



B-PLUS

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AHPA AND ABF WILL SEEK ANTI-DUMPING PETITION TO HALT THE CHINESE HONEY IMPORTS

Both national beekeeping organizations together are planning to sponsor a petition to the Department of Commerce (DOC) that will show that China is "dumping" honey on the U.S. market.

The only difficulty with this planned petition is that in order to effectively move the petition through channels it will take money. The best estimate is that it will require about \$250,000 to hire the most successful law firm in this anti-dumping arena. It is possible to petition the DOC with less expenditure of money. It would just take much, much longer and the success would not be as likely. And the relief from the imports would not happen until much later.

Where will the money come from? Each organization is polling their membership to seek the funds necessary to complete the task. One of the statements made was that if EVERYONE contributed \$0.10/colony then there would be enough money to pursue the petition. However, that approach will probably not work. A more likely plan would be to think of the possible gain from the petition and contribute that much. For example, if the petition results in only a 10 percent increase in the price of honey, then send in that amount. If the American Honey Producers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation do not get enough pledges of money then nothing will happen.

What is the likely result of a petition?, and why hasn't it been tried before now? Most organizations that have tried the A-D route have been very successful in increasing the tariff on their product from 100 to over 300% of the value of the item. If China lowers the price of their honey to try to stay in the market then the tariff goes up. An anti-dumping petition has not been tried before now because of the legal costs and because other means looked promising at the time.

President Clinton actually initiated the 406 ITC study. The ITC ruling was just overturned by the President. This can't happen with this petition as the process is protected by the law and the courts. Thus, if the DOC determines that dumping has occurred, then a tariff will be applied.

VARROA'S SEASONAL SWITCH FROM DRONES TO WORKERS COMING SOON

It is my belief that one of the major reasons for the great winter loss the last couple of years has been the seasonal switch to workers by varroa mites. This switch occurs when the colony stops rearing drones in late summer. When this happens many developing worker pupae are subjected to the feeding by varroa. This feeding probably shortens their life by at least a third. This amount of life reduction in the summer would affect the honey production of a colony to some extent. The amount of loss would depend upon the number of workers affected. The population dynamics of varroa follows the general growth curve. That is, the population grows on a logarithmic scale from the time you remove the Apistan[®] strips in the spring. Then the large number of mites that emerges from the last drones produced move over onto the worker brood. This switch occurs the last part of August and September. Just when the colony is producing the worker bees that should live over winter. If the same life-shortening effect occurs in these "winter bees" that affects the bees during summer then the colony will lose many bees early in the winter cycle. For example, even if a quarter of the bees were affected and lived only until early January. This is the period of time the colony most needs a large population. The loss of these bees reduces the cluster size and prohibits the bees from starting brood rearing at that time. Yes, colonies normally will begin to replace the bees beginning as early January. Maybe not many young larvae when it is zero out but some. And it is these early replacement bees that keep the colony going into spring. Without these replacements the colony keeps getting weaker and often dies before spring.

The best way I know to stop this early loss of worker bees is to treat during the time when these bees are produced. That time is late August and September. While the general recommendation is to treat when there is no brood in the hive, this occurs too late to help. In addition if you put the strips into the hive for the full 45 days all of the mites will eventually come in contact with the pesticide during their phoretic stage (the time spent out of the cell and attached to an adult bee).

If we can protect these winter bees from having a shorter life span we should be able to get our colonies through a normal winter. Then we only have to worry about nosema and adequate food!

HIGH HUMIDITY REQUIRES CARE WHEN EXTRACTING HONEY

This summer has been extremely wet in this part of Michigan. Along with the rain we have had very high relative humidity. Honey is hygroscopic, that is, it will pick up moisture anytime the RH is above 50%. Conversely, when it is below 50% RH honey will give up some of its water. The problem of controlling the moisture level in the final bottled, or barrel, product starts back at the hive. When the RH is as high as it has been much of this summer, even the bees have a difficult

time keeping the honey moisture low enough. Then the beekeeper steps in to remove the honey. If the bees are blown out then almost no change occurs until the supers arrive back at the honey house. If you use escape boards then the bees can not keep the temperature-RH constant. Therefore, the longer that you have the supers above an escape board the more moisture that the honey can pick up. Don't be fooled into thinking that the honey is capped and thus safe. The wax capping only slows the process up a little.

Once the honey supers are back in the honey house the honey will continue to pick up water. The only way to prevent this is to keep the supers in a warming room, and/or with a de-humidifier. With a de-humidifier and a little heat you can actually lower the water content of honey. If you are a small beekeeper and do not have a warming room you can do what we do at the MSU Apiary, and that is use a small heater that blows warm air up through a stack of supers. Alternatively, I have used a shielded light bulb under a small stack of supers.

Take every precaution to keep water out of the extracting process. I have seen beekeepers wash their tanks and extractor and not wait until they are dry before putting honey into them. The only place the water is going is into the honey and can raise the moisture level too high. The honey needs to have a water content less than 18.5% to meet U.S. standards. Levels in the 17% range will provide better protection against fermentation. This lower level is especially important if the honey crystallizes. Since during the formation of crystals the glucose portion takes some of the water to make the crystal. This leaves the fructose portion with too high a level of water and that portion begins to ferment. In the fermentation process the yeast breaks down the sugar to carbon dioxide and water. The additional water then enhances the fermentation process.

The only way to not to worry about picking up excessive moisture is to keep the extraction process going along very rapidly. Higher temperatures help to speed the extraction as well as helping to keep the moisture down. If the temperature of the honey is raised from 70° F. to 80° the viscosity will decrease three fold. That is, the honey will flow three times faster. Another good reason to warm the honey before extracting.

To summarize the moisture-honey problems. First, don't let the honey supers remain on the colony any longer than necessary to remove the bees. It is not a good policy to put on an escape board one weekend and then return the next to remove the honey. It would be better to use another method to remove the honey. For example, a fume board. Second, keep the honey, or warming room, at a elevated temperature. Remember, the humidity is "relative". Thus, if an amount of water can exist at one temperature, and you raise the temperature, the relative humidity will be lower. Finally, if you do not own a refractometer to test for moisture, then find a bee-keeper/processor who does and take a sample to them to test for water content of your honey.

TALES FROM THE LONESOME HIVE

So far it has not been a spectacular year for the LH. If you remember, it had a tough start this spring with its attack from varroa. Thus the buildup was not what it could have been. Then I suspect from watching the colony grow that the queen has not been up to her ancestor's level of production. Her oviposition does not look bad, nor do you see reduced brood viability. I suspect you would have to run a very careful daily count of brood to see that she is not doing what I have come to expect from the LH queens.

We are now mostly through the honey flow for this area (Last week of July). Though the rains may extend the season somewhat. The colony is producing honey though the nectar has been coming in relatively slow. (A good day will show a two-pound gain.) If we can keep it up for a couple more weeks the colony will certainly have produced some honey. My problem has been that I wanted to continue producing the Half-comb cassettes. Comb honey works best when the nectar is coming in fast. The faster the better the comb is, and the lighter the color. It has not been at the rate that I have felt comfortable with putting on the comb supers. The weather for the next week looks good so I may just try it to see if I can get a few sections this year. The colony is currently five 6.5" bodies high. The bottom three for brood and the top two are extracting supers. I will shake/brush all of the bees out of these supers and then put on the comb supers. This should "push" the bee right into the boxes.

As soon as the honey flow is over I will put on a division screen and raise a new queen in the division. Once the new queen is laying well I will remove the old queen and unite the division to the main colony.