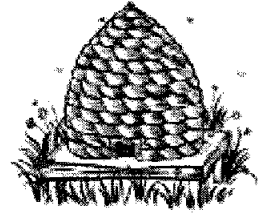


# The Bee Cause



Volume 5, Issue 6

September 2008

## Summer Extension Report

### Points of Interest:

- Next general meeting is 7:30 Tuesday, September 9th at the River Heights Community Centre, 1370 Grosvenor Ave., Winnipeg.

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- David Ostermann (Manitoba Agriculture Food & Rural Initiatives)

### Winter/Spring Reports

The completed survey results received to date indicate that winter losses were higher than normal this past winter (results are still coming in). On average, 22% of the 81,000 colonies put into winter last fall died over winter and an addition 6% died or were used for other colonies, for a total of 28% colony losses. The spring was unusually cool or cold which made build-up more difficult and effectively culled the weaker hives, and there are reports that colony build-up is about 1-2 weeks behind normal. Generally it is felt that losses of around 20% can be made up by splitting the strong hives, but losses above that are difficult to manage, especially when the spring weather doesn't cooperate or when they occur on a more regular basis. Last year, Manitoba colony losses were also high (29%). Typically, colony loss in Manitoba is in the range of 15% - 25%. Throughout Canada, losses this year are estimated at almost twice as high as normal (capabees.ca). The Canadian Honey Council (CHC) is currently lobbying for

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## MANITOBA HONEY SHOW OCTOBER 3-5, 2008

The 2008 Manitoba Honey Show is slated for the first weekend of October at The Forks market, Winnipeg.

The Show will include the standard entries as in past years. Classes include Liquid, Granulated, Chunk, Comb, Buckwheat, etc. Jars of Honey are to be the 500g (350ml) glass containers. Two jars for each entry.

Regulations and entry form are on [www.manitobabee.org](http://www.manitobabee.org).

A special feature this year will be a cooking demonstration by our very own "chef" John. In addition, all RRAA members are invited to bring two jars of a floral specific honey for the "Colours of Manitoba" display.

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**Summer Extension Report**

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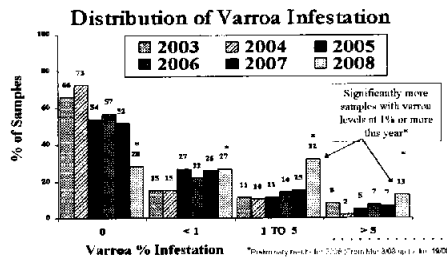


Fig. 1. MAFRI Apiculture Diagnostics Lab preliminary results show varroa levels higher this year (2008). Figure includes results of 202 samples from 102 Manitoba producers.

financial assistance for the Canadian beekeeping industry in response to the higher losses.

**Varroa Control – What’s Working (and What’s Not)**

So far bee samples processed at the Apiculture Diagnostics Lab this year indicate that varroa levels in Manitoba are significantly higher than normal (Fig. 1). This is perhaps not surprising as we’ve seen widespread resistance to Apistan® (fluvalinate) and Check-Mite+™ (coumaphos) throughout most of the province. In particular, the problem of CheckMite+™ resistance (i.e. where varroa control is poor or variable) appears to have increased significantly this year. This is obviously a major concern, and in some cases high varroa levels was the main reason for a lower crop last year and high winter loss this year.

Fig. 1. MAFRI Apiculture Diagnostics Lab preliminary results show varroa levels higher this year (2008). Figure includes results of 202 samples from 102 Manitoba producers.

When varroa resistance is present it may be varied and scattered throughout an operation where some hives have fully resistant mites and others have mites that are not, as well as everything in between. It is advisable that no treatments should be used ‘blindly’, without following up on the results at some point. Alternating strips (i.e. Apistan®, CheckMite+™, Apistan®...) is not the answer and assuming so can be devastating. Even if you’ve never used Apistan® or Check-Mite+™ don’t assume that they’ll work on your mites; it is amazing how efficiently these mites (resistant or otherwise) spread. Formic acid and oxalic acid treatments have been found to reduce mite levels, and there is no resistance to

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**Varroa Down Under**

From Alan Harman

Varroa destructor has spread throughout Papua New Guinea, raising the chances that it will make it to Australia, the last major honey-producing country still free of the mite.

Researcher Denis Anderson of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization tells the Australian Broadcasting Corp. the mite has taken over in Papua New Guinea.

"We actually found the mite near Port Moresby in bee colonies and also down at Lae, and they're two coastal ports where

there's a lot of ship traffic between PNG and Australia," he says. "So it dramatically increases the risk of it getting to Australia."

Elsewhere, another hive of Asian honeybees has been found in Far North Queensland, the eighth on the last 12 months.

The strain of Asian honeybee doesn't carry Varroa mite, but Cairns beekeeper Morrie Damon tells the Australian ABC they are still a threat.

"They're a very aggressive forager and when they become established in an area they will tend to display other native bees and Apis Mellifera, the Italian honeybee," he says

## President's Report

The summer is on its way out with a number of hot days finally and prospects of a good fall ahead. A variety of challenges have taken place this summer for beekeepers, with many cool days, high moisture levels and flowers not blooming on a normal schedule.

When the honey crop started to come in late July or early August, the honey crop looked good in many areas with overflowing supers filled with honey. How late this honey flow will last into September always poses a variety of questions for the beekeeper. How long do I keep collecting honey? Is there a trade off between late collecting of honey and preparing the bees for cooler weather and winter? When do I start preparing the bees for winter with syrup feeding, medication and varroa treatments?

What are the current varroa levels in my hives? How do I sample the varroa population number to determine a treatment plan that will be effective? How do I avoid the high winter losses of 2007/2008 that occurred over much of the province?

Some of these questions and others will be dealt with at our September 9th meeting as one of the Provincial Apiarists will be the main speaker. A good meeting to attend for sure.

And a reminder that the Manitoba Honey Show is scheduled for October 3rd to the 5th at The Forks. Try to enter the Honey Competition this year and also bring in two jars of special honey for the Colours of Manitoba display at the Forks. Free 375 ml glass jars for entries and the colours of Manitoba Display will be available at our September meeting as well as at the supply order desk at Bee Maid. Let us try to have a bigger display than last year!!! Also remember to volunteer for an information shift of 3 to 4 hours at the Honey Show. A voucher for a snack at one of the Forks' many food vendors will be provided to each volunteer who completes a shift.

Being part of the Provincial Bee Inspection team this spring was a good opportunity for me to meet a lot of other beekeepers and discuss issues common to all of us. One of the common themes was that varroa mite numbers seem to

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## Summer Extension Report

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these acids, but they must be used according to specific instructions which can be difficult at times. Also, whereas hives may have been treated for varroa every 12-18 months in the past (e.g. Check-Mite+™), now treatments may be needed every 6-12 months (e.g. Mite-Away II™). Some producers have tried new formic acid or oxalic acid treatments on a smaller scale (i.e. hives or yard) before taking them to a larger scale (i.e. whole operation).

Perhaps more than ever before, it's important to be vigilant about monitoring and treating for varroa and dealing with the problems that we know of in our hives. We know that varroa is bad on its own at relatively low levels, but even more so when levels are high and/or when other diseases or stresses are present. When varroa levels are high, realize that it may be very difficult, if not impossible, to reduce it to uneconomical levels, and it is very possible that damage to the bees may be done and irreversible. Therefore, it is critical to regularly monitor and effectively manage the levels.

Monitoring is certainly a valuable tool these days. Information on how to monitor can be found in the annual "Recommendations" mailed to every active registered beekeeper in Manitoba each year, and from the Provincial Apiculture Office at 945-3861 or 945-4825. It is also available online at <http://manitobabee.org/bulletin/archives/2008recommendations.rtf>. Bee samples can be submitted to the Apiculture Diagnostics Lab year-round, the earlier the better. After all, knowing that your levels are high on May 15th is much better than knowing on June 15th, for example.

Where producers are using formic acid, there are some reports of less than desirable or mixed results which may be attributable to poor weather conditions (e.g. too cold). For this reason fall treatments may be more difficult, and in cases where mite levels have been building up all season and are high, the damage to the bees may already be extensive and irreversible. Therefore start early and be sure to follow the instructions closely and realize that this may require significant planning and working around (e.g. to get in a full treatment under optimal temperatures/conditions). Also, keep in mind that beneficial short term treatments may be limited in their level of control, where mite levels may bounce back relatively easily, as opposed to longer term treatments (e.g. 3-6 weeks) which may provide a more sustained treatment.

Main points:

- Early results from the Apiculture Diagnostics Lab indicate that varroa levels are significantly higher this year
- Resistance to Apistan® and CheckMite+™ is widespread and growing throughout Manitoba, which means that these products are providing poor or variable control and putting colonies at serious risk if they are not monitored for treatment efficacy
- When varroa levels get high, irreversible damage to the colony may occur, and even following treatment, high levels may be difficult to reduce to uneconomical levels

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## Red River Apiarists' Association Minutes of the General Meeting May 13, 2008

Charles Polcyn welcomed everyone (20) to the April RRAA meeting at the River Heights Community Centre. Charles said that the Manitoba Honey Co-Op has some extra queens for sale.

**Minutes:** Moved by Walter Wright and seconded by George Chwist to accept the minutes as circulated with the Bee Cause. Carried

**MBA Updates:** Jim reported that the Manitoba Beekeepers' Association had met with Ms Rosanne Wowchuck, Minister of Agriculture for the province of Manitoba. Our annual inspection program is confirmed for one more year. Inspectors may have to adjust inspection intervals according to the disease history of the operations being inspected. This should not adversely affect the disease incidence in the province. This year the inspection program is under the direction of David Ostermann.

The beekeeping Centre of Excellence was also discussed with Ms. Wowchuck.

Hopefully, West Nile virus will not be an issue this summer. Rhéal Lafrenière has discussed this matter with representatives from Manitoba Health. A major outbreak could require aerial spraying and consequent loss of honey bee colonies. At that time assessments would be made and individuals with unusual losses may need disaster recovery assistance.

Also discussed with the Ag Minister was bee health, food safety and the need for additional research into the causes of CCD which has been causing major colony losses in the US.

The Minister was also invited to attend the celebration of the bee display opening at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

**RRAA/MBA Field Day:** The combined beekeeping field day will be held on Friday, June 27th at the Mennonite Heritage Village. Field day activities begin at noon and include a tour of the "History of Beekeeping in Western Canada" display and lunch at the Livery Barn restaurant. The cost is \$16.00 for admission and lunch.

**Program:** Sam Barlin from Canadian Food Inspection Agency gave an informative presentation on how unwanted traces of lead could be introduced into honey from galvanized equipment, paint and solder containing lead. Reusing offshore juice barrels has caused problems with lead contamination in the past. He also discussed the Federal Government's Honey

House Regulations and the Canadian on Farm Food Safety (COFFS ) program for honey.

**Loonie Draw:** The following members won items in the loonie draw. Albert Anderson, Emil Rekrut and Walter Wright won red hats, Gerry Bobij won the book "A Recipe for Bees", Ken Rowes won the top cover, and Helen Grysiuk won the feeder jars.

Ron Rudiak, Secretary RRAA

## Red River Apiarists' Association Executive Meeting - August 12, 2008

Salisbury House (Corner of Bishop Grandin and Pembina Highway)

In attendance: Charles Polcyn, John Russell, Jim Campbell and Ron Rudiak. Charles opened the meeting at 5:30 PM

- I. Honey Show - 2008: The Manitoba Beekeepers' Honey Show has been arranged with the Forks Events Coordinator and will be held on October 3rd, 4th and 5th in the same location as last year.

Arrangements have been made for food samples to be given out to spectators at the cooking demonstrations this year.

In keeping with food trends and popular promotions we will use the same theme as last year "Honey Less Traveled".

Show competition details, categories and entry form to be sent to Jack Lee (BC editor).

Notifications are needed for newspapers, community billboard etc.

Jim Campbell will contact Roland Sawatzky for PDF's of selected story boards from the MHV Museum beekeeping display for use at the Honey Show.

Volunteers will be needed for the display areas. Incentives were discussed.

Vendors: Charles Polcyn, Ron Rudiak, and Ray & Donna Hound

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Prize Ribbons: Dennis Ross to be notified

12 tables will be required for sales and displays.

Andrea Clow is the Forks Event Coordinator.

RRAA information contacts that will be listed on the beekeeping brochure are David Ostermann, John Russell and Ron Rudiak.

Equipment display (contact Bee Maid), Colors of Manitoba (Jim will contact MBA Board)

2. September Meeting: Room for Sept. 9th. Need to notify John Speer (and RHCC).
3. Meeting Topics: September - David Ostermann "Varroa Reduction Program", fall feeding and disease prevention.

October 14th - Dr Currie on Fumigating Packages

November 10th (Monday) or 12th (Wednesday) - RRAA 45th anniversary celebration. Location to be selected.

December - No meeting scheduled.

January 13th - Elections and topic for presentation to be selected.

4. RRAA Bylaws: Jim Campbell and Jack Lee are in the process of updating the RRAA constitution. Copies of the updated document will be circulated to all members. A discussion and vote will be required to put the recommended changes into effect.
5. 2008 Honey Prices: \$2.50/lb in customers container (MBA).
6. Varroa Infection Levels: Perhaps David Ostermann could provide information on areas in Manitoba where varroa mites have become resistant to conventional treatments.
7. Other Business: Newsletter - deadline for submissions Monday, August 25th. The Bee Cause should be in the mail on the 29th of August.

Ron Rudiak - Secretary

# Anthony's Law of Force

Don't force it; get a larger hammer.

*Murphy's Law (and other reasons why things go **SWORM** Pp 44.*

## Presidents Comments

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be growing, and that neither the white or brown miticide strips have much effect any more. The varroa mites have become very tolerant to both of them either due to our continual use over 3 to 5 years, or by inappropriate use by the beekeeper who didn't follow the directions on the package.

The easy varroa mite control program using the strips is over in most of Canada and North America. The strips are now ineffective as a good mite control. The mites have evolved and are able to tolerate the chemicals in the strips. There is another chemical control from Europe and South America called Amitraz that may be approved for use in Canada, but it is not yet available here.

Beekeepers have to change some of their mite control practices using an Integrated Pest Management program. You need to know when to treat, how to treat using Formic or Oxalic Acids or ???, and then monitoring the effectiveness of your treatment.

Beehives going into winter with high mite loads will be stressed and subject to a variety of other possible diseases. This leads to unhealthy situa-

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*We are on the web!*  
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The Bee Cause is the official publication of the Red River Apiarist Association for distribution to its members and their colleagues in the beekeeping industry. It is published eight times a year on a monthly basis excepting December and the summer months of June, July, and August when membership meetings do not occur.

Articles can be best submitted in HTML or RTF formats as email attachments. Though they may be edited for spelling and basic grammar, no changes will be made to their contents, message and opinions. They are those of their originator and not of the Red River Apiarist Association.

Deadline for any submission to this newsletter is the second Saturday preceding the membership meeting to allow for publishing and mailing delays. Regular membership meetings are normally scheduled 7:30 PM on the second Tuesday of every month at the River Heights Community Centre located at 1370 Grosvenor Avenue in Winnipeg except the months as noted above.

The Red River Apiarist Association, formed in 1963, represents the beekeepers of the Red River Valley and environs in southern Manitoba. The association provides a forum for the promotion of sound beekeeping practices through education, networking opportunities, meetings, field days, workshops, presentations by local apicultural experts, as well as the dissemination of this monthly newsletter.

## Summer Extension Report

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- Formic acid and oxalic acid treatments reduce mite levels and must be used precisely according to their specific instructions in order to achieve optimal mite control and minimal bee impact
- Monitoring varroa levels helps to ensure a treatment is effective and is a valuable tool
- Early monitoring or sampling in preparation of treatment allows for optimal timing of full treatments under more optimal (temperature) conditions

### Nosema, Tracheal Mite & AFB

While nosema and tracheal mite continue to be concerns for producers, the preliminary results for this year suggest that their levels are more in-line with recent years. Compared to last year, the percentage of samples with high levels of nosema appears to be down somewhat while high levels of tracheal mite are up somewhat. At this time nosema analysis is not determined to species (*Nosema apis* / *N. ceranae*). Incidences of AFB found through the inspection program also appear to be similar or lower compared to last year, with no new cases of rAFB (oxytetracycline-resistant AFB). Please note that these results are preliminary.

For more information contact David at 945-3861.

## Presidents Comments

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tions in the hives which likely result in the rapidly rising higher winter losses that beekeepers are reporting all over Canada. We need to develop a serious VARROA REDUCTION PROGRAM that beekeepers can use with confidence and begin to rebuild the beekeeping industry.

There are some interesting programs coming for the fall RRAA meetings. There will be as well, a gala 45th Birthday Celebration in November of the Red River Apiarists Association which had its humble beginnings in 1963! Watch your newsletters for more information as well as announcements at the September and October meetings.

I am hoping that you are finishing up with much honey in your containers, and that it has been a good summer for all of you.

All the best- Charles Polcyn -- RRAA President