surplus of \$2299. As the community Centre lost a couple payments, a new cheque was needed. This will reduce our balance slightly.

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RRAA Executive Members

President: Jim Campbell
Ph 467-5246
Box 234
Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0
Email: jaycam@mb.sympatico.ca

1st Vice President: Heather Laird
Ph 255-1551
18 Burning Bush Bay.
Winnipeg, MB R2J 2G1
Email: hlaird@mb.sympatico.ca

2nd Vice President: Gilles Lantagne
Ph 885-6047
1018 Cavalier
Winnipeg MB R2Y 1E1
Email: lantagne@mb.sympatico.ca

Secretary: Ron Rudiak
Ph 326-3763
Box 1448
Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0
Email: manbeekr@mb.sympatico.ca

Treasurer: Dennis Ross
Ph 878-2924
Group 125, Box 10, RR1
Vermette, MB R0G 2W0
Email: rosskr@mb.sympatico.ca

MBA Delegate: Jim Campbell
Ph 467-5246
Box 234
Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0
Email: jaycam@mb.sympatico.ca

Reporter: Ron Rudiak
Ph 326-3763
Box 1448
Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0
Email: manbeekr@mb.sympatico.ca

Past President: Ron Boudreau
Ph 885-3344
795 Pepperloaf Crescent
Winnipeg, MB R3R 1G2
Email: goldrod@netcom.ca

Newsletter & Website: Doug Henry
PH 757-4694
Group 321, Box 6, RR3
Selkirk, MB R1A 2A8
Tel: 757-4694
Fax: 833-2566
Email: ve4tg@rac.ca

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Special thanks to Rod for his donation to the Barry Fingler Research Fund. With his and other donations, we were able to spend \$552 toward research this past year. Keep in mind \$100 went to research within our own membership. I asked for ideas on increasing revenues. Some good observations were made on ways to reach beekeepers in the Winnipeg area. If you have other ideas, please let us know.

The group extended a hearty "thanks" to the organizers of the combined beekeepers picnic last June. This primarily goes to organizer Phil Veldhuis, and the cook, Art Bergman.

Hopefully many of you will attend the Manitoba Beekeepers Association Convention on February 3 & 4, 2003, at the Victoria Inn, Brandon. Lots of great topics planned. The panel discussion is always interesting also.

There was a suggestion to include the costs for joining MBA in our newsletter. Be sure to look for the insert. Any one can join for basic fee of \$50 plus 20 cents per colony fee. If you don't care about voting, the fee is only \$25.

Our favorite past time is fast approaching--- TAX Time. I do my preparations on a program called "Quick Tax". This program includes sheets for both Farming and other Business. I love the planning tool, which lets me see tax figures for various options I am considering. Happy filing!!!!

Hope you can attend our 11 February meeting!

Jim Campbell

**Red River Apiarists' Association
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
January 14, 2001**

The **regular meeting** of the Red River Apiarists' Association, held at the River Heights Community Club on Jan. 14, 2003 with 17 members and guests present, was called to order by Jim Campbell at 7:35 PM.

Minutes:

Ron Rudiak read the minutes of the Nov. 12 meeting. Moved by Gilles Lantagne and seconded by Dennis Ross that the minutes be accepted as read. Carried.

Financial Report:

Copies of the 2002 financial statement were distributed to all members present. Jim Campbell read and discussed the statement of operations for the year. Moved by Herb Schon and seconded by Ken Fehler that the statement of operations be accepted. Carried.

It was noted that the amount of money in the bank was less than last year. It was generally agreed that we, as an association, need to find ways to increase the bank balance.

Some suggestions from the floor:

Revenue from membership fees is less than in the year 2001. It was suggested that the RRAA could increase membership dues or, preferably, increase membership by soliciting all beekeepers within the Winnipeg and surrounding area.

We should, again, pick up some members from the beekeeping course at the University of Manitoba. All students qualify for a complimentary membership for the first year by filling out an application form.

We may have to cut back on the amount of money donated to bee research.

Have the membership submit ideas for generating new revenue in order to maintain or expand the current level of service.

Create a promotional brochure to attract potential beekeepers who visit our display at the honey show etc.

Provide information on how to become a beekeeper on our web site with links to CHC, MBA and other beekeeping sites.

Make a membership application form available on our web site.

2002 Picnic and Field Day

Whereas: The MBA Picnic and Field Day was enjoyed by everyone who attended, therefore be it resolved to recognize those beekeepers and their families who worked very hard to ensure a successful event, especially the Phil Veldhuis and Art Bergman families. Moved by Russell Martin and seconded by Herb Schon. Carried.

40th Anniversary Celebration:

The membership indicated that an evening wine and cheese event would be appropriate. Donations for cost recovery might be a good way to pay for the celebration. One really nice raffle prize for this event was suggested eg. a hanging basket or equivalent item.

Produce a recipe booklet.

Election Committee: Ron Rudiak gave the report for Rhéal Lafrenière, Fred Jones and Dan Gass.

The nominees who agreed to let their names stand for election were, as follows:

President - Jim Campbell, Newsletter - Doug Henry, 1st Vice President - Heather Laird, Honey Show Committee - Albert Anderson & Charles Polcyn, 2nd Vice President - Gilles Lantagne, Entertainment Committee - Chris Argeriou & Ken Fehler, Secretary - Ron Rudiak, Reporter - Ron Rudiak, Treasurer - Dennis Ross, MBA Representative - Jim Campbell. No further nominations were received from the floor. All nominees were declared elected.

Beekeeping for Dummies

Murray Porter informed us that this book is

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available at McNally Robinson Booksellers in the Grant Park Shopping Centre. It is very well written, thorough and reasonably priced.

Loonie Draw:

Wayne Proudlove provided small glass jars of honey packed for Austrian and French restaurants. Each person entering the loonie draw got to take home a sample of this beautiful honey.

Meeting Adjourned

Ron Rudiak (Secretary - RRAA)

Scheduled Presentation:

A friendly get-together over Red River Apiarists Association 40th Anniversary cake and coffee. The Dennis Ross family also provided a variety of baked dainties for our members and guests to enjoy.

Gadget Night Stimulates Ideas for Others

As a yearly event, the Red River Apiarists Association holds a "gadget" night. For this evening, members are invited to bring along any type of item they have purchased, borrowed or invented. The evening provided time for them to describe the purpose and result of using the item. Some stories relate to failures, while others detail successes. All stories stimulate other beekeepers to ask questions, and sometimes tell their own stories. During 2002, the October meeting was dedicated to gadgets. The stories are here for your information, as reported by Ron Rudiak.

I find Gadget Night, as a meeting topic, always entertaining and educational. Beekeepers invent things, improve other gadgets or buy the latest items from beekeeping catalogues. Some things work, as planned, other items can be a disappointment. Home built beekeeping items usually work very well and some are a work in progress. Improvements sometimes need to be

made a step at a time until the piece of equipment reaches the stage of maturity where no further changes are required.

Insulated Plastic Hive a Success

Javad Niazi, about 5 years ago, recognized the need for an improved Langstroth hive. In Western Canada insulation is usually applied by wrapping the outside of the hive for wintering. Winter preparation is an expensive and time-consuming process that might be eliminated if hives were provisioned adequately with built-in insulation. Spring unwrapping is often done when the beekeeper needs his time to do other work. Hives have to be unwrapped for feeding and inspection in the early spring. After these early spring hive manipulations are completed, the wrap must be replaced to maintain warmth for early brood rearing. Wraps or cardboard covers have to be kept in good repair or replaced when no further repairs are possible. Winter wraps, bulky and dusty, require a lot of space for storage when they are not being used.

Javad has designed his insulated hives using extruded plastic material. The panels are easily cut to size with an ordinary table saw. Each corner is fastened together using a plastic 90 degree angle held with screw nails. Insulation can be either injected into the hollow plastic panels or pieces of Styrofoam insulation inserted into the holes before assembly. There is no need for paint because the plastic supers shed moisture and do not deteriorate in the sun and rain. The completed boxes are lighter than wood and easily as strong.

The bottom boards are built from a similar plastic material and may be used as a hive top as well. The regular plastic hive cover is made with a top entrance for winter ventilation built in. During the winter there is no accumulation of moisture inside the hive. All supers fit tightly together and any small openings become sealed with propolis. The inside of the hive is smooth and easy to clean when wax and propolis accu-

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mulate. Javad winters his bees outdoors in this equipment with good colony survival.

Fred Jones Experience With Insulated Brood Chambers

Fred Jones, from Portage la Prairie, demonstrated an insulated brood chamber. Fred bought these boxes already built by another beekeeper a few years ago. He likes many things about these brood chambers, but one problem keeps him from continuing to use them. They are built slightly larger in order to provide space for insulation between the hive walls and still use 10 standard frames. The material has been cut up from camper shell panels. Both outside and inside are pre-finished at the factory and require no further painting. Two bands of strapping hold the sturdy boxes together. Simple but effective. Fred says that they are great for over wintering. Another minor problem is that the insulation is exposed to the bees within the hive because the regular box does not completely cover the Styrofoam. Honeybees seem to enjoy chewing up insulation or anything else softer than wood.

Fred has gone back to using standard boxes for his brood chambers and intends to divide his insulated supers into two for use as nuc boxes. Small, four or five-frame, colonies build up much faster when they don't lose a lot of the heat they produce. Brood patterns are larger and do not suffer, as readily, the consequences of cold spells in the spring. If the cold weather continues for too long, the bees cannot cover the brood and much of the brood will perish.

Over wintering - Why Bees Sometimes Run Out of Food

An adequate supply of honey or syrup is one of the primary requirements for successful over wintering indoors or out. It can be discouraging when we feed our bees in the fall, the hive weight seems adequate, but we find honeybee

starvation when we do our spring checks. It is possible that the brood combs, which we see as perfectly good, are in fact just too old for the job. It has been shown that the cells become smaller as each succession of brood leaves their cocoons within the combs. These smaller cells produce smaller bees and are able to hold less stored food.

Recently, Ted Scheuneman weighed several new brood combs (empty) and found that the weight is usually between 350 - 400 grams. When he weighed older and very dark combs, the weight was between 600 - 850 grams. The weight increase is due to cell walls that have become thickened with cast off cocoons and added beeswax. If we use a super filled entirely with old combs it will hold 10 - 12 lbs. less feed than a box of new brood frames. The two boxes, filled with feed and weighing the same, will differ in the amount of stores they contain. 10 - 12 lbs. of stored feed can mean the difference between wintering a live colony and starving one that has become severely weakened. Besides being a reservoir for bee diseases, old combs should be replaced to ensure that our bees have the maximum amount of feed available for the winter.

Moving Bees - Keeping It All Together

The last presentation was made by your reporter and secretary, me. When we started using screened bottoms this gave us another reason to give up the use of hive staples. Besides making the equipment hard to take apart for reversing brood chambers or cleaning the bottom boards, staples gouge holes in the wood, giving moisture yet another entry to begin dry rot.

Several years ago we decided to try using hive straps to hold everything together. I was given a box of 25 or so sets of steel pieces that had been used with metal banding for moving beehives. The well-made, galvanized, steel pieces originally came from Australia and were in perfect

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condition. I bought some nylon webbing material to use with them instead of steel strapping. They worked very well, but because there were two loose pieces making up the tightener mechanism this system was not great for night moves. I was always looking for dropped parts with a flashlight.

I found a few nylon straps, 10 feet long, with friction buckles at a Canadian Tire Store. They worked fairly well but were hard to get really tight. Nylon straps tend to loosen and should be re-tightened at least once to maintain tension. Princess Machine on Panet Rd. in Winnipeg sells ratchets for nylon strapping. I bought another dozen or so and picked up more nylon strapping. The local shoe repair shop sewed the straps onto the ratchets for me. The best ratchets to use are the, more expensive, black powder-coated ones. The lighter duty, gold colored ratchets bend easily and are difficult to release.

When we move bees, a ratchet strap is first placed on top of each hive. We light the smoker, then go back and slip the straps underneath the hive then tighten them up. The straps will accommodate single box hives or two or three story hives. They are strong enough to hold everything together even if the hive is dropped from the height of the truck deck. The bees, though, will still get very upset.

Queen Catcher

Another useful item is a queen catcher. I always carry one in the truck and keep a few in the extracting building. This device resembles a hair clip. Several holes, cut in the sides, are the same dimension as a queen excluder. Queen catchers are readily available from most of the bee equipment suppliers. In use, the queen catcher is held open and placed over the queen on a brood frame. The catcher is allowed to close slowly in order to avoid damaging the queen. She will remain trapped inside the queen catcher that should quickly be placed into an ice

cream pail or margarine container (no lid) in the shade of the hive. This keeps the queen out of the heat of the direct sun while the plastic container prevents the queen from becoming lost in the grass in the event she is able to crawl through the holes in the catcher. Expect that worker bees will join her in the cage. This is normal.

Honey Bee Importation a Hot Topic **By Ron Rudiak**

Honey bee importation from Continental United States has not been permitted for more than a dozen years, when the border was first closed because of the discovery of parasitic mites (i.e. Varroa and tracheal mites) on bees in the United States. Since this time, bee importation has been allowed from only a few sources, New Zealand*, Australia**, and Hawaii***, which until recently were all considered parasitic mite free. Because of Global Trade, these mites are now found in nearly all countries that use honey bees for food production and pollination including Canada.

Because of long distance shipping and major climatic and seasonal differences, bees and queens from New Zealand and Australia are sometimes criticized for not being suited for honey production and wintering on the Canadian prairies. Due to long distance shipping costs, package bees from New Zealand and Australia are also comparatively expensive.

Some Canadian beekeepers are in favour of removing the US bee importation ban. They believe US bees are better suited for honey production, overwintering, and are better adapted to our problems, such as parasitic mites than bees from Downunder. They believe that importing bees from the continental US is more profitable and is the key to keeping the Canadian honey industry viable. Other beekeepers disagree, saying that the risks are too high for

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spreading pests and diseases that are not found or considered widespread in Canada. They also question the notion of increased profitability. Canadian beekeepers have been successfully producing honey and overwintering their bees since the border was closed to US bee importation and continue to be a viable and profitable industry.

In Canada, beekeepers generally do not practice migratory beekeeping (i.e. move bees from coast to coast or from the southern border to the northern border) like many of our American counterparts, therefore the spread of the mites across the country has been much slower. Despite the slow spread, currently, almost all parts of Canada are having to deal with these destructive pests. Treatment-resistant bee diseases and resistant parasitic mites continue to be a major problem to North American beekeepers. Apistan® (fluvalinate) strips have been used in the US and Canada to control varroa mites, which now, are becoming increasingly resistant to this chemical.

Subsequently, CheckMite+™ (coumaphos) strips which received emergency registration in the US several years ago, are also becoming increasingly ineffective for controlling these destructive parasites. At this time, we have not had to deal with Africanized (killer) bees and the small hive beetle has only recently made its appearance in Manitoba. The small hive beetle came to Manitoba in a shipment of beeswax cappings, brought in from Texas, for rendering into purified beeswax. This beetle is extremely destructive! When small hive beetles infest bee hives they create conditions so bad that the bees will pack up and leave. Beetle larvae living in stored honey boxes quickly render that equipment unsanitary and unfit for use.

It is still uncertain how devastating this pest will be to the honey bee industry in Canada, but it is reported that it can become a serious pest in honey extracting facilities if not properly con-

trolled. In the United States, CheckMite+™ is recommended for the control of the small hive beetle in honey bee hives and GardStar® 40% EC, (40% Permethrin), a soil drench treatment for the control of beetles (i.e. larvae and pupae) in the soil around the hives. Coumaphos and Permethrin are not registered in Canada for small hive beetle control. Currently coumaphos has been granted an Emergency Use Registration in Manitoba for the control of fluvalinate-resistant varroa mites and Permethrin is the primary active ingredient in 214 products already registered in Canada.

In order to increase colony number and/or replace colonies that have died over winter, many Canadian beekeepers routinely start up many small colonies of bees during the summer, which will not be used for honey production that year, but rather allowed to develop into a full sized colonies for the next honey production season. These small colonies which are referred to as “nucs” can also be sold to other beekeepers for a profit.

Another procedure regularly used to increase colony numbers or replace colonies that have died over the winter is to use the surplus bees from successfully overwintered colonies to create new colonies. For example imported queens from either NZ, Australia, or Hawaii are used to head up bees taken from overwintered colonies. These new hives are relatively inexpensive to produce and certainly cost significantly less than purchasing commercial packages of bees from New Zealand or Australia.

Importation of US bees and queens would certainly increase the rate of spreading disease and pest across Canada. Given the development of resistance to coumaphos and fluvalinate, the only other registered chemical for varroa mite control is formic acid. Beekeepers are reluctant to use this product because of its unpredictable nature and potential for causing queen failure. Importing bees from Continental United States

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would also carry the risk of bringing in Africanized (Killer) bees.

Using Africanized bee stock in Canada would make other farmers reluctant to allow placement of bee hives on their property even though they know the value of pollination on their flowering crops. Lawsuits have taken place in the US because of such stinging incidents resulting in a monetary loss for the beekeeper, aggravation for the crop grower and much bad publicity for the industry.

There is some scientific evidence that indicates the Africanized strain of honey bee become less aggressive in the cooler northern latitudes. However, we are uncertain at this time, how much our Canadian climate will warm up due to overall global weather changes.

Many of the older beekeepers who imported bees before the ban can remember getting great production from their package colonies but also remember getting less than stellar performance from other truck loads of packages.

Some beekeepers are looking at bee breeding for a more permanent solution to production and pest management problems. As they search for desirable characteristics within their own hives, they are finding some colonies of bees which are largely resistant to the attacks of the parasitic mites in addition to being good honey producers with good wintering abilities. This quest for stock improvement has resulted in the formation of many small queen bee breeding groups. These groups who are successfully breeding selected lines of bees with good results are now getting together to form associations, such as the Manitoba Queen Breeders Association.

* New Zealand, once a source of mite-free bees, is now dealing with the same species of varroa mite found in Canada. After a short ban on New Zealand importations, Canada lifted the

restrictions and queens and packages continue to be brought in.

** The small hive beetle has recently been found in two areas in Australia.

*** Hawaii is a source of honey bee queens. They provide no shipments of package bees.

RRAA Celebrates 40 Years

Party Time! What a way to start the year you might say. Well, my response is that it's time to celebrate our heritage, rejoice in our present, and refocus for our future. Mostly however, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Red River Apiarists Association during 2003.

During January 1963, the Provincial Apiarist and Entomologist, Don Robertson, sent out letters suggesting the formation of a Greater-Winnipeg Beekeepers Association. This resulted in an organizational meeting on March 26, 1963, where Don outlined the benefits of forming an association. The main ones centred on buying package bees, exchanging ideas with one another, and organizing field days.

The first Executive consisted of:

Chairman	Bill Brace
Vice Chairman	Nick Olnick
Secretary	D. Smith
Treasurer	D. Loudin
Executive Members	E. Loginski, H. Oldenberg, and S.P. Donkin

At the April 1, 1963 Executive meeting, committees were formulated, including Education, Entertainment, Field Day, and others. The first Regular Meeting held April 16, 1963 followed this. At this meeting the constitution of the "Red River Apiarists Association" was adopted by the 35 people present. At this time member-

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As the organization grew, meetings moved. Locations included church basements, school classrooms, library boardrooms, lecture theatres, etc. Membership in the RRAA peaked at 250 during 1983, when 1,100 packages of bees were distributed to members at a cost of \$25.75. Member fees were \$10.00 with about 90 people attending each meeting. Mites in the USA prevented importation of their bees during 1986. This affected beekeeping and several people quit the practice.

In 2003, we still uphold the basic principles of the organization to provide education, equipment, and entertainment for all members. As specific dates come by, we will be recognizing our heritage.

Jim Campbell, Chair RRAA

Around our Country

The industry has been under pressure from several sources to permit bees to be brought into Canada from the USA. The border has been closed for several years to reduce the spread of disease and pests into our bee yards. This has served us well by at least slowing down this spread.

Alberta Beekeepers Association (ABA) hired a consultant to do a risk assessment on this issue. The report was to be available by 24 January. However when I visited the ABA office on Friday, no report had been issued. In addition, the consultants had not advised of any preliminary findings, nor of any date the final document would be released.

In other areas, ABA has surveyed its members about the need for non-family workers. One question looked ahead to predict worker needs for years 2006 and 2008. Other sections asked

about training for people entering the workforce. MBA has dealt with the need for workers by linking in with Canadian Honey Council approaching the Fed's.

ABA has also surveyed members for feedback on use of technology and software to remotely monitor bee yards. This survey also attempted to identify specific activities to be monitored. Some of the questions alluded to future requirements such as monitoring "Queen right" colonies, watering systems, and even disease testing.

Jim Campbell

Items for Sale

For Sale: Sears Craftsman 10" Table Saw with Stand, in good working order: \$125.00 or best offer. Call Ted Scheuneman at 338-6066.

For Sale: Planed Spruce Boards, 7/8 inch x10 inch x8 ft long, price \$0.80 per foot, will cut to any size required. Contact Dennis Ross at 878-2924.

RED RIVER APIARIST'S ASSOC. 2001 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Please complete and mail with your cheque, for \$20.00, payable to: The Red River Apiarists' Association.

Mail to: **Red River Apiarist's Association**
Dennis Ross, treasurer,
Box 10 Group 125, RR#1,
Vermette, Mb,
R0G 2W0

NAME: _____ PHONE NO. _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____ E-MAIL _____

POSTAL CODE: _____ NEW MEMBER [] RENEWAL []

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THANK YOU
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