



# B-PLUS

BEEKEEPING REPORT FROM MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dept. of Entomology, E. Lansing, MI 48824-1115

**No. 36 Spring, 1995**

**Roger Hoopingarner, Editor**

---

---

## **NATIONAL HONEY BOARD - SELF EVALUATION**

What do you get for your money? That's the question the National Honey Board (NHB) tried to answer at the Am.Beekeeping Federation convention in Austin, TX. (This story is condensed from the APIS newsletter from Florida, by Dr. M. T. Sanford .)

To set the stage, the executive director Bob Smith said, the Board's goal is to promote and maintain existing demand for honey, while increasing demand in selected markets. The NHB must not be crisis oriented, he said, but the Board must focus on what it does best, long-range promotional efforts of honey. One indication of industry support, Mr. Smith concluded, is that the vast majority of handlers are assiduously collecting NHB assessments in a timely manner.

The NHB budget is about \$3 million. Sherry Jennings the Board's industry relations director, provided an overview on how this money is being used. The vast majority is honey promotion (50%), followed by food technology (16%) and Foodservice (10%). Product research consumes six percent and crisis management four percent of the total budget.

In keeping with its basic mission, the Board engages in a great many advertising projects throughout the year and has an excellent rapport with the press. There have been "Hints for Heloise" columns that featured honey, due to the efforts of Manfredumann, the Board's press relations officer. Any beekeeper can also request a honey sales kit from the Board, as well as brochures to help in local sales efforts. Contact the Board toll free at 800/553-7162.

## POLLINATION SERVICE - FOR YOU?

From APIS the newsletter from the  
University of Florida by Tom Sanford.

A quality pollination service takes a real commitment. The beekeeper must always be ready to get bees in and move them out of fields with very short notice, and some kind of a backup plan should be in place in the very real case that things could go wrong. One must also develop a long-term personal relationship based on trust with the customer. A key to this is communication. Successful pollinators are regularly in contact with customers, even during the off season. They send out reminders and make phone calls in advance of the coming season to try to assess their capabilities and the growers' needs. One outfit writes a newsletter that includes information on a wide variety of topics.

For those thinking of entering the pollination game, it is of utmost importance to solicit advice from colleagues actively doing this for a living. Here are some valuable pollination tips by David Green, publisher of the Eastern Pollinator Newsletter P.O. Box 1215, Hemingway, SC 29554

*“Pollination service is an alternative use of honey bees. You need to note that word alternative, because, in order to do pollination, you will have to manage the bees differently, and you are going to give up some or all of your honey production. Considering the shape of our markets for honey, and the almost desperate need of our farmers for more bees, I consider this a good decision. An added advantage is that pollination service is more consistent from year-to-year. Honey production is a much greater gamble.*

*Many beekeepers who are just beginning, think they are going to keep on making honey, and they do not figure in the added costs, so they tend to underprice. With current markets, you cannot do an adequate job of managing your bees and provide good service for less than \$30-35 per single story hive, per crop. This is just a break-even proposition at that price. The profit comes from doing more than one crop per season.*

*You need to protect yourself (and your customer, as well) by having a written contract. The two central points that need to be addressed are that you will provide good bees, and that the grower will not hurt them. Then you can deal with other factors such as placement, responsibilities, problems that can arise, liabilities, etc.*

*Traditionally pollination service has quantified the bees in terms of hives. However, the development is in the direction of numbers of frames of brood. Most almond pollination is done this way today. I use single story brood chambers and guarantee a minimum of five frames of brood at placement, and try to average 6 to 6 1/2. If you use double brood chambers and guarantee, say 12 frames, you should price accordingly (and figure on a forklift to move them).*

*I also guarantee the bees to be healthy and queenright. They are treated for varroa mites and foulbrood, and selectively bred for resistance to tracheal mites, chalkbrood and other diseases. I agree to open a reasonable number for grower inspection upon delivery, if requested. The contract also indicates grower responsibility to notify me, if there is poor flight, and I agree to replace hives, if more than 5% are substandard, queenless, or have foulbrood.*

*It would be good to have your grower understand, even if it is not in the contract, that it is important to have not only a minimum standard, but a maximum, as well. An overly strong hive, especially if it is last year's queen, is likely to swarm, and swarming bees do a poor job of pollination, not only after swarming, but during the week or so ahead, while they are preparing. The best pollination [colony] is provided by young queens (I figure 80 - 85% of my queens are this season's) who are laying heavily.*

*Very important, for your protection, is a liability limit. Like the seed companies, you cannot guarantee a crop; that depends on too many factors, so, like them, you should limit your liability to the price of the contract. I hold growers liable to an agreed amount for damages to the bees based on things under their control, such as their employee running over the hives with a disc, or burning off hedgerows (they have happened to me). And we split damages that are outside of grower control, such as bear damage, trespasser vandalism, etc. Growers are also responsible to notify others who are at risk of stings, and they assume liability for these.*

*Placement and timing need to be addressed. The bees [may] need shade, water, and some sort of stand, (trailer, pallets, old tires, etc.). And you may need to be pulled out of a mud hole.*

*There are two myths that need to be addressed. (A myth is an idea with a germ of truth that has become universalized.) One such myth is to wait until the bloom has started, because the bees may get used to working other plants and neglect the crop. If there is a lot of other bloom, and the crop you are pollinating is a poor nectar source, such as pears or kiwi, the principle can apply. But our melons, cukes and vine crops bloom when there is little else available and the bees will work them just fine, even if you put them in well ahead of bloom. Suppose it rains for a week, just as bloom starts and the farm roads are pools of mud. Better placed six weeks early, than one week late!*

*Another myth is to distribute the bees. Resist the grower who wants you to place one hive every hundred feet. You have a much harder time taking care of them, and protecting them from fire, etc. The recommendation to distribute the bees arises from places where bees are brought in by tractor trailer and to "distribute" means drop six pallets (24 hives) at each location. The losses from bumping around a rough field more than offset any gain that would be made by placing them around the field every so many feet. Put the bees in a favorable*

*spot with a good road to it. They will easily cover one half mile. I have studied this a lot!*

*The last serious issue to address is pesticide use (or misuse). The grower should be taught to monitor for foraging bees as the label requires. With the newer, non-residual pesticides that are most often used today, the only protection the bees need is that the grower not apply during the time bees are actually foraging. The grower should understand that compliance with label directions is required by law and by the contract, and is sufficient protection for the bees. Residual pesticides such as PennCap M, Sevin, or any of the organophosphates should never be used during bloom. The label clearly marks them as residual*

*If you ask the growers to notify you before applications, you will be doing a lot of chasing, and mostly to no avail. I used to have growers call me. I'd go, prepared to "protect" the bees, and the weather would prevent application that day. How many days do I need to wait? Or the grower needs to spray, and I am away for a few days and he cannot reach me. Notification does not work for either beekeepers or growers and those who make pesticide recommendations have done a great disservice by promoting this as a way to circumvent compliance with label directions.*

*I am aware of a case where a grower died, and his son (and heir) locked the gates to the farm. He claimed the bees were his and he was not going to let them go. A good contract would have protected the beekeeper. The beekeeper resorted to a risky "solution." He watched the farm, until he noted one of the gates unlocked, sneaked in at night and got the bees. Nothing was said, so he got away with it. But he could have gotten shot."*

Mr. Green kindly offers to send a copy of his contract upon receipt of a self-addressed stamped envelope. Information for would-be pollinators is scarce. Unfortunately, the one best resource, Agriculture Handbook 496, **Insect Pollination of Cultivated Crop Plants** out of print. Written in 1976 by S.E. McGregor, this publication remains the "pollinator's bible."

---

## TALES FROM THE LONESOME HIVE

The LH confirmed for me what I had been hearing from other beekeepers...we had a pretty good winter! I finally was able to do an inspection the Sunday afternoon following the ANR Week beekeeping program. The colony had bees in four hive bodies (remember these are the 6 5/8" deep).

With that many bees this early in the season it looks like I may have problems with swarming, if they are not attended. I say that with a little concern as the colony had almost no sealed brood that I was able to see. They had a few cells that were about to emerge and then lots

of eggs and small larvae. It seems that the very cold weather that we had did turn brood rearing off. I had made some comments to various beekeepers that the very cold temperatures might have slowed down brood rearing. It seems that I guessed right - at least as far as the Lonesome Hive was concerned.

What very well might happen is that I will see a big decline in the population as the next few days unfold. This is because we had a break of almost three weeks when little brood was produced. It is these replacement bees that would normally keep the population strong. Once the present bees begin to forage for many days they will begin to die off in fairly large numbers. Since the colony will not have many replacements for at least a month the total number of bees may go down for a while. If that happens I will have less swarming problems than it appears at the moment.

The LH has a lot of honey in the hive. I was too busy in September to extract it. We had an excellent goldenrod and aster honey flow last year. I should be able to turn that honey into bees. One thing about honey is that it doesn't go anywhere. It is like money in the bank - a honey bank.

My plans for the LH are to put a division screen on soon and make it a two-queen colony for a while. Then I will unite as soon as the honey flow begins and put on my half-comb cassette supers. I should have done that last fall but we usually don't get the fast and heavy flow in September that I like for comb honey production.