

### **Buying Bees and Asking Questions**

Most beekeepers in Arkansas want to have more bees. Adding more colonies can be done in a variety of ways whether you are making splits, capturing swarms, or just buying bees. You can buy bees in a variety of ways also. You can buy hives from another beekeeper, buy different sizes of packages, buy nucs, or just buy a queen.

When you are shopping around for bees you want to be sure that you are buying good bees. No beekeeper wants to buy someone else's problem. To ensure that you are buying a good quality product there are certain measures you as the buyer could and should take. If you are purchasing bees from an in-state beekeeper make sure they have had a recent inspection and ask to see the inspection report, or a copy of the Certificate of Health issued by the Arkansas State Plant Board. If they have not had a recent inspection ask them to get an inspection.

You may also want to ask the seller a few questions. Like:

- 1) What diseases/ parasites have you had in your apiaries?
- 2) How have you controlled disease, mites, beetles, etc.?
- 3) What products have you used for control, and when was the last application?
- 4) How often do you change out combs, and how old are the combs in the product I am buying?
- 5) How old are the queens?

If you are ordering bees from out of state there are certain questions you need to ask/ consider to ensure you receive good quality bees.

- 1) Are the bees certified to be of European Stock?
- 2) What are the genetics and where and how were they bred?

- 3) How close are Africanized Honeybees to your apiaries?
- 4) Will a Health Certificate be shipped with the bees?
- 5) What have the bees been inspected for?
- 6) Etc.....

Keep in mind that when bees are inspected most of the time not all of the colonies are opened. Due to workload, not every colony will be inspected but rather random inspections are done of those present with a minimum of 20% being opened and inspected. The inspector will report conditions that "appear" at the time of the inspection. However, some conditions may "appear" later. Take foulbroods for example: Foulbrood can be present at dangerous levels even when the symptoms can be covered-up at the time of inspection. Legal antibiotics can temporarily cover-up symptoms while future "outbreaks" can be just around the corner. This is why as a buyer you will need to ask certain questions to ensure the quality of the product you are purchasing. You will also need to look at the bees yourself either before you purchase them, or when they are delivered.

I am not trying to say that inspections are not of value. In fact, countless times buyers have avoided problems because of inspections. But it is important that the potential buyer take some responsibilities when buying anything. It is just an extra step to ensure quality. It is like checking the eggs at the grocery store, or obtaining Car Facts before buying a vehicle.

### **Ongoing Research at U of A**

Roxane Magnus, a Master's Student working in Dr. Allen Szalanski's Insect Genetics Laboratory at the University of Arkansas, has been conducting a study on the genetic variation of honey bees in

southern and central United States by DNA sequencing a portion of the mitochondrial DNA genome. Mitochondrial DNA is maternally inherited and is ideal for tracing honey bee genealogy. Thus far, we have focused primarily on feral and colonies managed by hobbyist and sideliner beekeepers. Of the 432 samples sequenced so far from 13 states, a total of 35 mitotypes were observed which represent all four *A. mellifera* lineages known to exist in the United States. Those lineages include: (C, 16 mitotypes) Eastern European; (M, 5 mitotypes) Western European; (O, 5 mitotypes) Middle Eastern; and (A, 9 mitotypes) African. The greatest amount of genetic variation that we have observed is in the 'C' Eastern European lineage which includes *A. m. ligustica*, and *A. m. carnica*. This is not surprising since this lineage is preferred by the beekeeping industry. Interestingly, we found evidence of the 'M' lineage (*A. m. mellifera* the "Dark Bee") still existing (8% of feral colonies), even though this subspecies has not been preferred by beekeepers for over 100 years. This lineage is being managed by at least by two beekeepers in the area, one in southeastern Missouri and another in central Arkansas.

Furthermore, we also found representatives of the 'O' lineage (*A. m. syriaca*), (11% of feral colonies) which has not been imported into the US since the 1880's.

This summer and fall, we will be looking at the genetic variation of southern queen breeders in order to compare and contrast them with what we have found in the feral colonies as well as in the hobbyist and sideliner beekeeper colonies. So far from the two queen breeders we have sampled, only two mitotypes were found, C1 and C11, and these two mitotypes are found in over 70% of managed colonies we have surveyed so far. Future breeding programs utilizing genetically distinct lineages/mitotypes could be used for increasing the fitness of honey bee colonies in Arkansas.



**National Honey Bee**  
**Awareness Day**  
*A Day Dedicated to*  
*Honey Bees*

The National Honey Bee Awareness Day (NHBAD) is the first ever day completely

dedicated to Honey Bee Awareness from a national effort. This year, on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, we are asking for all state and county associations and bee clubs, to

participate in local events tailored to educating, and connecting with the community.

The goal of the National Honey Bee Awareness Day, is to harness and multiply the efforts that many bee associations already make in their communities, by having a national effort to come together on one day.

It's about time a day is dedicated just to the Honey Bee.

If you're interested in educating the public to the pitfalls and dangers of chemical and pesticide use, then get involved. This is a day to connect with the public and voice your concerns, and make a difference on a local level, with national exposure. This is a day for all clubs to open a bee yard, let the public sample some honey, and get others interested in bees and beekeeping. No matter the event...DO SOMETHING!

This is a grassroots effort. At this time, we have no board of directors, state coordinators, or national sponsors. What we need, are beekeepers willing to get involved, and those with constructive comments and positive attitudes.

What event each association plans to do is up to them. The idea is to connect with the community, educate on issues effecting the honey bee, and get others involved in beekeeping.

If you would like to get involved, contact Mike Thomas at [mikenida@ptd.net](mailto:mikenida@ptd.net) or call 717-938-0444. The website address is [www.nhbad.com](http://www.nhbad.com).

## **APIARY LAWS**

In the 2009 Legislative Session Bill HB1873 was introduced to update the current Apiary Laws. HB1873 was pulled from the 2009 Legislative Session and was recommended for study in Interim by the Joint Interim Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development. The Interim Study Committee will keep reviewing HB1873 and will be seeking input from various sources to produce an acceptable revision for the Apiary laws to be introduced in a future legislative session.

In order to gain input from concerned parties the Apiary section along with staff from U of A will be attending Beekeeper Association meetings around the state. These meeting will be open to the public and the local State Senators and State Representatives will be invited to attend. Once the meeting dates have been established they will be posted on our website at: [www.plantboard.org](http://www.plantboard.org); once on the home page – click on *Apiary Law Changes*. We will also send out notification of the meetings to the surrounding area

beekeepers two weeks before the meeting, and the meetings will be listed in newsletters (if the information is available by print date).

All associations have been mailed a copy of the current law and of HB1873 to share with their members and to review. Copies will also be posted on our website. Copies can also be mailed out on request if you are not a member of an association, or if you do not have internet access.

Comments will be taken at the meetings, by email at: [mark.stoll@aspb.ar.gov](mailto:mark.stoll@aspb.ar.gov), or by mail at:

Apiary Section- Arkansas State Plant Board  
Attn: Mark Stoll  
P.O. Box 1069  
Little Rock, AR 72203

All comments will be turned over to the Interim Study Committee.





**Happy 4th of July**