



B-PLUS

BEEKEEPING REPORT FROM MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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No. 33 Fall, 1994

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ANR WEEK PROGRAM MOVES TO FRIDAY-SATURDAY

The airline industry makes this shift almost necessary with their requirement for an overnight stay on Saturday in order to get the lowest airfares. Thus you should set aside March 10 & 11, 1995 for the two-day beekeeping program.

The principle speaker this year will be Dr. H. Shimanuki from the U.S.D.A. Beltsville Bee Lab. Other speakers will include Dr. George Ayers speaking on honey plants. There are plans for a display room nearby for various exhibits. The program will start each day at 9:30. The program will be in the Lincoln room, rather than the Auditorium, however I think the space will allow a much better exchange of ideas from the speaker to the audience. The Honey Queen program will still be in the Kellogg Center Auditorium on Friday at 7:30 p.m.

CHINESE HONEY ANTI-DUMPING FUND AT \$150,000+

At the winter meeting of the Michigan Beekeeper's Association, Reg Wilbanks, as a representative from the ABF, indicated that the joint fund of the American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) and the American Honey Producers Assoc. (AHPA) had passed the \$150,000 mark. More money is needed and beekeepers should send their contributions to either the ABF at P.O. Box 1038, Jesup, GA 31545, or the AHPA at P.O. Box 368, Bruce, SD 57220.

It is possible to donate honey instead of money. Don Folkema has agreed to be the holding station for any barrels of honey donated by Michigan beekeepers. He is located in Fremont. Call him at 616-924-2306 if you have honey that you would like to donate to the anti-dumping program.

CHINESE HONEY ANTI-DUMPING PETITION PASSES FIRST HURDLE

On October 24, 1994 the Department of Commerce (DOC) made an initial ruling that the petition from the ABF and the AHPA should proceed. The petition charges that the Chinese are dumping honey at below costs in the U.S. The petition was first filed on October 3, 1994, and throughout this process there are only certain number of days that can pass without progress. The final ruling could come as early as mid March, but no later than June.

The initial tariff amount was set at between 30 and 49%. This amount was a somewhat lower than the petition requested. However, during the hearing and petition process additional data will be gathered by the International Trade Commission (ITC) and the DOC. Thus a final tariff amount could be higher. Even if the 49% level was finally used, the price of the Chinese honey imported into the U.S. would be about 53¢/lb. This figure is calculated by starting with the price of 31¢/lb. F.O.B. China. To the base price is added 15¢ for the anti-dumping tariff and 7¢ for ocean freight, insurance, harbor fees, regular tariff, and the NHB assessment. If the Chinese try to lower their price to remain competitive, the anti-dumping tariff rises to compensate.

In addition to the potential early tariff, importers are also faced with some uncertainty to the real final price. For example, from the date of the final ruling by the DOC until mid-1997 the DOC will monitor honey imports and if they decide that the dumping has increased they can raise the tariff **retroactively**. That means that importers would face an increase in total cost for honey imported for the previous two years. A cost that they could not pass on since the honey had been sold earlier. This could discourage them from importing very much Chinese honey.

The anti-dumping petition is more-or-less removed from the political process. That is, the Administration can not overrule the decision as in the IDC (406) ruling. Much more has to be done to shepherd the petition through its various stages, and beekeepers may have to respond to additional questionnaires from the ITC or the DOC.

WORK OF THE NATIONAL HONEY BOARD DEFENDED

In response to a letter of mine, Bob Smith, Executive Director of the NHB made the following comments. I thought the ideas he expressed in the letter were worth passing on to you.

“...I appreciate the fact that the Michigan beekeepers believe that the Board has successfully driven the domestic demand for honey. I am fascinated to find out that these same producers believe that the Board’s success is the reason why Chinese honey imports are entering this country. Let me explain why I believe this conclusion is incorrect.”

“Chinese honey would be entering this market regardless of the NHB’s existence. A Chinese honey surplus exists, The Chinese marketing/distribution system has been decentralized, Chinese honey appears to have been positioned for sales abroad based on price and U.S. buyers have been buying.

“The Board has worked to strengthen demand for honey. This is the mandate legislated by the beekeepers who established the program. The current demand for honey in the U.S. ranges between 300 million to 320 million pounds. It seems that some honey producers believe they would be better off if the domestic market were weaker. If the U.S. demand were weaker, U.S. honey prices would necessarily be lower. If the U.S. demand were weaker, Chinese honey would displace more U.S. production than it is now. We’ve seen what happened to honey prices even with the stronger market. Imagine how low they would have gone with a weaker domestic demand.

“The faulty reasoning that blames the Honey Board for influencing demand and being responsible for Chinese honey imports is only comparable to a beekeeper saying that the good beekeepers in south Texas are the reason that the Africanized bee is moving into the U.S. What, you say, beekeepers and managed colonies in Texas have nothing to do with AHB moving into the U.S.! Precisely my point. The AHB is moving into the U.S. because it is south of the border and can move north. In fact, the more competent and skilled the south Texas beekeeper, the more successful the beekeeper may be at minimizing the impact of the AHB.

“Roger, if a beekeeper finds mites in some of his hives, he doesn’t destroy all of the hives in the yard as a result, does he? Of course not. So why would he want to destroy a successful marketing/promotion program that drives demand for honey when the need for marketing and promotional effort of the Board is the greatest?

“Chinese honey is not a problem today because the Honey Board is doing its job. But because the Board is doing its job, the impact of Chinese honey is less harmful than it would otherwise be. The implication of the beekeeper’s comments is that they would be better off without the Board. I don’t believe the facts support such a belief.”

TALES FROM THE LONESOME HIVE

In the last B-Plus I indicated that I was going to put on the half-comb cassettes even though it appeared that the nectar flow was not all that great. I also had wondered why the LH had not built up the way I thought they should. I think I have some indication of the problem. It seems the

LH had been the victim of some pesticide poisoning. I am not sure where they were picking up the poison, but dead bees with their tongues extended were good indications that some of the foragers were being killed. I suspect the queen was not the cause of the poor population growth. When I saw the low population caused by the poisoning I decided not to put on the cassettes.

The colony had produced about one 6 5/8" super of honey during the clover honey flow. I then put on a division screen and raised some brood to the top of the hive. The nuc produced a good queen and she began laying toward the end of the month of August.

Then I became quite busy with the start of classes the end of August and did not visit the LH until the first day of fall, September 21st. I had suspected that the bees were doing quite well as we had nearly perfect weather for a good goldenrod flow. Yes, they had done well. Everything was full and overflowing. Even the nuc had filled up most of the frames with honey. I don't remember ever seeing a colony with more brood, including drones, that late in the year. It is very difficult to find queens under such circumstances. Thus, since I had painted the queens to mark their age I decided to unite the two colonies. Usually under these conditions the youngest queen is the one that survives even though both queens may lay a while together.

I am hoping that with varroa control and the great population this fall that the LH will have lots of bees in the spring. I will put the inner cover wedges (approx. 1/2") into the hive soon. They give an upper entrance for winter. We will know how well we did next spring.

NUC PROVIDERS TAKE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT APPROACH

In the past nucs (short for nucleus hive) have been sold by beekeepers in place of package bees. The advantage of such a system is that the nuc has brood and a laying queen from the first day, whereas a package takes 3 weeks before any new bees would emerge. The only thing that has changed is that now the suppliers are contracting with the beekeepers and taking the beekeeper's own equipment to the South for re-stocking with bees. Before the equipment was generally supplied by the producer-shipper. Some suppliers will also take your bees south for re-queening and division. Prices for the services provided vary, but are very competitive compared to package bees. I have a list of beekeepers who will provide this service.

SMALL BEEKEEPERS DO NOT NEED NUTRITION LABEL FOR THEIR HONEY

The nutrition labels that have become commonplace on all foods are not required for small beekeepers. Small, in this case is defined as a company doing less than \$500,000 in gross sales or less than \$50,000 in food sales. However, if any nutritional claims are made then the exemption is void. For example, if the label says, "Healthy", or "No Fat" then a nutritional label is needed. Any questions about a label should be directed to the FDA's Office of Food Labeling - 202-205-5229.