

The Valley Beekeeper

Volume 15 / Issue 1 / February 2012 A quinary report from the Cowichan Beekeepers Club, Box 274, Cobble Hill, V0R 1L0

Meeting monthly, the third Thursday, 7:30pm, Feb.-Nov., Cowichan Agricultural Office meeting room, Clements St, Duncan.

www.cowichanbeekeepers.ca

Opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Club Executive or members.

Presidents Corner

Happy new year fellow beekeepers, this is the start to my second year as your president. Hopefully we will all have a better year than last year with good strong hives and buckets of excess honey.

Its a bit early to be checking your hives but as the weather warms up get ready to feed and medicate your hives. If anyone has ideas for meeting topics or guest speakers please let me know and we'll try to arrange a good year of information. I look forward to seeing you all and coming out to support your club. Thanks, Mike Pauls

INVITE Theo Fredrichs invites all those interested in beekeeping to his informational sessions the 2nd Saturday of every month starting March, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. 2798 Cedar Road, Nanaimo. Call ahead at 250-245-4214.

Reminder Club dues to be paid.

NO increases—just \$15.00 per person and \$20 for two family members. See Cowichan Beekeepers website for benefits and news.

First meeting on February 16th is the popular get together for coffee and goodies and catch-up on what's being going on around the valley

Seedy Saturday Victoria's Annual Seed & Garden Show February 18th at 10:00-4:00, location is the Victoria Conference Centre, 720 Douglas Street. Admission \$7.00, children free

Reminder not to purchase Rogers Sugars as they are made from genetically modified crops. Buy sugar marked with Pure Cane sugar to be safe. The best prices are Costco for a 40lb bag and Walmart in Duncan.

Video of interest on the continuing use of pesticides and herbicides on crops and the landscape. The major danger of genetically engineered foods may be related to the increased use of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's weed killer Glyphosate, which is the most common weed killer in the US and just happens to be more toxic than DDT. See on the internet Dr. Huber's interview with Dr. Mercola <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4swW9OFmf8>

BCHPA Semi-Annual March 16-18,

Location: **Holiday Inn and Suites Kamloops**

The Holiday Inn and Suites in Kamloops offers a room rate of \$ 99.00/night for the semi-annual. This is not the Holiday Inn Express. Book using the code BEE. You can book via the Holiday Inn web site or the hotel direct 250.376.8288 or email www.holidayinn.com/kamloopsbc It is a new hotel.

March 16: upcoming honey industry changes and regulations at Thompson Rivers University. Fee \$20

March 17: Business Meeting. Free. Lunch available.

Sunday March 18: Educational presentations.

Bee Masters 2012 Short Course

The Bee Master 2012 course, UBC's Vancouver campus from February 20 – 24, 2012. This biennial course was first introduced by the late John Corner, BC Provincial Apiculturist in the mid-1950s. The one-week intensive course is intended for experienced beekeeper. Inquiries please visit www.beemasters.ca/beemasters

Cowichan Beekeepers Club 2011-2012 Box 274, Cobble Hill, B.C. V0R 1L0

Executive

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New book in the Club's Library

Harmonic Farming: BEES by Werner Gysi, printed 2011 in B. C.

HONEY— Does It Pay? On page 125

Honey, does it pay"? may be what your spouse asks the next time you come back from the bee yard covered with bees. It would be well to remember that *Harmonic Farming* is a life style rather than a commercial venture. The monetary values in the table below will change due to changing values of currencies, but the figures provide a guideline for cost analysis.

A piece of land with a 1.6 km (1 mile) radius will sustain 20 to 30 bee colonies, depending on available forage. Compared to other farm activities, a larger initial investment is required for beekeeping. Also, coping with new diseases and shrinking nectar sources will provide a challenging future.

Cost Analysis

As laid out in chapter 3, the cost of two hives will be approximately \$675.00. An operation with 20 hives would require \$6750.00 plus \$115.00 for tools, to total \$6865.00. Bees may be acquired with nucs. Each nuc costing \$100.00, so \$2000.00 for twenty. In addition, the following equipment would be required:

- Extractor, 4-frame, powered	\$649.00
- 2 uncapping knives, manual	\$46.00
- Double sieve, to fit pail	\$39.95
Total, honey processing tools	<u>\$734.95</u>

Other tools may be needed, such as a scale (approx. \$45.00), hot plate (approx. 25.00) and electric embedder (approx. \$36.00), for a total of \$106.00.

Total cost of investment to operate 20 hives:

- Bees	\$2000.00
- Hives and tools	\$6865.00
- Honey processing tools	\$734.95
Misc. tools	\$106.00
Total	<u>\$9,705.00</u>

With my method of beekeeping, an average honey crop of 23 kg per colony per year (50 lb.) can be expected. Honey of this quality is valued by consumers and can be sold at the farm gate for about Can \$ 12.00 per kg (Can \$5.45 per lb.). In order to replace your equipment within 10 years, the following yearly cost analysis can be done:

Income:

- Honey sales, 20 x 23 kg x \$12.00 \$5520.00

Expense:

- Cost of equipment (replaced in 10 years) \$970.00

- Cost of yearly operation
(mainly the cost of sugar) \$300.00

- 1 kg glass jars \$460.00

- Misc. (electricity, fencing, gas, etc.) \$500.00

Total expense **\$2230.00**

Yearly net profit **\$3290.00**

If you have 20 hives and spend 10 hours a year to manage each hive, this would result in an hourly wage of \$3290.00 divided by 200 hours to arrive at about \$16.45/hr. That certainly would be worthwhile, but the above numbers reflect ideal conditions and do not take into account such things as poor weather, breeding new queens, new diseases, time to clean and rework frames, marketing, etc. It would also be a bit risky for an inexperienced beekeeper to start out with 20 hives. Most likely the hours spent would double, and I would highly recommend that new beekeepers have an experienced beekeeper close by for support. More time and a few more items would also be needed to recycle wax, make a mould, and produce foundations, but most likely sales of surplus wax or wax products such as candles or foundations would offset those costs.

[PS You can also check out the Ministry of Agriculture site: http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/busmgmt/budgets/budget_pdf/specialized_ls/honey_production_summer2001.pdf]

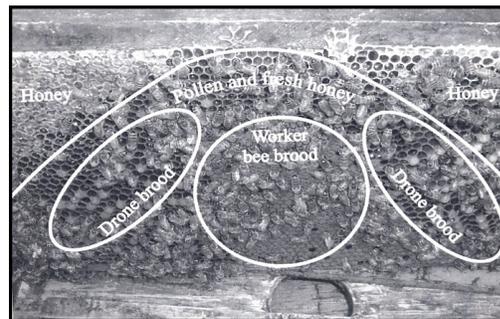
If you are buying bees for 2012 - Buy them now.

Packages and nucs can be in short supply if the build-up isn't as strong as hoped and they will sell out fast with the every-growing number of new beekeepers, and beekeepers replacing winter losses. **Importing Queens and Packaged Bees** approved sources include: Queens - New Zealand, Australia, Chile, California and Hawaii. Packages - New Zealand, Australia, and Chile.

Contact: Stan Reist, Flying Dutchman, Nanaimo, 250-390-2313 or email: flydutch@telus.net

Morley Clark has Western Australian product: 4lb package with two queens, \$250. Contact Larry Lindahl for Morley's information at 749-3800 email: lindahls@shaw.ca or sales@thebeestore.ca

Larry also has information on New Zealand bees at \$150 lbs. for \$150.



Still a little early and cool to be checking the frames this closely but this is what a healthy frame should look like.

Why every beekeeper should have a nuc

The term "nuc" is short for nucleus colony. A nucleus colony is just a very small colony of a few thousand bees and a queen.

Talking to beekeepers on the Island many reported the health and survival rate was better for their nucs than the colonies.

Nuc boxes—the structures that hold a nucleus colony—come in all shapes and sizes. Usually you see five-frame deep boxes, but they also come designed to hold medium frames. The width varies too, two-, four-, five-, and seven-frame nucs, both single story and double story. One of the favourite nucs is a standard-size deep box with three dividers that gives you four two-frame sections, each with its own entrance. Or you can remove one or more of the dividers to make bigger sections. It all depends on what you want.

Reasons for maintaining a nuc:

- If one of your hives goes queenless, you have another queen ready to go. If you wait for your colony to re-queen itself, the population will drop such that you won't get any surplus honey for that year.
- You can re-queen at times of the year when queens are unavailable to purchase.

You can use the bees in a nuc to boost populations of a weak hive. If you don't want to re-queen, you can just transfer some of the frames from your nuc into the weak hive. In addition, having an empty nuc box on hand is useful for catching swarms or removing extra bees from an overcrowded colony.

So how do you raise queens in a nuc? The simplest way is to take a frame of brood with a swarm cell from a populous hive and put it in a nuc. The frame should have lots of nurse bees covering the brood to keep them warm. Put a frame of honey or an internal feeder next to the brood. Fill any extra space with drawn comb or empty frames, then close the lid, add an entrance reducer, and let the bees do their thing.

This works fairly quickly. You can do the same thing without a swarm cell if there are plenty of eggs or very young larvae on the brood frame. This takes a long time, however, and after a week or two you may not have enough nurse bees left to raise a good queen.

Here's an example on **how to use a nuc.**

- Last spring one hive that built up early and looked like it was ready to swarm. Don't want it to swarm, so take out four frames of brood. Each frame had at least one swarm cell on the bottom and lots of nurse bees covering the brood.
- Put each frame in a separate two-frame nuc and gave each one a frame of honey reserved from the year before.
- After about four weeks check the nucs and found three had produced laying queens. Combine the queenless one with one of the others, so now there are three nucs.
- After a few more weeks transfer the two-frame nucs into five-frame equipment so the colony would continue to expand.
- Kept entrance reducers in the small colonies to protect them from robbing bees and yellow jackets.
- At the end of the fall transfer each five-frame nuc into ten-frame equipment.
- Stacked the three nucs, one atop the other. Put the strongest on the bottom, and put double screen boards between each nuc so the warm air from the largest colony would help to keep the smaller ones warm.
- In December, if you find a dead queen on the landing board of one of the regular hives. Use a piece of newspaper, combine one of the queenright nucs with the queenless hive. This leaves you with two nucs.
- The hive to which the queen was added and the remaining two nucs if all goes well they should all thrive.
- With still a number of weeks to go, but if the two remaining nucs are not needed before the first honey flow, set each of them up as a separate hive.

As you can see, having a nuc available gives you many management options that you wouldn't normally have. You can think of a good nuc as an insurance policy against the loss of a queen.

Cowichan Beekeepers Cost for Pollination Services?

*Interesting question and reply from our members over the Club's website.

I'm just curious what the going rate is for pollination services?

I'm new at this aspect of beekeeping and I'm curious what the fees and conditions are for providing the services for pollination? Does anyone use some sort of a contract stating the obvious like, "don't use pesticides while my bees are on site" or something similar? General length of time to leave a hive in the field? Crop dependant I would suppose.

>Reply

The going fee is \$65.00 per colony and the colony consists of 2 deep boxes with a total of 8 frames covered with adult bees. The B. C. Ministry of Agriculture has a sample pollination contract form, which is available online. See sample below. http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/apiculture/forms/pollination_contract.pdf

Question:

I'm assuming 8 frames per deep, not 8 frames over two deeps. Is there any variation in the length of time typically stipulated? Although I don't know the specifics of various commercial crops, I could see apples or blueberries being 2-3 weeks but something like various squash species maybe could be 2 months. I'll look at the contract, that's a great resource.

>Reply

You are correct about the duration of apple flowering but something like pumpkins may need bees up to five weeks.

The apiculture site (<http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/apiculture/index.htm>) is a bit ambiguous about frames of bees, but if there are bees covering 8 frames, then a second box should be in place to avoid swarming.

HONEYBEE CROP POLLINATION CONTRACT

Crop Year: _____

Crop Grower: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Address: _____

Beekeeper: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Address: _____

Agree to the placement of **Number:** _____ honey bee colonies for the **fee** of \$_____ per colony, at **Location:** _____

Dates From: _____ **Removal date:** _____

Contract under the following conditions:

- A standard honey bee pollination unit includes a) a laying, healthy queen, b) eight (8) frames covered with adult honey bees of which, c) at least four (4) frames contain all stages of bee brood development. If some or all colonies fail to meet the pollination unit standard, a percentage can be determined and the total pollination fee adjusted. (Note: Allow for some natural variation among colonies during the pollination period).
- During the pollination period, no agricultural insecticides shall be applied on the blooming crop. If an emergency spray application is required, the grower shall provide the beekeeper with 24 hour notification for the protection or removal of the colonies.
- Colonies must be placed in locations accessible to the beekeeper, and allowance must be given for beekeeping management and inspection.
- 50 percent of the pollination fee will be paid on the delivery date of the colonies, and the remaining 50 percent paid halfway through the pollination service period.

Grower Signature _____ **Beekeeper Signature** _____