



Happy New Year!

If you're missing your bees terribly, welcome. You're among folks who understand that! But this time of year, please don't go knocking on the hive or peeking inside or worse yet, digging deep even when we have these odd warm days in winter.*

Instead, please dig deep into this newsletter. We've got insights and links that may help you become a better beekeeper, or at least help chase away the "I'm missing my bees blues."

Also, please go to the MBA site and look at upcoming bee schools. We can't work our bees this time of year, but talking about bees and with beekeepers is helpful.

Hang in there, bees and beekeepers. Spring is (allegedly) heading our way!

* Regarding digging into hives this time of year: I received a communication from a first-year beek who said all there to learn is overwhelming, but they're trying to do it all, and opened their colony in December to make sure it was still queenright as they'd been told that minimally, monthly, ensure you're queenright.

Gasp. Broken propolis seals, an energy loss while bees regroup and reheat, and if they weren't queenright, what are you going to do about it this time of year? Just to name a few issues ...

The need for beekeeper education and mentors is HUGE. In 2019, please consider how you can help.

Thank you.

Above photo: that's me, checking on winter hives. Here in southwest Michigan, bears aren't so much of a hindrance.

Spring Conference Notes & Meet the New Communications Chair



Jennifer Blackburn

Taking over the position from Dr. Meghan Milbrath after the elections at the fall conference is Jennifer Blackburn. Jen has kept bees for approximately eight years and is dedicated to continuing her own education on bees and beekeeping, as well as teaching others. During these cold winter months Jen and her husband usually work on rendering wax for projects as well as building any new equipment that may be needed.

The conference committee is working to

Jen's day job is as a buyer for an

finalize the last few speakers for breakout sessions and will be putting the schedule together soon! Registration opens on January 28th at michiganbees.org.

Dr. May Berenbaum is our keynote speaker this year. Dr. Berenbaum is a national medal of science winner, and the chair of the entomology department at University of Illinois Champaign – Urbana. She is an excellent researcher, speaker, and science advocate.

Stay tuned for more announcements regarding the spring conference. Hope to see you there!

automotive company. She and her husband keep a small hobby farm with chickens, turkeys, and pigs ... and bees! They're gearing up to do maple syrup soon as well.

Reach out to Jen if you're experiencing any issues or concerns regarding communications from MBA; her contact info is listed on the MBA website.

Thanks Jen!

A Fall Meeting Highlight

by Charlotte Hubbard, mibeeseeditor@gmail.com

Last issue, I promised to share more information on the fall meeting. As I look through my piles of notes and copies of the presentations, I'm overwhelmed by the amount of information conveyed. Bottom line: you should've been there!

Nonetheless, I'll try to summarize another of the highlights -- Dr. Meghan Milbrath's overview what MSU is doing for pollinators. (Lots!) She launched with a review of the [Michigan Pollinator Initiative](#), which addresses current and future issues related to bees, other pollinators, and pollination in Michigan.

Perhaps click on the first tab, "Programs", to explore a dazzling list of what this initiative is doing, from **Heroes to Hives**—the program helping vets' wellness through beekeeping, to the **Pollinator Champions Course**—which will provide you with information to support and speak on behalf of pollinators ... just to name a few.

The "Publications" tab leads to some must-reads, including a list of rules and regulations for Michigan beekeeping.

Dr. Milbrath also discussed ongoing mite research and the Bee Informed Partnership. The threat is real and increasing, and we beekeepers need to be vigilant.

MSU also has research focusing on fungicide use, European Foul Brood, a native bee census, educating vets—our partners in bee health, and determining the value of CRP land to bees, to name a few.

I suggest you click on the website's "Stay Connected" tab, where you can sign up for the e-newsletter which shares news of all that's going on.

We have lots of people working hard to protect Michigan pollinators. Salute to all of you.

Note: the 2019 Fall Conference is October 19. Please watch the MBA website for more information, and mark your calendars.

In your "spare" time ...

by Charlotte Hubbard, mibeeseeditor@gmail.com

While demands of bee season are paused, I don't know anyone who has *spare* time. Something always comes along that demands attention.

Ongoing beekeeping education hopefully gains some of your spare time. I asked our reps and various beekeepers who had crossed my path for **suggestions** on a favorite / helpful / insightful book or article,



Rep at Large

and / or video or movie to watch during the off season. Here's the responses:

- Beekeeping Today podcast, recommended by both *Greg Willis and Rich Wieske*
- Everyone should read Sammy Ramsey's paper on varroa feeding on fatty bodies, not bee blood. And figure out why that is important to colony management. *Larry Connor, PhD*
- It is a little pricey but am taking the University of Montana beekeeping courses working towards the Master Beekeeper and am actually learning a lot. The amount one can learn is endless. *Norm Adams,*

- Shameless self plug, but my swarm article. I want people to see it before spring. [Access it here.](#) *Meghan Milbrath, PhD*
- Meghan's swarm article! (Fun, info-rich read, see above.) and Increase Essentials by Larry Connor, PhD. I reread it annually. (Yes, I'm forgetful.) *Charlotte Hubbard*
- Bees - A Honeyed History. Loaded with historical fun-facts and really cool illustrations. Copyright page is at the back of the book, and it's a bit confusing, as the illustrator is listed as the main author. (c) 2015; ISBN: 978-1-4197-2615-6. I found it easily on Amazon. *Lauri LaBumbard*
- My recommendation was suggested to me by Meghan. It is called *The Lean Farm*, written by Ben Hartman. It is a practical systems-based approach for a more sustainable farming operation. It is a great read for any beekeeper who is scaling up yet tripping over all of the stuff we acquire and the inefficient practices we get caught up in. *Dave Pearce*
- Time to settle in and get some bee read time. The national bee magazines are always a great go to; "Bee Culture" and "The American Bee Journal" are up to date and thoughtful. I also like to take some time to do some in-depth review of my big old classic "The Hive and the Honey Bee" published by Dadant. I hear that an updated version will be coming out this year. *Joel Lantz*
- I strongly recommend watching Dr. Megan Milbrath's Youtube video entitled: Why did my bees die. I realize that may seem a bit doom and gloom but at some point, we all have asked that same question and her video is an excellent resource. *Theresa Bristol-Miller*
- In the winter doldrums? Waiting for spring to get back to beekeeping? Why wait? Winter is a great time to retreat to the workshop and build your own bee hive and related gadgets. Explore this other side of beekeeping with the help of the informative, step-by-step videos that can be found "In the Beekeeper's Workshop". This Youtube channel was created by Michigan's own Steve Tilmann and has recently passed 1 million views. Explore the channel at www.youtube.com/user/beekeepersworkshop. Free downloadable plans for these projects can be found on the Michigan Beekeeper's Association web site www.michiganbees.org; search for "workshop".

Above photo courtesy of Joel Lantz

Beekeeping In New Zealand The Manuka Honey Story, Part 3

By Steve Tilmann

Editor's Note: This is the third installment in this fascinating insight into manuka honey. Thanks Steve!

QUALITY ASSURANCE

We now turn to the issue of quality assurance and traceability of manuka honey. These two aspects of manuka honey are sort of interlinked. If you spend the kind of money



manuka honey demands, you kind of would like to know – specifically – what’s in it. And if there is an issue found, you need to know where that honey came from in order to fix it.

So here is how the UMFHA (Unique Manuka Factor Honey Association, the outfit that owns the UMF trademark and is the “official” source of manuka honey) handles that.

The Association has set up some laboratories that perform assays on manuka honey. If a member is going to sell manuka honey with the “UMF” brand, then they are required to submit honey samples to these labs for analyses.

The tests determine the amount of MGO (methylglyoxal, the active antimicrobial compound found in the manuka plant) present in the sample, the levels of dihydroxyacetone (DHA) a precursor to MGO, some other obscure chemical tracers and, I believe, pollen analyses. The higher the value of MGO and the percentage of manuka pollen, then the higher the UMF rating that sample receives. The higher the rating, the higher the selling price of the honey.

There are also minimums that must be met in order to be called manuka honey.

Every barrel of manuka honey must be tested separately. Here is where the traceability comes in. Each and every barrel of manuka honey receives a serial number and that number and the assay results follow that barrel of manuka honey where ever it goes (see photo above).

The lab analyses for each barrel doesn’t come cheap. I was told by the beekeeper I met that lab assays can cost him up to \$750 (USD) per barrel. But if that barrel tests out at the high end of the manuka honey rating scale, that would be \$750 well spent. The beekeeper will get that \$750 back many times over.



MARKETING MANUKA

You can have the absolute best product in the world, but if no one knows about

it, you won’t sell a dime’s worth. Creating a demand is what marketing is all about. And it is in the marketing world that the New Zealand beekeepers appear to have excelled.

New Zealand has a reputation of being a pure and natural country. Having been there, I can see why. New Zealand has every shade of green there is. Waterfalls of crystal clear streams abound by the thousands, backdropped by craggy, soaring mountain peaks capped in snow fields and glaciers. The farms are neatly laid out, clean, and have this pristine look about them. The New Zealanders are quite aware of this zeitgeist and actively promote this image around the world.



Honey already has an image of being a natural product. Combine this with the already wholesome image of New Zealand, you end up with a compelling marketing story. From what I can see, the New Zealand beekeepers are by no means shy in promoting this image, particularly when it comes to manuka honey.

PACKAGING THE PRODUCT

While in New Zealand, you are never far away from a manuka honey product display shelf. Virtually every tourist stop, pharmacy, farm market and grocery store sell the stuff. Small, stand-alone honey stores – even out in the middle of nowhere – are common.

Whenever you see a stand of manuka honey products, you instantly know what it is. There is a

consistent look to the well-designed packaging. To my eye, even the layout of the products on the shelves seem to be consistent.

Undoubtedly, this consistency in product packaging is Marketing 101. The New Zealanders have learned this lesson well.

There is also a spill-over effect to effective marketing. While manuka honey may be the next best thing to the second coming, you also see other hive products on the shelf right next to manuka honey stuff. Propolis – in all forms – is there. As is bee venom products, particularly facial masks.

I even saw “Deer Pizzle” on the shelf next to manuka honey products. For those uninformed, deer pizzle is a concoction that is essentially deer urine and ground up venison testicles. (This stuff was selling for around \$375 USD per ounce!) Curiously, the display shelf promotion for this product was entirely in Chinese.



Selling Honey, Having Hives, etc.

Sure, those bears are cute. They're even dressed for a Michigan winter! But are they legal to sell? Do beekeepers need to register their hives? Do we have a service for inspections? Are the GAAMPS a law?

MSU has an updated document on all of the rules and regulations related to keeping bees and selling honey in Michigan. Click [here to access](#) the helpful information.

BEEport—to Encourage Learning

I love bee schools—so many learning opportunities, and great people and vendors. (And I always need more bee earrings.)

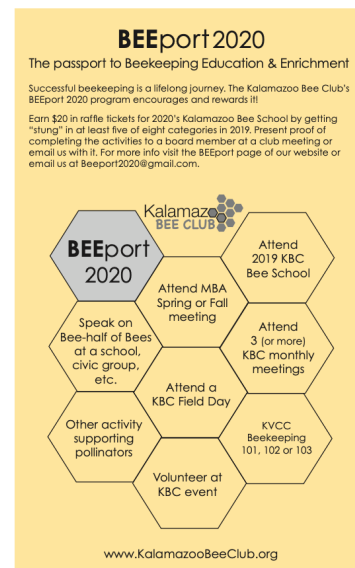
I also hate bee schools. Even though I've been keeping bees for over a decade, they accent how much I yet don't know on this life-long learning curve. It's even worse for bee-ginners.

Effective beekeeping comes with time, practice and information, and luckily bee schools are only one learning opportunity. Field days, online courses, club meetings, vendor presentations, and state meetings are great educational venues and opportunities to with others also striving to care for this bee-loved insect. Even speaking to your niece's preschool, or at the local garden or senior centers, makes you a better beekeeper: when you teach, you learn.

The Kalamazoo Bee Club is encouraging beekeepers of all levels to keep learning, through a “BEEport” – a passport to ongoing education. The BEEport holder gets a “sting” in a cell for events like attending a bee school, volunteering at a bee club event, speaking to a scouting group, attending a field day, etc. We've identified eight categories where you may be stung. If you're stung five times in 2019, you get \$20 in free raffle tickets for our 2020 Kalamazoo Bee School ... and our raffle prizes are pretty fabulous, often worth hundreds of dollars. Anyone stung in all eight categories earns an additional \$5 in free raffle tickets.

This is our first year for the program, so there will undoubtedly be tweaks along the way. For more information about BEEport, visit <http://www.kalamazoobeeclub.com>. And if you'd like to try something similar, please do, and let me know about your tweaks and experience. I dream of a state-wide BEEport some day, with people getting involved in multiple clubs and activities and quickly climbing the learning curve.

I also dream of colonies with no Varroa.



Charlotte Hubbard, on bee-half of the Kalamazoo Bee Club

"Bee package purchase and giving bees a ride of their lives ... us too."

Last spring my wife Margaret and I flew our Bell Jetranger helicopter to Napoleon, Michigan to pick up our package from Napoleon Bee Supply.

On the way home we commented we had 9,000 better pilots on board and we hoped they would stay in the package until we arrived at their new home at Potato Pond Farm in Mason, Michigan.



Beekeeper Dan Schiffer

State Apiarist News

Michael G. Hansen, Regional Supervisor/State Apiarist shared his report at the recent MBA meeting. The complete report may be found on the MBA web site as part of the meeting minutes, but here are many excerpts of significance.

I recently attended the Apiary Inspectors of America meeting in Tempe, Arizona. AIA met with the American Honey Producers and the American Association of Professional Apiculturists (AAPA).

If people want to move bees, the AIA website, <https://apiaryinspectors.org/> provides a list of state apiary contacts under the Inspection Services heading. The contact information for several states should be updated soon to include names of new State Apiary contacts. Note that for a number of states the Apiary contact may not be the inspector, but rather a contact in their state office that can assist with any questions you may have.

AIA and AAPA plan to meet with the American Beekeeping Federation next January in Schaumburg, Illinois. This will be a great opportunity for Michigan Beekeepers to participate in the Federation meeting, AAPA will hold their American Bee Research Congress event at the meeting - an excellent opportunity to listen in on the most recent research.

Beekeepers moving bees to California for pollination are now required to register their apiary locations, and to update their location list each time bees are moved for pollination. This is part of the State's pesticide program and Managed Pollinator Protection Plan. If you are sending bees, likely your broker will take care of the registration, however remember they are your bees and you want to make sure your broker is completing the process.

North Dakota is involved in a project working with California to allow for pre inspection of colonies that are headed to California for almond pollination. If this pilot program works out, it's hoped additional states (likely those with very little risk of Fire Ant) can be added. CDFA inspectors inspected bees in North Dakota this past fall, and those shipments received Certificates of Quarantine Compliance that allowed California Border stations to release those trucks from the border stations without additional inspections. Loads in the program were able to be pulled from the bee inspection line, and resumed their movement into California without a long wait. This is a pilot, another year of CDFA inspectors in ND is expected to training ND inspectors. Note that this type of process is not new - just new to beekeeping. At this point, it's unknown which other states may be allowed to participate, but we are hoping for success with the ND initiative.

We have seen most of the results come back from the National Bee Survey, however I anticipate we will have to wait on pesticide residue results and some of the final lab results due to the federal office shutdown, some of those tests are completed through USDA Laboratories. We are scheduled to participate in the survey in 2019. Again, we will collect 24 samples. We need 5 - preferably stationary apiaries - that we can sample in both spring and fall in what USDA calls a Longitudinal Survey. The remaining 14 samples are to be collected 4-5 in the spring, 4-5 in the summer and 5 in the fall. Beekeepers with at least 10 colonies in their apiary can be considered for participation. I will note that Michigan has been fortunate to have excellent cooperation from willing participants, but we do like to include new locations if we can. Migratory beekeepers, and queen producers are good choices, but we are not limited to those.

Tracheal Mite: Mike Studer, Apiarist from Tennessee, observed that beekeepers in his state that have switch over to using only Oxalic Acid for Varroa Mite treatment are suffering high losses from Tracheal Mite (TM). Beekeepers reported colonies appeared to freeze out, something that is not a normal occurrence in Tenn. Mike investigated and found balls of dead

bees in the colony, there were face forward in the cells (as in starvation). He also noted K-wing symptoms, and an analysis of trachea from the dead bees found high levels of Tracheal Mites. Operations lost of to 80% of their colonies. Mike notes that Oxalic does not treat Tracheal Mites, and beekeepers who moved strictly to Oxalic are no longer controlling TM. Many considered TM to be a pest of the past, and were not looking for it. Treatments using Formic, the Thymol products or other mite controls that target TM need to be part of the annual treatment package to keep TM from building up. Beekeepers can submit samples of adult bees to the Beltsville lab for analysis, or if a person has access to a 60 power or greater microscope, they can easily analyze a sample of bees for themselves. There are directions available on the internet.

District 1 News;



I have fed my bees when weather permitted. Which was 9 pm because after work it was 50, rain and wind; 9 pm was 50 degrees and calm. I'm glad I put in the effort, some hives were out of food.

We had our first bee school in the area on January 26, put on by the Kalamazoo Bee Club. Very well attended!

District 2 News;



Lost Nations Bee Club: I spoke with Russel Brix, president of Lost Nations Bee Club. Mel Disselkoen will be presenting to the club on his OTS (On the Spot) Method of queen rearing. He is an author and excellent hands on instructor.

Jacob Dilameter will also be speaking this Spring at the club.

Lost Nations will be partnering with FFA at North Adams Jerome Public Schools to help educate the students on bees. Their club meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month.

Napoleon Bee Club: Napoleon Bee Supply had Mel Disselkoen and 85 members in for his talk on his OTS Queen Rearing Method. Charlotte Hubbard is speaking February 2 for newbees.

A2B2: A2B2 had Drew Lathin in to speak to the club about growing sustainable landscapes and their relationship to bees. This was the January meeting.

The A2B2 Bee School has reached full capacity and has its first class sessions on Sunday, February 17.

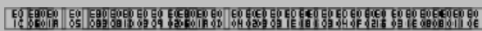
On February 12, Steve Tillman will be coming to speak to the A2B2 Club on bees in New Zealand.

The A2B2 Club is also in its planning stages to host the Fall MBA Bee Conference. The theme is Urban Beekeeping.

Mike Nardeli and Paul Mazur will be spearheading a new queen rearing program beginning this Spring. It will serve to both educate members and also provide club members with affordable queens from overwintered Michigan survivor stock.

Hidden Lake Bee Club: On February 23 the Hidden Lake Bee Club will be partnering with the Hillsdale Conservation District by putting on a pancake & sausage dinner. Walter Pett and Jaime Walters will be the guest lecturers at the event.

District 3 News;



Just returned from a very exciting bee club meeting in Oakland County at the Franklin Nature Center. The club has been in existence for many many years and has recently experienced the loss of its leader--one of the most prolific honey producers in the state. Dennis Holly, who unfortunately has suffered a collapsed lung and is now out of the bee business. Dennis is quite a character and made no bones about the **right** way to keep bees. And we know beekeepers all do it the same way.

Kerry Wysocki has stepped up and is now organizing the meetings and I must admit, though I've been to hundreds of bee meetings, this one is way up there in terms of friendliness and caring. Though a small group--35 or so--very excited and very sharing; it was a joy to watch the easy flow from speaker to speaker and a topper was having three relatively new beekeepers step up and tell their stories in front of the group. See lots of potential here. So if you're in Oakland County the first Tuesday of the month <https://www.facebook.com/oaklandbeekeepersclub/>

SEMBA Spring Conference is gearing up to be a big one this year with over 600 participants expected. Kent Williams from Kentucky will be the Keynote with Dr. Meghan Milbrath, AnneMarie Fauvel, Jamie Waters. Jim Ford and Mike Sauter--a truly stellar collection of speakers and topics. See more at <https://www.sembabees.org/conference/>.

SEMBA's Bee School is continuing its important role in bringing training and education to the public, with its beginning

classes sold out again.

This year's special intermediate program still has some openings, with visits to two commercial bee yards planned and an evening with Ken Schramm and his meads, as well as an extensive queen rearing and mating component. A very interactive summer and great venue to increase your beekeeping skills.

Nothing received from Koffi; hopefully he isn't buried under disorganized tax documents (like I am.)

District 4 News;



District 5 News; John Davis: JFDbees@gmail.com

Nothing received from John; hopefully he isn't buried under seed and bee equipment catalogs.

District 6 News;

Greetings from District 6. As I sit to write this it is a delightful 7 degrees here in the Thumb and I'm thinking my bees and I would be happier in California. Well, at least warmer. With that being said, we are all preparing for spring by ordering bees and the never-ending replacement frames and supplies.

Mid Michigan Bee Club began taking their club orders at the January meeting. The Club meets the first Thursday of each month at the Forrest Township hall in Otisville at 7p.m.

Saginaw Valley Beekeepers meet the first Tuesday of each month at the Valley Church. 3770 N Center Rd in Saginaw Township. In addition, they will be holding introductory beekeeping courses from March 12 to April 16 at Heritage High School. Registration closes March 1 so go to their website to register online.

The Seven Ponds Beekeeping Club meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at the Seven Ponds Nature Center on Crawford Rd in Dryden at 7 pm. They also have begun ordering bees. February's meeting will include a beginner's tract as well as a session for those overwintering bees now.

The Sunrise Bee Club in Hale meets the 2nd Wed of the month in Hale at 415 East Main St Hale at 7pm. They have already submitted their bee order and the next meeting will be March 13th.

While not technically in District 6, Applebee Farm in Fairview will be holding beekeeping classes starting in the spring. For those of you in the northernmost portion of the district their location may be more convenient to attend. I'll keep you posted as to when and where the classes will be.

District 7 News; Joel Lantz;

Winter finally has its arms wrapped around us here in the UP. We are normal in our snow fall (about 100" so far) and warmer than normal until now ...Jan 21. Most of our bees went into winter in pretty good shape but only time will tell how they do.

* The 2nd All UP Beekeepers Conference is scheduled for March 30th here in Marquette. Details at upbeekeepingconference.weebly.com

*Beekeeping 101 Sessions:

March 30th Marquette at the conferenc

Jan. 26 Escanaba <https://www.facebook.com/events/534657143665159/>

March 9th Eastern UP <https://www.facebook.com/SuperiorlandBeekeepersAssociation/>

Our UP clubs are alive and active. Please contact me with any concerns or questions.