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# THE COMMONWEALTH BUZZ

Volume 9, Issue 4

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## *View from the President*

### *Opportunities for Beekeepers*

Virginia beekeepers have a very interesting opportunity. At the November meeting Wayne Esaias of Howard County, Maryland, described his work on collecting scale-hive data from beekeepers. He works for NASA and has been very fortunate in interesting the agency in participating in his project. Basically it involves global warming. Now, before you say "global warming again!" let's think for a minute. Beekeepers are dependent on plants blooming for both pollination and for a honey crop.

If world climate is getting warmer that means plants in our area may be blooming earlier. Wayne's data so far shows that to be the case. So, again, we cannot read an old calendar and say "time to put supers on." The bees are responding to the flower bloom. We need to be responding to the bees' activity. Since our nectar flows are strong but short, they can easily be missed.

At one time a hive sitting on a scale was quite common in beeyards. I wonder if any of you have a scale hive today. Or perhaps you have a scale sitting in the back of a shed - used for a while but the interest in keeping records passed and the scale was stored away.

Virginia has a wide range of climates. There's the warmer east bordering the Chesapeake Bay. Moving inland the weather is a bit cooler throughout the year. Then we have the mountains with a cold, snowy winter. Scale-hives scattered throughout the state would give very interesting information. Virginia beekeepers can participate in Wayne's project. He is looking for beekeepers in the various regions to have a scale-hive in their beeyard.

Where do the scales come from? The "old fashioned" beam scales that farmers and feed stores had have been replaced by fancy modern ones. But—guess what—that old beam scale is as good

*see President, page 2*

## *Fall VSBA Meeting*

### *90<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Association*

The 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration opened with Wyatt Mangum presenting his recent findings on his North Carolina bee colonies, untreated for varroa for 6 years. His plan is to discover reasons for their survival with a goal of using them to produce queens for beekeepers.

Dr. José Fuentes presented data showing that air pollutants are reacting with the floral aromas that attract pollinators. Difficulty in locating plants leads to declines of wild plants dependent on pollinators and increases plants not relying on pollinators.

Dr. Rick Fell demonstrated the mite distribution in beehives during the seasons, with population peaks in September. Since 50 to 60 percent of varroa are found in brood cells, it may be possible to keep mite population low with management techniques.

Lannie Ballard updated legislative efforts for the beekeepers. Gov. Tim Kaine declared November 1-8 Virginia Beekeepers Week. In addition recognition was given to VSBA by VDACS.

Dr. Frank Linton presented his thoughts on developing a monitoring system within the hive for honey bees. Such a system could indicate the health and condition of colonies.

Dr. Wayne Esaias is promoting the use of scale hives as indicators of global warming. Plants are blooming earlier. Data from scale hives will not only demonstrate global warming but also affect the honey crops beekeepers achieve.

The day's celebration ended with Marc Hoffman's play giving us a glimpse into the remarkable life of the Reverend Lorenz Lorraine Langstroth, who discovered bee space and revolutionized beekeeping.

A 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday cake decorated with big honey bees was enjoyed by all. 🍯

*Submitted by Kathy Miller  
Secretary, VSBA*

# Business Meeting

## Minutes from the Fall Business Meeting

The business meeting of the Virginia State Beekeepers Association on November 1, 2008, at Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, VA, was called to order at 11:25 am.

A motion was passed to dispense with reading the minutes of the business meeting of April 12, 2008.

The President reported that membership is increasing as is attendance at the meetings.

The Treasurer reported approximately \$15,000 in the bank account.

A motion was passed to contribute \$1000 to Wyatt Mangum for his continued investigations on Varroa mite resistance.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am. 🍄

*Submitted by Kathy Miller  
Secretary, VSBA*



Virginia State Beekeepers' Association  
www.virginiabeekeepers.org

<b>President</b> Ann Harman	540-364-4660 ahworkerb@aol.com
<b>1st Vice President</b> Alan Fiala	703-790-8044 alan.fiala@aya.yale.edu
<b>2nd Vice President</b> Frank Wyatt	336-635-5821 wytgrp@embarqmail.com
<b>Secretary</b> Kathy Miller	434-906-0006 kfrasemiller@gmail.com
<b>Treasurer</b> Karen Hunt	540-937-4792 kahu9@juno.com
<b>Executive Secretary</b> Dr. Rick Fell	540-231-6341 rfell@vt.edu
<b>Legislative Chair</b> Lannie Ballard	540-291-2538 lballard@ntelos.net
<b>Webmaster</b> Tom Greiner	703-532-6655 tomg.rfi@verizon.net
<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Keith Tignor	804-786-3515 keith.tignor@vdacs.virginia.gov

*President, from page 1*

today as it was 50 or more years ago. The scales appear at farm auctions, in the back corners of barns and sheds and other forgotten places.

Perhaps you already have a scale-hive in your apiary. If you do and have records, Wayne would very much like to hear from you. If you have a scale, or know where to get one, he would appreciate your becoming a part of the project. Contact: wayne.esaias@nasa.gov or write: Wayne Esaias, Code 614.2, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771.

Just think! You could increase your honey production. 🍄

*Submitted by Ann Harman  
President, VSBA*

## Treasurer's Report

### Notes from the Treasurer's desk

Thanks to all those who have renewed their memberships, which were due at the start of the new fiscal year, June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Please look on your mailing label or email message --- if it says "2007-2008" it's time to renew.** If you do not belong to a local beekeepers' association, your dues are \$12. If you are a member of a local association, then your dues are \$10, and you can renew either through your local association, or directly with VSBA by sending your name, address, phone number, email address and name of your local association to: Karen Hunt, PO Box 213, Amissville VA 20106. Phone numbers are important, especially if I have trouble reading handwriting, or your mail or email is returned as undeliverable.

Since we seem to get quite a number of "email bounce backs" after each newsletter distribution, please remember to update the Treasurer with any changes to your email address (yep, this is an ongoing, regular treasurer's plea). **To change or add your email address, email me at kahu9@juno.com.**

If you have any questions, contact me at the address or email above, or by phone at 540-937-4792. 🍄

*Submitted by Karen Hunt  
Treasurer, VSBA*

# State Apiarist Report

## Winter-time opportunities

The fall meeting is behind us. Thanksgiving is over. And, a new year is here again. Time sure flies when you're having fun or don't have time to catch your breath between travel to meetings, hive feedings, and pushing honey sales. Such is the life of a beekeeper in the "off season".

Winter, traditionally, is a time for beekeepers to regroup. National associations hold their annually meetings. Beekeepers make preorders for supplies, queens, and packages. And, honey stocks diminish. The most important activities are planning – planning to improve operations, painting those hive boxes, agendas for meetings, and healthier more productive hives. Perhaps you could plan on adding one more item to the list – community services.

Community Services often goes by the more popular term of "outreach". One form of outreach is to place your name on the local swarm call-list. Answering a swarm call is an important part of a local association's service to their communities. Homeowners are not very tolerant of swarms hanging from their mailbox. Each association, and beekeeper, should make contact with local police, fire, and extension offices with contact information for a swarm removal coordinator or list of beekeepers ready to help a neighbor in need.

Another outreach is providing presentations and demonstrations for local schools, garden clubs, fairs, and museums. There is always a high demand from pre-schoolers to retirees for the expertise beekeepers can share on the mysteries of the hive. Just showing up with an observation hive, smoker, and veil is enough to draw a crowd. Sharing a few life experiences is always appreciated.

Although there are lots of other outreach opportunities, the last I'll mention are those to fellow beekeepers. Service to the local beekeepers through leadership and support, like queen and nuc production, helps improve everyone's operations. Mentoring a new beekeeper may be repaid in kind with added hands at extraction time.

Sharing is a common theme this time of year. Let's "plan" to make it a year round mission. 🐝

*Submitted by Keith Tignor,  
State Apiarist*

# Haagen-Daz Bee Garden

## UC Davis launches garden competition

Haagen-Dazs has announced a \$125,000 donation to the UC Davis Department of Entomology to launch a nationwide design competition to create a Honey Bee Haven garden at the Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility at UC Davis. \$65,000 from the gift will be used to establish the garden, with the balance of the gift to be used to benefit the health of honey bee populations.

The garden is intended to be a living laboratory supporting research into the nutritional needs and natural feeding behaviors of honey bees and other insect pollinators. Visitors will be able to glean ideas on how to establish their own bee-friendly gardens and help to improve the nutrition of bees in their own backyards.

The garden design competition is open to anyone who can create a proposal by using basic landscape design principles. Design submissions for the competition should describe a one-half-acre garden that can be installed for \$65,000 or less. Submissions must include a site plan, planting plan, maintenance program and construction cost estimate.

The plans should include plant species that provide forage for honey bees, a bee-accessible water source, and environmentally friendly paths for visitors. More design specifications and lists of bee-appropriate plants can be found at the UC Davis Department of Entomology Web site at <http://entomology.ucdavis.edu/dept/beebio.cfm>.

Design plans for the Honey Bee Haven garden must be received at UC Davis by Jan. 30, 2009. Plans should be mailed to the California Center for Urban Horticulture, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Dean's Office, University of California, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616-8571.

More information on the design competition can be obtained from Melissa Borel, program manager at UC Davis' California Center for Urban Horticulture, at (530) 752-6642 or [mjborel@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mjborel@ucdavis.edu). 🐝

*Taken from Catch the Buzz*

## Legislative Update

*Continuing to move forward*

Those of you who attended the Virginia State Beekeepers Association's fall meeting on November 1<sup>st</sup> were witness to a first in Virginia. You saw a proclamation signed by Governor Tim Kaine recognizing November 1-8, 2008, as Virginia Beekeepers' Week in Virginia. The proclamation also acknowledged the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Virginia State Beekeepers Association. It can be viewed on the VSBA web-site <http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org>. Also, with help from Senators Emmett Hanger and Creigh Deeds, the Association received a Commendation from the Virginia State Senate recognizing the Association's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

So, where do we stand now? On November 12<sup>th</sup>, in letters to several State Senators and Delegates, I requested two pieces of legislation be introduced in the 2009 session. I asked for continued funding for work started as recommended in "The Study of the Plight of Virginia's Beekeepers". Secondly, I requested legislation to allow a "honey bee" license plate to be issued.

Senator Harry Blevins, from Chesapeake, has agreed to introduce a budget request to continue the programs that the Virginia Cooperative Extension at Virginia Tech has started. Senator Hanger and Senator Reynolds have agreed to co-sponsor Senator Blevins' request. It is going to be difficult to get any funding this year. When asked to contact your legislator, it is going to be more critical than ever that you take a few minutes to do so. You might also get family, friends and neighbors to contact their legislators.

I spoke with Ms. Carolyn Easley at the Department of Motor Vehicles Special License Plate Program who informed me that a Virginia state legislator may introduce legislation for a special license plate. Otherwise the process requires obtaining 350 prepaid applications. She agreed that a "Help Save Our Honey Bees" with a picture of a honey bee on a goldenrod blossom or similar environmentally friendly plant on the plate should be a very good seller. More and more people are becoming aware of the problems with the honey bees and other pollinators.

*See Legislature, page 5*

## Upcoming Meetings

American Honey Producers Radisson Hotel & Conf. Cent. Fresno, CA	Jan. 6-10, 2009
Am. Beekeeping Federation John Ascuaga's Casino/Hotel Reno, NV	Jan. 13-17, 2009
VSBA Spring Meeting Northampton Comm. Center Hampton, VA	April 17-18, 2009
NCSBA/SCSBA Joint Meeting York Technical College Rock Hill, SC	March 6-7, 2009
KSBA Spring Meeting Henderson Co. Ext. Offices Henderson, KY	March 7, 2009
WVBA Spring Meeting Fairmont, WV	March 28, 2009
Eastern Apiculture Society Holiday Valley Resort Ellicottville, NY	August 3-7, 2009
VSBA Fall Meeting Blue Ridge Comm. College Weyers Cave, VA	Nov. 7, 2009

## Terramycin Availability

*Pfizer TM products discontinued*

Pfizer Animal Health reported recently that many of their Terramycin (TM) products registered for use with honey bees have been discontinued. The company cited competition from other TM products in the market place as a reason for this action. TM-343 is the only oxytetracycline product being produced by Pfizer that is labeled for bee use. Bee equipment suppliers still have terramycin products in stock. And, premixed TM products are available.

Over dosage with terramycin products can increase brood mortality and contaminate honey stores. Use on honey bees is approved for treatment of American and European foulbrood. TM-343 is applied 3 times at a rate of 200 mg per colony; and, removed at least 6 weeks prior to a honey flow. Dusting TM with confectionary sugar is the suggested formulation for treating bee hives. 🐝

*From VaBeeman*

## *The Gift of Bees*

*TBA donates beehives to international group*

Members of the Tidewater Beekeepers Association recently approved a gift of three colonies of bees, complete with instructions in beekeeping, as a holiday charitable contribution. The colonies were donated through Heifer International, an organization devoted to helping struggling communities worldwide obtain a sustainable source of food and income. Heifer promotes beekeeping because bees are useful in many ways. They increase pollination, which boosts crop production, benefiting a whole village. They produce family income through the sale of honey, pollen and beeswax. And adding beekeeping to a small farm helps diversify operations, so the farmers have something to fall back on if the market for one of their crops goes flat. One of the cornerstones of Heifer's philosophy is *Passing on the Gift*, which allows families and individuals who have received animals to be donors themselves. This means that the first swarm or split from the donated hives will go to another needy family within the village. This spirit of goodwill ripples through the community as animals are passed on and bonds are formed in a group effort to better their own lives. For more information, visit the Heifer International web site at: <http://www.heifer.org>. 🐝

*Taken from The Forager  
Pam Fisher, Editor*

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### *Legislature, from page 4*

As I asked in the past, invite your state Senators and Delegates to one of your monthly meetings. Get to know them; but, the main thing is let them get to know you, your association, and something about honey bees and beekeeping. This will help in Richmond when bills come up for debate.

I would like to thank all of you who have helped in the past. Send me any beekeeping concerns you believe could be addressed by the legislators. Please put "VSBA Legislative Issue" in the subject to avoid the SPAM blocker. My email address is [lballard@ntelos.net](mailto:lballard@ntelos.net). I hope you and your families have a good Christmas and a good New Year. 🐝

*Submitted by Lannie D. Ballard,  
VSBA Legislative Liaison*

## *Almond Production Growing*

*Optimism growing among Australian producers*

Almond production in Australia has tripled in the last eight years, and the industry predicts it will triple again in the next eight years. Production is valued at \$180 million, but it is expected to exceed \$500 million by 2015.

The Australian industry is now a net exporter, the third-biggest in the world, and is set to overtake Spain to become the second-biggest exporter by 2012. California is the world's biggest almond producer, supplying 80 per cent of exports, with an industry worth more than \$2.3 billion.

Almond plantings have been driven by the corporate sector and managed investment schemes. The industry estimates about 85 per cent of plantings are owned by corporations.

Almonds are depend on honeybees for pollination. The Australian industry estimates it will need 250,000 hives within five years, but only 150,000 are available. The relationship of bees to nuts is linear: if only half the number of bees are available, only half the potential nuts will be produced.

The industry worries not only about the number of hives, but potential honeybee pests such as varroa mite, which weakens honeybees and kills wild bees. Eight years after varroa mites infected colonies in the US, bee numbers were down by 25 per cent.

Drought is another threat to the Australian almond industry. Last year South Australian Murray River growers have had to buy water to keep their plantings alive. As much as 90 per cent of plantings are under drip irrigation.

Despite key resources being under threat, the mood of the almond industry is positive. "The industry is young and it is growing rapidly and is very forward-looking" according to Julie Haslett, the chief executive of the Almond Board of Australia.

Kevin Forbes, a Mildura senior rural salesman with Elders Real Estate said that over the past 10-15 years people had been converting dried fruit properties to almonds. Former broadacre farms with access to the river and licences to pump had been planted with almonds, he said. 🐝

*By Asa Wahlquist  
From The Australian*

## Virginia Beekeepers' Week

*Certificate of Recognition from Gov. Kaine*

In recognition of the many contributions provided by beekeepers, and their bees, Governor Timothy Kaine declared November 1-8, 2008 as Virginia Beekeepers' Week. The announcement coincided with the VSBA annual Fall meeting in Weyers Cave.

In the announcement Governor Kaine recognized that honeybees first arrived in Virginia in 1622 as cargo to Jamestown and assisted the colonists by contributing candle wax, honey and medical resources. Today honey bees increase Virginia's crop production and quality of crops such as apples, peaches, cucumbers, watermelons, soybeans and cotton; and, add an estimated \$74 million to the value of the harvest.

Governor Kaine stated that the Virginia State Beekeepers' Association has worked tirelessly to identify and resolve the plight of the beekeeping industry through research, education and expansion. For nine decades the VSBA has been a reliable resource and respected leadership by introducing beekeeping to newcomers, continuing the education of experienced beekeepers through meetings and classes, and implementing new techniques to combat the decline of the beekeeping industry in the Commonwealth.

A copy of the proclamation is available on the VSBA website at [www.virginiabeekeepers.org](http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org). 🍄

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## Pollination Survey

*VDACS – MAAREC survey for 2008*

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium is conducting a pollination survey. The survey is for beekeeper activities during the 2008 season. Beekeepers who participated in the pollination of a crop, i.e. apples, cucumbers, pumpkins, and cantaloupes, are asked to complete the form on page 7. Completed surveys should be returned to Keith Tignor at VA Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218. Survey results will be posted on the MAAREC website. 🍄

## Australian Bee Problems

*Apis cerana threatens beekeeping down-under*

Australia may be in breach of protocols that allow it to ship live bees to the United States. The problem is an incursion of Asian honey bees (*Apis cerana*) in far north Queensland where 17 nests and swarms were destroyed in May last year. Similar in appearance to *Apis mellifera*, the Western honey bee found in North America, *A. cerana* is associated with several honey bee parasites and diseases.

The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations requires live bee shipments from Australia to be certified as having hive freedom and country freedom from Asian bees. Australia can certify hive freedom, but not country freedom. The Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS) is in negotiations with U.S. authorities in regard to live bee imports. Meanwhile, Biosecurity Queensland is making a major push to find and destroy as many Asian honeybee nests and swarms as it can before the wet season sets in.

The isolated location of the incursion may be the saving grace for the country's ability to export packages to the U.S. Last year revenue from packages shipped to the U.S. from Australia was estimated at \$6 million. Exports to California in time for almond pollination are expected to increase again in 2009.

Rob Williams, agriculture counselor at the Australian Embassy in Washington, told Bee Culture the U.S. has been informed of the incursion and Australia is proposing a change to the protocols that would effectively put Cairns in a quarantine zone. However, there has to be U.S. agreement to the proposal. "It is such an isolated area," he says. "Our feeling is the U.S. will look favorably on this but we haven't received official confirmation yet."

A U.S. rejection of Asian live bees would be a disaster on both sides of the Pacific. It would rip through the booming Australian export industry and threaten American crop pollination, including the multi-billion dollar almond, apple and orange sectors. Australian bees have become even more important role in pollination of U.S. crops after losses suffered from Colony Collapse Disorder and other hive problems. 🍄

*Taken from Catch the Buzz by Alan Harman*

## HONEY BEE POLLINATION SURVEY – 2008

Please enter the crop name for each pollination contract or contact. Also indicate the county, approximate number of acres pollinated, number of colonies and the price charged per colony for each contract.

	<b>CROP</b>	<b>COUNTY/State</b>	<b>ACRES POLLINATED</b>	<b>NUMBER OF COLONIES</b>	<b>PRICE PER COLONY</b>
<b>1</b>					
<b>2</b>					
<b>3</b>					
<b>4</b>					
<b>5</b>					
<b>6</b>					
<b>7</b>					
<b>8</b>					
<b>9</b>					
<b>10</b>					
<b>11</b>					
<b>12</b>					
<b>13</b>					
<b>14</b>					
<b>15</b>					

Estimated number of colonies you owned **at the end of 2007:** \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated number of colonies you owned **at the beginning of 2008:** \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated percent split of your annual gross beekeeping income between:

**honey sales** \_\_\_\_\_ %

**pollination rentals** \_\_\_\_\_ %

**other** \_\_\_\_\_ %

**COMMERCIAL BEEKEEPERS ONLY:**

How many full time employees did you have in 2008?

What is your estimated **TOTAL** cost (in dollars) to maintain one colony for one year? \$\_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Keith Tignor, VA Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218.

# **VSBA Spring Meeting**

**April 17-18, 2009**

**Northampton Community Center  
Hampton, VA**

Karen Hunt  
P.O. Box 213  
Amissville, VA 20106

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED