

The Middlesex ee

The Middlesex Bee is the official newsletter of the Middlesex Beekeepers Association, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization

September 2016

“When you hear buzz around the beehive, you know they’re making honey in there.”
Terrence Howard

Saturday August 27, 2016 MCBA outdoor meeting and hive opening

Rick Reault got the meeting started by thanking Sarah Grimwood, and her husband Michael Kielty for hosting the meeting, and to the 4-dozen plus members that attended. As is our tradition, he asked anyone present for the first time to introduce themselves:

- Peter and Patty B. from Acton, just got their bees
- Melanie from Burlington, she has one hive
- John and Jeane, no hives yet, will take attend Bee School this winter and start next year
- Maghena, a first year beekeeper in Maynard, she has one hive
- Paul C. from Lexington, keeps his hives in Maine. He had a pair that didn’t overwinter so he started up again and has two hives going now.

We usually start off the meeting with a bee talk, discussing current conditions of your hives and answer questions that you may have.

I’d like to know everything there is to know about overwintering hives, I have two hives in Billerica that are on 2’ stands and I’ll wrap the Tom Fiore suggested (to prevent updrafts), but what about condensation, sugar boards, insulation boards...? Overwintering is a very broad and involved topic, and lots of people take different approaches – but **the most important thing about the overwintering process is that you have to start now**. What you do now will determine whether your hive will survive winter. Every hive is different, and you have to think about each and every one as an individual. You have to fully evaluate your hive: does it have enough pollen stores? Enough honey stored? How many frames is the queen

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Save The Date

MCBA Outdoor Meeting and Hive Opening

09/24, 1-3pm, 8 Crescent Avenue, Bedford

MCBA Indoor Meetings and Bee Talks

First Religious Society Hall, 27 School Street, Carlisle, MA

10/28, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD; Annual Auction

11/25, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD; (Annual FAT meeting)

12/12 (Tentative), Saturday, 6:30-9pm, Holiday Dinner

01/27, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD

02/24, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD

03/24, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD

04/28, 7-9pm, Topic/Speaker: TBD

Massachusetts Beekeeping Association (Mass Bee) Meetings

11/12, 8am, Fall Meeting

Knights of Columbus on Rt. 139 in Pembroke, MA

03/18, 8am-3pm, Spring Meeting

Topsfield Fairgrounds, Topsfield, MA.

06/24, 9am, Field Day

UMass Agronomy Farm, South Deerfield, MA

laying on? Is she laying a good pattern? Are the bees healthy? At the beginning of year, a typical 2-Deep 20-frame hive will have about 70% brood and 30% honey/pollen ratio. As the season goes on this Brood/Stores ratio begins to shift - so that the queen has more food and pollen and there are fewer frames of brood. Deciding where you should be in that range is where beekeeping and your evaluation comes in. This time of year, we should currently be seeing more brood than food, perhaps a 60/40% split. Have you done any mite treatments? Did your hive swarm? You need to know these things because you need a healthy hive with a lot of bees to make it through the winter.

I haven't applied a mite treatment yet, should I consider doing one soon? Yes, you should do a mite check before applying the treatment and then follow up with another mite check afterwards to see how the hive is doing. The bees that are being born now are the ones that will raise the bees that will be overwintering, so keep an eye on the mite levels because they correspond to the virus loads and healthy bees, if there are enough of them, will make it through.

Should I do an alcohol wash, or a sugar roll? Rick said that he is not a fan of doing alcohol washes – it's a waste of bees. While yes, it is a more accurate test and tells you exactly what is going on, a sugar roll spares the bees and is very accurate.

My hive has 2-deeps, and the top box is full of bees, and it weighs about a hundred pounds. It's full of bees, brood and pollen, that means the bottom box should be a hundred pounds too, right? Do I need to evaluate it? Yes. When you said that the top box weighs a hundred pounds, the experienced beekeepers here immediately thought that you meant that that box is full of honey; we assumed there's no brood in that top box because a brood frame does not weigh as much as honey frame – a deep frame of honey weighs 7 pounds, so a deep box would be 70 pounds, not including the weight of the box, or the weight of the bees. Well, it feels like it's a hundred pounds, and I haven't seen any mites. Unfortunately that doesn't mean anything, because I can guarantee that there are mites in there. We need specifics. When did you start the hive? Was it a package or a nuc? It was a package that I started on May 22nd, and I've been treating since day one. What have you been treating with? Listerine. Well, that's a new one... we need to use scientific studies and keep our bees based upon solid research. Beekeepers have used a lot of things that just don't work. We used to fog with mineral oil until we found that it was totally ineffective. Screened bottom boards are okay for ventilation, but they don't seem to have a lot of impact on mite levels. You have to go by what has been proven, and you need to know exactly what is going on in the hive. You can't simply assume that the bottom box of bees in a hive is filled because there are lots of bees in the top box – this time of year the bees move up, working their way to the top. We hope that there'll be a fall flow so that they begin to back-fill and work their way back down to the lower box.

Bernie Michaud said that one of the things he's seen since he began mentoring new beekeepers this year, is that **they try to evaluate their hives by simply looking down from the top.** You need to delve it, at least once every two weeks take a frame out, one at a time in each of your boxes and know what it looks like. It is very important as new beekeeper to see what is going on. If you don't do an evaluation and just take the super off for extraction because it's full of honey, you could have just killed that hive, because there are no stores anywhere else so you've just left them with nothing. You have to go in and take every frame. Bernie said

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that he has had times when he has had 50,000 bees flying all around his face, but in order to know what is fully going on that's what you need to do. Bernie said that one guy had a real problem in his hive, but would go at least a month between inspections and what started as something that could have been corrected has now at the end of August resulted in a dead-out. In the beginning, as new beekeepers you need to go in every other week, and take notes!

To follow up on Tony's point about bees being up at the top and going back down to the bottom, **when do I go back in and manually move them down?** For those new beekeepers with us, we're talking about hive manipulation and there are no rules. You have to remember that each hive is an individual, and you have to evaluate your hives separately and treat them differently. Some of your hives may have 5-frames over 5-frames of brood, while others the brood is entirely in the top box. This time of the year, Rick said that he likes to put all of the brood in the bottom box, with a few empty

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Our Facebook Page has updates about meetings (delays/cancellations in Winter), and articles about bees - so the next time you're online, come visit!

frames in the middle of the upper box. The bees will cluster and have honey on them, and it is better to have them all on the bottom with the honey on above. If you're lucky, sometimes they will do this all on their own and you won't have to do any manipulations at all. Rick mentioned the he sometimes he will add a frame of honey outside (frame positions 1, 10) with pollen on the inside (2, 9) with the brood sandwiched between. Bear in mind, Rick said, that he has seen situations where 2 deeps were not heavy enough so he added a medium honey super atop to insure they make it through the winter and not starve.

Should I remove the bottom deep if my hive is not too strong? Lets say your bees are only in one box, and the bottom hive box is empty. You might want to reverse the boxes and start feeding like crazy. That hive could have swarmed and it is now recovering, or it's in the process of petering out due to a high virus load. We could list ten different circumstances about why your hive is like that, but the only way to know what is going on in the hive is to do an inspection and keep good notes. That way you can piece the puzzle together.

Tony suggested people should think about preparing to feed their hives in case the fall flow fails. We're in an extreme drought here in Middlesex County, with some areas 8-inches below normal precipitation levels. Your yard is brown, the gardens are suffering, and the fall plants could be in the same predicament barring a tropical storm dropping a few inches

Bee Magazine Discount

MCBA members receive a 25% discount off subscriptions to *American Bee Journal*.

For a copy of the ABJ Association Member Subscription form, visit the *Club Business & Important Links* section of the MCBA members-only website:

membership.middlesexbeekeepers.org

of rain on us soon. **Rick said that he disagreed, and hadn't seen that many light hives**, and he cautioned members against feeding simply to feed – if you're going to do so, feed only with a defined purpose.

Is it too late to start a nucleus colony (nuc) right now to overwinter? Rick said that he gets this question a lot, and that it depends. There are a many different ways to make a nuc – you can take frames and purchase a queen, let them raise their own – or by grafting one, make a split and take the queen with a few frames... but if you are going to start one by grafting or letting them raise their own it takes longer and the question is 'how many drones are out there for the queen to mate with?' It's too late to let them raise their own or to try to graft one now. If by making a nuc you mean taking a single frame of

brood or stores from your ten hives and adding a queen – then no, it's not too late. August and early September is the robbing season, and a 3-frame nuc is too weak to ward off robbers. A five, six, or seven-frame nuc would probably be okay, depending upon how strong it is when you make it. It depends on what you have for resources.

Do you wrap your hives? Rick recommends doing so, but it's not essential. **Should I move my hive to a sunnier, less windy location, and when should I do it?** You should evaluate your hive, and first see how heavy it is. Moving hives in winter can help because the bees don't have to

Annual Auction

Have some extra frames? Don't like your Hive Tool? Think about donating unused or un-needed equipment to the club to raise money at our October Meeting & Annual Auction.

reorient. A less wind-exposed location is good, but the most important factor for overwintering is access to the sun. You can wrap a hive or provide a wind barrier, or even pile it up with snow for an igloo effect on the windward side, but the sun is best – assuming that you have a healthy hive.

"If you don't have a big cluster of healthy bees," Rick said, **"I don't care what you do: feed it, wrap it, it doesn't matter because you will NOT overwinter a sick hive, it is just not going to happen."** "I can take a healthy colony with no stores and feed, and feed it and it will overwinter – that hive could have started with no honey whatsoever and it will make it." Rick said that the club often hears from members in the late winter and spring "I don't know what happened, they were a huge colony but they dwindled out and left a lot of honey behind..." It doesn't matter whether you started with a package or a nuc, if they bring in honey all season

DID YOU KNOW ?

Stinger

Honey bee workers have a barbed sting at the tip of their abdomens with which they can defend the colony, but only by making the ultimate sacrifice. The delivery mechanism is a modified version of the egg-laying apparatus on the tip of the abdomen; hence only females can deliver a sting.

The main component of bee venom responsible for pain in vertebrates is the toxin melittin; histamine and other biogenic amines may also contribute to pain and itching. In one of the medical uses of honey bee products, apitherapy, bee venom has been used to treat arthritis and other painful conditions.

The sting consists of three parts: a stylus and two barbed slides (or lancets), one on either side of the stylus. The bee does not push the sting in but it is drawn in by the barbed slides. The slides move alternately up and down the stylus so when the barb of one slide has caught and retracts, it pulls the stylus and the other barbed slide into the wound.

When the other barb has caught, it also retracts up the stylus pulling the sting further in. This process is repeated until the sting is fully in and even continues after the sting and its mechanism is detached from the bee's abdomen.

When a honey bee stings a person, it cannot pull the barbed stinger back out. It leaves behind not only the stinger, but also part of its abdomen and digestive tract, plus muscles and nerves. This massive abdominal rupture kills the honey bee. Honey bees are the only species of bees to die after stinging.



long only to get sick and die it's just a waste. Remember, the most important thing for a beekeeper is a healthy colony.

I haven't done anything about mites yet, what would you recommend? Rick said that he does a mite treatment once per month – he applies ONE mite-away-quick strip pad (half the recommended dosage). Different beekeepers apply different treatments, Ottavio for example treats with Oxalic Acid vapors, and that's a good treatment (but it only affects phoretic mites, so you need to apply several treatments a week apart), and there are other/different treatments that you can use. Rick's philosophy is that you should treat your hive(s) when the mite levels are low, if they get high then it's likely too late.

Rick then said that he wanted to emphasize something that Bernie said, that **you should take frames out and look at them**. It is especially important to do a frame by frame inspection, so that you can see what healthy brood looks like and what sick brood looks like, you have a comparison (which is another reason the club recommends that you have at least two hives). Look at your frames before and after applying mite treatments: Is the queen laying better? Is there a good cluster? Is there a tight brood pattern?

Isn't Mite-away a heat sensitive treatment? How do you deal with the timing if you're applying once a month? I don't put it on when the temperature is in the 80's to 90's. If it's within range for the first three days and the

fourth will be warmer then I'll go ahead and do an application. You need to make adjustments, according to whether the hive is in the full sun or shade. Rick reiterated that he's very conservative on the treatments and only uses one pad versus the usual two.

What type of bottom boards do you use? Rick has solid bottom boards, as it is easier when you apply treatments – if you have screens then you'll need to close it off before the application. **When is the latest that you treat your hives?** He applies one now at the end of August and then another at the end of September. The experts recommend that you use different tools to keep the mite levels down, so vary them. **What about Oxalic Acid?** Ottavio said that he will vaporize and then follow up with a vaporization one week afterwards, and then another two weeks out. Be sure to look for an improvement in the brood pattern and that you don't see anything wrong in the hive. Hopefully you will see better patterns 1-2 weeks after your treatments.

We did a Sugar Roll test and it resulted in 1-2 mites, is that okay? About how many bees did you have? Around 200 bees. So figure about 1 mite / 100 bees, in a hive of 50,000 bees that's 500 mites. Know that an alcohol wash will show more, and that you're only determining the number of phoretic mites (mites that are on the bees and not in the cells) so you may be only getting half the mites – let's say 1,000. In 3-weeks the population of mites will double to 2,000 and 3-weeks later it will double again to

The Athenian Bee

Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 BC) is called the "Athenian Bee." Legend has it that a swarm of bees settled on his mouth when he was lying in his cradle. Consequently, his words flowed with the sweetness of honey.

4,000. Studies show that the critical level of mites in a hive (a.k.a. The Economic Threshold) is 3,000. Rick reiterated that his theory is that you should now treat before it gets too bad. If you treat now, then there will be bees that have been raised without ever being exposed to mites. What is a mite? It's a Leach, a parasite. Bees that have been parasitized by mites are smaller, less long lived, and less healthy. Treatments try to minimize that exposure so you'll have healthy bees.

I've treated 3 times with Mite-Away, and am thinking of switching to Thymol [to vary the treatments]; **do you have any recommendations for using Thymol?** Where do I put the tray? Rick said that Thymol is a really strong treatment, and he suggests that if you have 3 hives then split the 2-trays (in the package) between them, and to put the tray between the

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

William Butler Yeats

2-deep boxes. Rick reminded everyone that any time you do a treatment, you need to go back and see if queen is still laying afterwords.

Bernie relayed a story, he is mentoring a new beekeeper and two months ago he went over to check the hive and as soon as Bernie took the cover off there was a strange smell. Took the honey super off and started the inspection in the bottom box, only to find dead brood that was both capped and uncapped. **The bees looked “Mummified,” they were whitish.** Rick interjected that it sounds like Chalkbrood. Bernie said that he reached out to Tom and Tony, who urged him to contact the bee inspector. The hive owner said that he was going to “Give it awhile” and purchased another queen which wasn’t released immediately. Did he kill the old queen? No, she was dead or gone. What was the population like? About the same as a package. The county bee inspector came out with the State inspector and determined that it was European Foul Brood – Bernie asked Rick if he has seen any EFB around the county, or in his own hives? Rick explained to the members that any disease that ends with the word “Brood” means that the brood is dying. With AFB (American Foul Brood) the brood dies while in the pupa stage, while with EFB the brood dies in the

larval stage. EFB usually is the result of insufficient feeding, when there are not enough adult bees – with a strong colony any effected bees will pulled it out of their cells and removed from the hive. Bernie wasn’t sure the full story on the hive, he thought that it was an April package that swarmed three weeks later. Bernie’s original inspection with the bad smell was in early July. Rick said that we don’t know what the whole history of the hive is, how many bees were on frames, whether there were any type of pesticide kill which will diminish the population of adult bees in hive (which then affects the brood). Just because you diminish the field force doesn’t mean that the bees can’t recover from that, for example in Rick’s observation hive which has three frames, it swarmed – but there was a huge amount of capped brood and within 10 days you couldn’t tell the difference – so bees can bounce back. Rick said that while there has been a little bit of EFB this year, there’s been a lot of Chalk Brood going around.

What is the determining factor to know when to feed your bees?

Should we be feeding our bees now? You have to do an evaluation first. What is the weight of the hive? Which box do you mean? Both of them together – Rick said that he places a hand underneath the bottom board and tilts the hive forward. If the hive can’t be budged then it is heavy. Sometimes a hive can be so light that you can lift it with three fingers. During your inspection you should see how many frames of honey and pollen are in the hive. The bees should bring in more between now and the end of the year even with the drought we’ve been experiencing. Rick has set up scales on a few hives in his yard and they’ve been gaining one or two pounds a week, and at least they’re not going backwards. He suggests that there should be a minimum of 6-10 frames of food this time of year in the brood boxes.

What’s going on with the Merrimack Valley Beekeepers in Billerica?

For those of you who don’t know, the Cards are a family which run Merrimack Valley Apiaries in Billerica, and they’ve been there for 50-60 years. They don’t keep a lot of bees on their property all year, but do move bees up from the South in the spring, bringing packages and nucs. A longtime neighbor, who has complained in past about the bees, took their complaint to the Town Health Department (which subsequently

sent an immediate Cease and Desist order). The Health Department quickly backed off of that. The Town officials have asked that the two landowners come to an agreement – something simple along the lines of not putting the bees at the adjoining end of the property. In the news, it was reported that the neighbor complained about the need to bee proof their house, and that their cars and clothes needed constant cleaning. Ottavio commented that his town's BOH also issued a violation which they also withdrew. Rick guessed that there are at least 30 beekeepers in the immediate area of the Cards, let alone all of Billerica. Rick also briefly mentioned that the City of Cambridge was proposing new beekeeping ordinances, and information would be on our club's internal website and notices will be sent out when we have more information.

Paul said that one of the reasons he doesn't keep bees at home, but up in Maine is that his neighbors have swimming pools and he heard that **bees are attracted to swimming pool water due to the chlorine and other minerals. Is there a way to manage your bees to prevent that?** Yes it's true that bees are attracted to pools, and no you can't manage/prevent it. If they like that pool more than your water traps that you've put around for them, there's no preventing them from going there. A member said that she has one hive and her own pool – the bees have not been a problem. A member said that he has had good luck putting out watering spots with black rocks in them – you need to provide something

Extractor



MCBA maintains a hand-operated Maxant 3100-series 9-Frame Honey Extractor for rent by current members. Rental includes everything you need to extract your honey, including:

- Electric hot knife for uncapping honey frames
- Uncapping Fork
- Uncapping Tank

Terms:

- This extractor is available on a first-come, first-served basis to members only.
- The extractor is easy to transport in an SUV or Pickup, and is capable of being moved by one person with ease (however 2 people are helpful)
- \$15/day. Extensions may be available depending upon scheduling. Contact the Extractor Coordinator at extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org for information.
- The Extractor must be cleaned WITH COLD WATER before returning to the club.
- Any and all damage and/or maintenance issues MUST be reported to the Extractor coordinator immediately.

To reserve, contact Kathy at:

extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org or by phone at: 617.549.7460

What's Blooming Now?

Common Name	Scientific Name	Value	Plant Type
August			
Bachelor's Button	Centaurea Cyanus	Nectar	Herbaceous Perennial
Boneset	Eupatorium Perfoliatum	Nectar & Pollen	Herbaceous Perennial
Burdock	Arctium Minus	Nectar & Pollen	Biennial
Bur-marigold	Bidens Laevis	Nectar	Perennial
Goldenrod	Rudbeckia Laciniata	Pollen & Nectar	Perennial
Heart's Ease	Polygonum Persicaria	Nectar	Perennial
Joe-Pye Weed	Eupatorium Purpureum	Nectar & Pollen	Herbaceous Perennial
Regweed	Ambrosia Arensiifolia	Pollen	Annual
Virginia Creeper	Parthenocissus Quinquefolia	Pollen & Nectar	Vine
September			
False-chamomile	Boltonia Asteroides	Nectar & Pollen	Perennial
Japanese Bamboo	Polygonum Cuspidatum	Nectar	Perennial
October			
Witch Hazel	Hamamelis Virginiana	Pollen	Shrub

Information for **What's Blooming Now?** was taken from **Nectar and pollen plants of Massachusetts as observed in the central Connecticut Valley region** Special circular #27, Revised F.R. Shaw, Department of Entomology, University of Massachusetts, 2-2-56

for the bees to land on so they don't drown – it provides warmth and the bees seem to like whatever minerals are leached into the water. Another member said that they like to put something out there that the bees like and will continue to use, and there's something about wet rocks that attracts them. John said that he has a pond on his property, and has noticed that the bees seem to prefer sucking up water through the mud, presumably because of the mineral content. A member shared that their hives are surrounded by farms that use Neonics, and I put out several different options for the bees, and I've found that with bird baths the bees prefer a dark surface, with stones or wood floating in water so that they can land on something before drinking. A member said that he had purchased a chicken waterer, based on an American Bee Journal article, but the moss that he tried with it didn't work and would not recommend others bother with it. Another suggested using Boardman-style feeders with water instead of sugar syrup, in entrance. It's easy to gauge their water usage, and it doesn't promote robbing.

I managed to overwinter my bees, and after temporarily moving them in May, I moved them back. A week after the final move, when they had appeared happy and flourishing... **then my neighbor called to report hundreds of dead bees on his property. He had just hydro-seeded his yard, and I've never seen anything like that before.** Did he do any type of mosquito spraying? No, simply the hydro-seeding – we thought that since they had overwintered that we had it made, and then that weird die-off happened. The problem is that you have no way of knowing what the bees were exposed to in his yard. Why would they die over on his property if they had been exposed on yours? Additionally, what's in the hydro-seed? Unfortunately these days Neonicotinoid pesticides are in everything – even things like pressure treated lumber have it.

Should I be feeding protein now? Is there a need to give them a supplement of some sort? If your hive does not have a lot of pollen stored in frames, Rick does suggest maybe to add some. However, Rick said that he isn't seeing problems with pollen when he inspects hives. It may be because of the dried soil that there isn't as much nectar but he's seeing bees really bringing in the pollen. Now if you look in the hive it may at

first blush appear that there isn't a lot of pollen stored in there, but make sure you look carefully. What should we look for in a Brood to Pollen to Honey ratio in healthy hive? It's hard to think of it that way because the bees don't always sock pollen away in entire frames, they can disperse it over a lot of areas, and sometimes you'll see a little ring of it around the brood. A couple of frames worth of pollen is adequate for their late winter and spring build up.

My bees have been feeding on something and they're bringing in a florescent yellow nectar, does anyone know what it is? Golden rod is very yellow, but there's an definite smell that goes along with it so you'll know when they're bringing it in.

I'm wondering whether it is advisable or a good idea to take a medium of honey off of a strong hive and move it onto a hive that has 2 capped boxes of brood? How strong is the strong hive? It has 5 mediums and it is full of honey, I'm wondering whether I should harvest the honey from the strong hive and feed the weaker hive with candy or syrup. Yes, you can harvest it or move it. Just remember, you can feed a hive that's not healthy, and just because you're feeding it doesn't mean that it's going to get healthy just because you feed it. You can feed an unhealthy colony all you want and it's not going to overwinter. Pay attention to your hives now, because in August and early September it's still possible to correct problems. Determine why your other hive is weak and

take the appropriate actions (add queen, brood, add queen and brood, feed it, et cetera). As beekeepers, we're trying to fix things. Generally you leave a hive alone because it's working. But if something isn't working you try to fix, and if that doesn't work you try it again, and again. There can always be problems, and the only way to learn is to keep trying to fix the situation, whatever it is.

Bernie asked a follow up question about problems that arise when the queen dies and you don't have any young brood to feed and raise a new one. **Rick said that he sells queens, but with every one he asks the beekeeper "What they're planning on doing with it?"** A queen alone will not save a hive! How long has the hive been queenless? Figure there will be no brood available for three weeks and add to that. That's the advantage of having more than one hive – you can borrow resources from one to give to another.

Is 'Bearding' on a hive a good? Bearding can be good, but whether a hive beards or not depends on your hive. Weaker hives are not going to beard, but bearding can show that a hive is strong with plenty of adults. What is 'Bearding?' Bearding happens when bees cluster on the outside front of the hive: it could be several hundred or sometimes its several thousand bees. What they're doing is lowering the amount of bees within the hive itself, because the brood can overheat and die, so they're creating more space and airflow within the hive so that it doesn't get as hot in there.

Can a screened bottom board (SBB) help with bearding? Yes it can help, but there are situations where it might not help (when applying treatments for example). Rick has solid bottom boards and raises the outer cover by placing some pebbles atop his inner cover to increase the airflow that way. What about overwintering with SBB? Rick said he wasn't sure since he uses solids. Editors Note: I use SBB to overwinter my hives, and Jen Reed does as well – keeping hers open year-round.

When the bees are bearding, is that an inopportune time to open the hive? In hot weather do your inspections early in the day before it gets hot. Rick goes out and starts at 6am, and his team will work 5-6 hours and then

Help Wanted

Tony Pulsone is stepping down from his position of **Director** and the club needs a replacement.

A **DIRECTOR** is the club's delegate / representative to the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association, which meets several times each year.

If you are interested in becoming one of the two MCBA delegates to MassBee, please contact Tom Fiore at: president@middlesexbeekeepers.org

stop, because it is very disruptive to go through bees when it is hot out.

I've heard that some beekeepers will drill a hole in their supers as upper entranceways and to provide ventilation, what do you think about that? I've heard that it also helps when the entrance gets clogged up in the wintertime. Rick is strongly against the practice of drilling holes in supers; he once took over an operation that did that, and said that he couldn't get rid of those boxes fast enough. Some inner covers have notches to provide upper entranceways if you shift the outer cover, or even prop it open slightly. Everyone does things differently. You can also accomplish the same thing using a notched inner cover, or a rim with a hole. Bernie said that sometimes it's too hot to work your bees – when it's 90° in the sun you should just let them be until it's cooler, and that they should have some form of top ventilation because a very small hive can overheat very quickly in this kind of weather. This is especially true if you paint hives a color other than white. Bernie suggests that you could add an empty super on top of your boxes (without any frames) and that dead space will help improve the ventilation.

When do you know when there's not enough ventilation? When there's lots of bearding on the front of your hive, try to ventilate more. Rick said that he just worked with someone that puts plywood over their hives to create shade.

My comb is very shiny, I mean glossy – could it be melting? Are you talking about the comb in the brood area or above in the honey section?

Down in the brood area. Sometimes in the comb right after brood hatches the bees will clean it out and the cells will be shiny so it's ready to be layed in. You could also have a lot of propolis in there.

I noticed a wasp carrying bees away!

Sometimes you'll see bees crawling around on ground outside of the hive, and wasps take that opportunity to seize those bees. Similarly on flowers you'll find spiders or other things laying in wait. Dragonflies and some birds are also big killers of bees. Just remember that a honeybee colony has tens of thousands of bees and they're prone to predators.

There's a Yellow Jacket nest near my hive...

This time of year, other insects (and other bees) may try to rob from your hives. If the colony is strong it will be able to protect itself. This is the robbing time of year: late August and September is robbing season. Rick is not fan of reducing entrance – especially when it's warm out, but if your hive is weak you should consider doing so. Tony shared that he uses hardware cloth to close down his entrances – the No. 8 metal screen is small enough to prevent bees and other insects from getting in, but will allow airflow. Rick said that he uses quarter- or half-inch screen year-round as mouse guards.

Rick relayed a story about a hive opening that he attended in another county, the hive was open too long and was in the direct flight pattern of bees visiting a bank of fall flowers. He said that you should be careful when doing

inspections, and watch the front of your hives at other times. Robbing activity is easy to identify with a mass of bees fighting at the entrance. If you witness this, you need to do something, move the hive or completely block up the entrance. When robbers no longer have access they will become disinterested and go off. After you block up the entrance, wait until later and things cool down before reopening a small space so there's limited access at the entrance.

How late can you do an inspection? A frame by frame inspection, or just to see the cluster? With a frame-by-frame inspection Rick says that he likes it to be 60° or warmer. If you're just going to open it and take a quick peek at the cluster in the middle of winter, you can do so at 10° below zero – the bees are just heating the inside of the cluster and not the entire box – but you don't want to leave them hanging too long...

Can you put one hive atop another? If you mean putting a weaker colony that's in a 10-frame box over another? Then yes, you should use a double screen Snellgrove board. Can I just use a screened bottom board? Rick wouldn't recommend it because a SBB puts a lot of space between the two clusters. When should I move the hives together? You can move them at any time, but they need to adjust that since they upper cluster will adjust so that it is over the lower cluster. However, there's still plenty of time to feed any light hives or to fix your colony if there's an issue. What's the advantage of putting hives atop one another? A weaker hive can take advantage of any residual heat given

off by the stronger lower colony. Rick cautioned that hives atop one another require more work in the winter, and then you have to separate them early in the spring. A member said that you can help with the winter cleansing and orientation flights by staggering the entrances so they point in different directions. ■

Business Meeting

There was no Treasurer's Report to present, and Tony briefly mentioned his intent to make a motion to amend the club's bylaws.

A motion to amend the club's By-Laws

To better clarify the officers and their roles, at the next meeting Tony Pulson as a member in good standing, will submit a motion to amend the club's constitution with the following changes:

Article III – Officers

Section 1. The officers of this Association shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Clerk, a Treasurer, a Recording Secretary, and two delegates to the state organization, who together shall constitute the Board of Directors. The President, Vice-President, Clerk, Treasurer, the Recording Secretary and the two delegates to the State's Beekeepers Association shall be chosen by ballot at an annual meeting and shall hold their offices for two years.

Article IV – Duties of Officers

Section 3. The Clerk shall maintain an accurate record of all current members of the Association, and shall provide notice of annual meetings. The Clerk, Treasurer, or another member appointed by the President shall collect all dues.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall collect all moneys due the Association, keep an accurate and permanent record of all financial activity, and provide a monthly report of that record to The Association. The Treasurer, Clerk, and/or another member appointed by the President shall collect all dues. The Treasurer shall present all bills to the members for their approval, and pay all properly approved bills drawn on the Association.

Section 5. The Recording Secretary shall keep an accurate and permanent record of the meetings of the Association, shall provide notice of normal meetings, and shall conduct all regular correspondence, as directed by the President or the Board of Directors. The Recording Secretary or his/her designee shall be responsible for The Association's newsletter and any other publications of the Association.

Section 6. Any officer, delegate or committee member who cannot attend a meeting shall arrange with a member to perform his or her duties pro-tem.



Middlesex County Beekeepers Association

Membership Form

\$15 Annual dues per family, **payable to MCBA**. Mail this form and payment to: Rick Ressijac, 7 Coolidge Road, Ayer, MA 01432 *OR* bring it with you to a meeting.

Please print CLEARLY.

Name _____

Family Members' Name(s) _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

How did you hear about us? _____

How many hives do you have? _____ Renewal or New Membership

Club Officers

President

Tom Fiore
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Vice-President

Rick Reault
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