

ALMOND GROWER NEWSLETTER . . . December 20,

2016

We're Ready When You Are We'll be juggling the numbers from our bee suppliers right up to February 1st, as beekeepers continue to sort through their hives, selecting only those colonies with 8 frames of bees or better for our growers. Give us a few days notice as to when you want your bees delivered. Try to have all or most of your field-work done prior to scheduling bees (poling, mowing, herbicides, etc.).

Fungicide Sprays Almond growers have mixed feelings about rain during bloom. We need the rain, yet rain can increase the severity of blossom diseases. Unlike treatment guidelines for most insect pests, there are no numerical guidelines for fungicide applications (e.g., spores per flower). Most growers apply fungicides when rain is forecast; often, though, those that don't spray don't have a disease problem. If an orchard has a history of disease, fungicides are warranted, if not, maybe not. Consider leaving an un-sprayed row to determine the effectiveness of a given fungicide spray.

If you do spray during bloom, avoid spraying when there is exposed pollen on the flowers. By mid to late afternoon, bees have collected most of the pollen, and there is less chance that bees will be damaged by ingesting contaminated pollen. Never add pesticides, including IGRs (Insect Growth Regulators) to the spray tank; some feel that spreaders and stickers added to sprays can harm bees, but so far there's not enough data to prove, or disprove this.

Theft Bee hives in almond orchards are susceptible to theft, almost always by another beekeeper. Take steps to eliminate potential theft problems.

\$ For Bee Research Every year, we collect \$1/colony each from our beekeepers and our almond clients and distribute the funds for bee research. This year we rented 33,590 colonies and sent \$57,180 to Project ApisM and \$10,000 to Randy Oliver. Project ApisM is the leading bee research entity in the U.S., funding scientists, both here and in other countries. Check out their website: www.projectapism.org Randy Oliver is a beekeeper/scientist who works tirelessly on keeping bees healthy - check out his website: www.scienticbeekeeping.com You can easily spend an hour on each of these websites and learn a lot about bees in the process.

You've likely read that the varroa mite is the major cause of current bee problems; the viruses carried by these mites, can be just as harmful as the mite itself. The catch-all term *varroa/virus complex* is now being used as shorthand for the major problem plaguing bees. Poor nutrition exacerbates the problem by impairing the immune system of bees (learn about planting nutritious bee plants on your property, including your backyard, at the apism website).

Tom Ferrari Passes I recently found out that pollen/pollination guru, Tom Ferrari, PhD, passed away in September. Tom was passionate about his work and contributed much to almond pollination via his work with selling and dispensing pollen to almond growers, including some of our growers. Tom was data-driven and it was difficult to argue with his data showing benefits from supplementing almond by introducing additional pollen into an orchard. Tom will certainly be missed.

Climate Change An incomplete hard copy of the accompanying article has been mailed to some of you.

Stay in Touch As we get close to bloom, we'll be in touch to schedule bee deliveries for your ranch, or, give us a call anytime.

Season's Best Wishes Enjoy the current Holiday Season, and sincere best wishes for a prosperous 2017.

Joe Traynor, Mgr. Scientific Ag Co.