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BEEKEEPER NEWSLETTER

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## 2012 Season

This year's pollination weather was the best in years, last year's was the worst in years, yet it is unlikely that the 2012 almond crop will exceed last year's record 2600#/acre.

## 2013 Season

We are increasing prices next year, in spite of the bee surplus this year. We will face more competition in 2013 because beekeepers that got shut out of almonds this year will be offering cut-rate deals to growers. Our growers will be prime targets for other beekeepers- as they have always been- since price is still a major consideration for all almond growers.

The only way we can maintain price is to (continue to) deliver a quality product. Although our agreement with you specifies a minimum of 8 frames, we expect more than that (*thanks!*). The overall strength of the colonies you deliver stands at well over 10 frames. We haven't gotten into bonus payments for 10+ frame colonies because I don't feel the extra inspection time for such colonies is warranted.

We did get into a bonus payment about 10 years ago, but found that only a few growers were willing to pay the premium price for 10+ frames, and those that stuck with the 8-frame bees wound up with 10-framers anyway.

One thing we will be clamping down on in 2013 is on the few (one or two) of you that throw in sub-par colonies in order to make an 8-frame average. I realize that a 2% queen loss can be expected every time a load of bees is moved, but **all** colonies should be 8+ frames when you deliver them.

If you buy a case of fumagillin (or Honey-B-Healthy, or whatever) and find that one or more containers is only half full, you're upset, and rightfully so. When we show your bees to growers, they are also upset when they see a half-full box and they let us know about it in no uncertain terms.

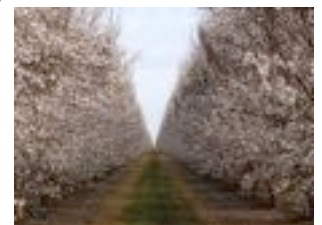
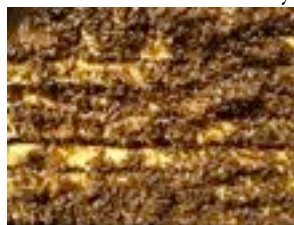
## 2013 (continued)

If you wish to bring bees to us in 2013, please fill out the enclosed slip and return it to us at your earliest convenience so that we can commence plans for 2013. Please do **not** return the slip unless you plan to deliver all 8+ frame bees to us.

I realize that you have to budget for fall feeding in order to come up with quality amonged bees. We plan to notify you by August of the number of colonies needed for 2013.

## Almond Acreage

Depending on the source, almond acreage will either increase from the current 800,000 acres to over a million acres within a few years or will remain static. Those that favor expansion make a good case: growing demand for almonds, esp. from China and India, will keep almond prices at profitable levels. Those that feel acreage will remain static also make a good case: there's not a lot of suitable almond ground left, and much of it will be planted to grapes (currently in good demand). Grapes have a much lower water requirement than almonds (32"/year vs. 42" for almonds) an important consideration in water-short California and esp. on the water-short westside where we're already seeing almond acreage being converted to wine grapes. In the Sacramento Valley, almond ground is being planted to walnuts (prices for **all** nuts are very good). Walnuts in the San Joaquin Valley are subject to kernel browning (from high summer temperatures) so we won't see many walnut plantings in our area. The big factor favoring increased almond plantings remains that there are not that many areas in the world where almonds can be successfully grown. I'm surprised at the current robust health of wine grapes as wine grapes can be grown in every state of the union and in every country in the world.



## **Congratulations to Stewart & Lynda Resnick!!**

This dynamic duo finally cracked the <sup>Type to enter text</sup> ~~Forbes~~ Billionaire list (March 26 issue). They may not have achieved this lofty perch without an assist from beekeepers since a major portion of their wealth is derived from their vast almond holdings.

## **Paramount Beekeepers Urged to Support Research**

Perhaps in celebration of the Resnicks achieving billionaire status, Paramount Farms (with a major assist from Gordon Wardell) paid record pollination fees this year. Via their bonus program, most Paramount beekeepers will receive over \$160/colony and many will get the top rate of \$165/col. Paramount beekeepers can now afford to donate 1\$/colony for bee research, with Paramount generously matching that dollar. If you are or know a Paramount beekeeper, ask them to *do the right thing* and kick in a dollar/col. for bee research.

## **Butting In**

Frank Eischen's 2011 almond-bee tests comparing 1 vs. 2 colonies/acre showed a significantly higher nut set at 2/acre **but** the final yields were virtually identical, **but** the 2 col./acre plot is on a bit poorer ground **but** the 2010 crop on the 2 col. plot was significantly lower (crop the previous year is a major influence on crop in a given year). This year, the same blocks are being compared at the same rates, **but** the 1 colony plot has a significantly lower flower-bud set. Dr. Eischen is running similar tests (2 vs. 1) on 2 other growers this year **but** on one site the 2 colony block is on poorer ground; the blocks on the other grower are more uniform **but** the bee strength is not. Getting uniform blocks and bees for such tests is a difficult task and a major problem - enough to tax the ingenuity of the acknowledged master of experimental design, Frank Eischen, Dr. Eischen is running other almond-bee tests (timing of pollination, etc.) which are providing great information.

Significantly, the grower that used 1+ col./acre in 2011 stayed at the same rate in 2012 (he has a mix of early-late blooming varieties). On one block not in the test he exceeded 5,000 lbs. of nut meats/acre on one variety at 1.2 cols./acre (the other varieties were around 4,000 lbs.).

The state-wide 2011 almond crop was a record 2600#/ac. indicating that maybe bee colony density may not be that critical since there were many sub-par colonies in 2011 (as there are every year) **but** Gordon Wardell has found a direct correlation between colony strength and crop yield.

## **Bee Informed Survey**

If you haven't heard of this survey, do a search for Bee Informed Survey. The deadline for sending it in is April 20. This survey helps everyone, so RSVP.

## **Pruning Prune Rental Fees**

20 years ago I upset some beekeepers by offering prune growers in Tulare County bees for free. Prunes bloom after almonds and before oranges and keep bees going until the oranges start (saving on feed bills). This year, a beekeeper did me one better and offered to **pay** a prune grower 5\$/colony to place bees around his orchard.

## **Good News? Record 2012 Canola Acreage(USDA)**

US acreage is projected at 1.5 million acres (vs. 1+ million in 2011). WA, OR and ID are getting in the canola game: WA 17,000 acres projected (up from 10,000 in 2011)

## **Bad News? Record 2012 Corn Acreage (USDA)**

US corn acreage is projected at 96 million acres, the largest acreage since 1937 BCS (Before Corn Syrup). (What's with 1937??).

## **Genetically Modified Crops - And Honey**

from Peter Tomkins, March Beekeepers Quarterly:  
*"The growing of some GM crops in some countries has reduced the use of toxic pesticides by 80%... With regard to honey labeling I think the EU's recent decision is ludicrous and will do more harm than good. GM labeling of honey implies a risk when there is none."*

## **Neonicotinoids - The Story Continues**

From the Penn State study; August 2011 ABJ: *"It is unlikely that doses of neonicotinoids from routine systemic seed treatment will attain the necessary greater than 100 ppb levels in pollen or nectar to acutely impair honey bees. Dusts from improperly formulated or applied seed treatments do have the necessary high residue levels to directly kill bees... Pyrethroid [e.g. fluvalinate] prevalence and persistence in the hive likely has more consequences for colony survival than the water-soluble neonicotinoides [in the hive]."*

A recent French study showed that levels of neonics that simulated field concentrations significantly impaired the bees ability to remember how to get back to their hives. Certainly more work is needed on this subject.

### **Still With Us After All These Years**

*"We are in the midst of the Deformed Wing Virus epidemic, which started shortly after varroa arrival but shows no signs of abating."*

Randy Oliver, Sept. 2010 ABJ, p.872

### **Going to the Dogs**

Maryland has used sniffer dogs since the 1970's to detect foulbrood in hives; a similar program is being initiated in Australia. Dogs can detect cancer in humans. In Florida, dogs can detect canker in citrus, and maybe greening disease. What about varroa and nosema in honey bees?

### **Worth Repeating**

*"Simply knocking the mites back in fall is no longer adequate for successful colony wintering. Mite management must begin by mid-summer at the latest."*

Randy Oliver, April 2011 ABJ

A spring treatment is important and some treat regularly with soft chemicals in the summer, followed by Taktic in the fall.

### **Good People**

I am often humbled when I read of American that sacrifice \$, and esp. time (the latter being a more valuable commodity) to help others. The bee industry has their share of such people. Clint and Janice Walker teach beekeeping to poor African natives (do a Search for [Swaziland Beekeeping Project](#) for details). Bill Mares and Dewey Caron do similar work in Mexico as did Jerry Hayes in eastern Europe a couple of years ago. There are many more; great ambassadors for America and great examples for the rest of us.

### **The Hayes Effect**

Several years ago when Roundup was in its heyday, I purchased some Monsanto stock. Last year I kept reading reports about Monsanto being subject to multi-million dollar lawsuits for Round-up resistant genes straying to (infecting?) other crops; some reports said that Round-Up was losing its effectiveness on some weeds - creating Superweeds. I sold my stock and waited or the stock to drop, congratulating myself for a brilliant, prescient move. Instead of dropping from around \$60/share, it climbed to \$80/share. I was confounded until I correlated the start of the stock's rise to the date Jerry Hayes hooked up Beelogsics, a subsidiary of Monsanto.

### **Hayes (continued)**

It was a near perfect correlation --  $r = 0.9!$  Word is that a noted Wall Street firm has assigned a recent Harvard Business School graduate to track Jerry's career and to use the information to advise selected clients.

### **I've Been There**

*"Exhilaration is that feeling you get just after a great idea hits you, and just before you realize what's wrong with it."*

Actor Rex Harrison; quoted in [The Week](#) March 23, 2012

### **Kevin Ward Could've Told You This**

New Zealand society "is both deeply conservative and fiercely egalitarian.... by virtually every measure, New Zealand has a more just and decent society than ours." From a review of the book [Fairness and Freedom: A History of Two Open Societies](#), New Zealand and the United States. Atlantic magazine, April, 2012.

### **Trace Elements**

Irish beekeeper, Jim Fletcher, has an interesting piece in the January [Australian Beekeeper](#) (reprinted from the November 2011 [Irish Beekeeper](#) and titled [Honeybee Nutrition - Trace Elements](#) (copy enclosed for those that get the print form of this newsletter).

Jim speculates that plants in his area may be deficient in cobalt and selenium. These two elements control the production of some essential vitamins and when Jim added these vitamins from January to March he found that "The numbers of bees per vitamin-fed hives this summer has been greater than I have ever experienced before, chalk brood disappeared and honey yields were over 4 times greater than the control fed hives."

Keep in mind that deficiencies of cobalt and selenium were peculiar to Jim's area and that he did not feed these 2 elements (which can be toxic to living things at high doses). He fed the vitamins (which can also be toxic at high doses). Always use caution when testing new materials.

### **Beware of Miracle Supplements**

The enclosed UC article It's Your Money by Albert Marsh and Milton Fireman (do a Search for the title authors for on-line version) advises using caution on new products; to be wary or unsubstantiated claims and to wait for rigorous testing by University or USDA scientists. Jim Fletcher's vitamins could fall into this category (although he's not selling them). As could Honey-B-Healthy, the Lefore Patty and Nutra-Bee. I have recommended these latter three products to beekeepers based on credible testimony from successful commercial beekeepers. I'd still like to see independent tests on these products. Perhaps only 1 ingredient in them is the "magic bullet" and could be economically produced.

### **Sweet-smelling Lemongrass**

Lemongrass is a major ingredient of Honey-B-Healthy, and many beekeepers have remarked how much the bees love it; they pull into a yard and bees swarm the truck.

One beekeeper who fed Honey-B-Healthy at a winter stockpile on a warm day with good bee flight, found that the bees drifted to the outer hives in the apiary, to the detriment of the inner hives; come almond time, the outer hives looked great, the inner ones not so good. He speculated that the lemongrass odor was so strong that the bees had trouble locating their home (or got too excited to do so). He didn't have the problem when feeding on a cool day when the bees weren't flying.

### **Parkinson's Pesticide Link**

Parkinson's Disease is more prevalent in the San Joaquin Valley than in other areas and has been linked to **long-term** exposure to paraquat, maneb and ziram (do a search for Parkinson's Pesticides). The European Union banned paraquat in 2007. The EPA banned maneb on corn, grapes and apples in 2005 (but not on almonds). Ziram is still used extensively. Frank Eischen's crew was out here the last week in March and got doused with a Ziram spray in an orchard where they were making nut counts (comparing 2 vs. 1 col./acre). A Search for Ziram Parkinson's gives health info.

### **\$ For Research**

\$2/colony from our pollination fees (\$1 each from growers and beekeepers) goes to bee research. Research \$ from the 33,538 colonies rented in 2011 was distributed as follows

Project ApisM	\$56,000
Randy Oliver	5,000
Frank Eischen almond study (labor)	5,200
Total:	<hr/> \$67,200

We plan on making similar contributions this year on about the same number of colonies.

You have already contributed \$1/col. for the colonies rented through us. Consider contributing to those you rent to others, esp. Paramount Farms, if you rent tot them.. And bug any Paramount beekeepers you know to do the same. Project ApisM is a good place to put research \$. Check them out at [www.projectapism.org](http://www.projectapism.org).

### **If At First You Don't Succeed**

From the March 30 Capital Press, p. 12, Second go likely on referendum:

*"Washington cherry and stone fruit growers may get a second chance to assess themselves \$5million over 8 years to fund Washington State University research."* An earlier referendum failed to get enough votes.

### **How old is Traynor anyway?**

Confession: I'm closer to 70 than I am to 60.

### **And his health?**

Good, considering his age.

### **Once Again**

Your efforts to make our service a first class one are acknowledged and appreciated. We couldn't function without you. Call anytime for how things are going up (or down, or over) here. And best wishes for a prosperous year.

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