

# Kentucky Bee Line

## Spring 2008

Volume 59 Issue 1

Bobbie Vernon, Editor

*A Publication of the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association, Inc.*

The Kentucky Bee Line is published electronically to all interested beekeepers for the purpose of providing to them “up to date” information relative to the Beekeeping Industry. Additionally this publication provides a forum for interaction among KSBA members in the sharing of ideas, meeting notices and other pertinent information considered beneficial to them and the promotion of beekeeping locally and nationally.

For information or any business regarding this publication, please contact Bobbie Vernon at 3583 Brownsford Rd, Scottsville, Kentucky 42164.



*The Kentucky Bee Line is published in collaboration  
with Kentucky State University*



Kentucky State University Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

**KSBA President's Column**

**Hello again! Just when warm weather appears to be here to stay...we have a frost. Hopefully it will not prove to be as damaging as the late freeze we had last year, but time will tell.**

**We have been having a pretty good honey flow at our place for the past two weeks, and with black locust beginning to bloom (I saw the first blooms in my locale April 25). The honey season seemed to be underway. It is hard to say how much impact this late frost will have on honey plants. Some nectar producers, such as wild mustard, are more tolerant to colder temperatures than other more tender plants. In many cases a short cold snap will cause plants that are hardy enough to survive the cold to really kick into high gear with nectar production. Of course if the plant in question is not hardy, nectar production is stopped cold... pardon the pun.**

**One by-product of a good honey flow is an abundance of swarms. I have had several swarm calls over the past two weeks. There are also other "bee calls" that increase in frequency at this time of year which are also related to the honey flow and the swarming season. I have received numerous calls concerning bees that have taken up residence in houses and/or trees. The homeowner is usually frantic, and has already called exterminators – who refused the job – and in their eyes a local beekeeper is their last hope to ever again have a normal life in their house. If you want to take the job of bee removal I promise I will sit patiently and listen to your horror story at the next meeting. These are jobs created by a Mr. Murphy...you know, the guy that has everything go wrong. No bee removal, no matter how simple it may appear, is easy or goes off without a hitch. I have been in on dozens of these jobs, so I know the territory, and can feel your pain. The easiest removals I have executed have involved trapping bees from a structure by using a screen funnel and a queenright nuc. The drawback to this method is the need to return repeatedly over a period of time to the site of the removal before the job is finished. If you decide it is your calling to become a bee removal specialist I applaud you. Getting back to the subject of honey flows...are your bees in condition to store a surplus of honey from these early 'flows? If you have Russians or Carniolans I would assume they are not populous enough to take good advantage of an early flow. The biggest shortfall of this race and sub-race of bees is their slow start in spring. They winter on much less food than Italians do, but they build much slower in spring due to their requirement of a sustained honeyflow to stimulate the queen to begin laying. All three types of bees are good, but don't expect Italians to winter on 30 pounds of food stores – and don't expect Russians or Carniolans to be strong enough to store a big crop of locust honey.**

**The "bee school" sponsored by LBBA each spring at our place was another success – regardless of weather. There were over 100 persons attending over a four-day period. I appreciate the members of LBBA that gave of their time and knowledge to make the school a success. Congratulations to the winners of the door prizes - especially the winners of the grand prizes, a four-frame observation hive and a complete hive with bees. Hoyt Adams won the observation hive, and two new beekeepers, Greg and Ann Reno, won the hive complete with bees. It is also appropriate to extend our fellowship to new members of LBBA, the Renos and Mike and Cheryl Traynor. It is encouraging to see young persons becoming involved with beekeeping. I was privileged to meet several young beekeepers at the bee school, but for fear of unintentionally leaving someone out, I will not list them at this time. You can all be assured that a good impression was made, but I have found that the older I become, the harder it is to recall names to go with faces. I am sure, however, we will all see a lot more of these young beekeepers in the future. The one young beekeeper that I will mention is Sawyer Rambo. I make this mention because Sawyer installed his first package of bees into a hive in our beeyard on the first day of the school. A job well done Sawyer. To all that attended, thanks for your participation; and to all that assisted in making the school a success, thanks for you efforts.**

**Dates to Remember**

**June 21**, Summer meeting of KSBA. Held at the Walter T Kelley Company in Clarkson, KY. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Speaker will be Kim Flottum. Kim is not *just* the editor of Bee Culture magazine, he is an extremely knowledgeable beekeeper, and has extensive knowledge of the beekeeping industry as a whole.

**August 4 – 8**, 2008 Conference of EAS, to be held on the campus of Murray State University. This will probably be the best chance any of us will ever have to attend a major beekeepers conference. Until you attend a conference of this magnitude it is impossible to describe the learning opportunities available to the attendees. Don't worry about the information being "over your head"...everything is "over our heads" until we allow ourselves to be educated.

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**Five Chores for the Beeyard in May**

1. Get those supers on!! The bees won't put honey in the supers if the supers are still stacked in your garage!
2. Monitor your hive(s) for potential problems. Watch the traffic at the front door of the hive. If you have more than one hive, compare the traffic from one with that of the other hive(s). If there is a hive that has significantly less traffic, open it and try to find the reason for the difference. If you do not know what to look for, ask a more experienced beekeeper to help. Another option is to ask the Assistant State Apiary inspector for your area – me – to come look at your hive(s). There is no fee for the service; it is paid for by the KY Department of Agriculture. There is also no real regulation of bees in KY, so there is not a possibility of getting into trouble of any sort by having your bees inspected. Evaluation would actually be a better term for the procedure. It is important, however, to make sure you catch a damaging situation, such as queen failure etc. before the hive is too far gone to correct the problem. At this time of year the two most common reasons for a hive to dwindle in activity are excessive swarming and queen failure.
3. Cut the bushes and grass in your beeyard. Imagine if you had to walk through a thicket every time you carried groceries from your car to the house. I think you get the picture. A thick growth of grass or weeds in front of the hive also has a detrimental effect on ventilation. The ventilation of your hive(s) will become even more important during hot weather. (Don't come looking at the undergrowth in my beeyard. Do as I say – not as I do)
4. Try your hand at raising a few queens. If you are interested in the subject, but don't want to go into the project "cold turkey" there are beekeepers in this area that would be glad to show you their technique and help you get acquainted with the process. This is the best time of year to raise a few queens, because nature causes the bees to be much more inclined to raise queens during this season.
5. Make arrangements to attend EAS, HAS, or the summer KSBA conference. (EAS is the closest of the three this year, being held in Murray) If you have already made these plans, do something to prepare yourself for a good conference experience. Get a copy of the program and a speaker list from the EAS website (if the website does not have the material available yet, contact me for a copy). Choose the topics and speakers that most interest you and do some research on the speaker and the topic. It is surprising how a little reading can bring life to a presentation, or how understanding the circumstances that brought a speaker to their current position can affect your experience with their particular presentation.

Submitted by: Kent Williams, KSBA President

*From the Kentucky State Apiarist  
May 2008 Bee Line*

**KSBA Webpage updates**

I recently assumed the duties of webmaster of the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association's webpage: <http://www.ksbabeekeeping.org/default.htm>. I'm in the process of making some additions to the site which I hope will assist our beekeepers. One of these will be a page where KSBA members can list beekeeping equipment for sale; another page will be for the sale of nucs, queens, or excess hives with bees. There will be some restrictions on the use of this new service. First of all, you must be a member of KSBA to post anything for sale on the site. (It is a KSBA webpage.) Also, the equipment page will only allow listings by non-dealers. The purpose of the page is to give beekeepers (and former beekeepers or their family members) a way to sell their used or excess equipment, so if you sell equipment for a profit, you will not be allowed to list on this page.

To get more information about these new pages, view listed items, or view directions on how to list items, go to: <http://www.ksbabeekeeping.org/default.htm>.

I have some ideas for future additions, so drop in on the webpage from time to time. If you have suggestions for changes you would like to see, please let me know.

**Kentucky State Apiarist Webpage**

In addition to the KSBA webpage updates and changes, I have been making updates and additions to my own site at <http://www.kyagr.com/statevet/bees/association/index.htm>. Here you'll find listings for all the local associations in Kentucky, beekeeping information (including special tips and information for those interested in becoming beekeepers), back issues of this newsletter, listings of upcoming beekeeping classes, meetings and schools, and my schedule for speaking at various beekeeping meetings.

**Buying nucs – some tips**

A nuc (short for nucleus hive) is a new hive started with two to four frames of bees (some of which contain capped brood) and a queen. Think of a nuc as a small starter hive with a laying queen (normally young) and a small number of bees, which can grow into a strong hive in the summer. Purchasing a nuc is a great way to increase the number of your hives, or to get started in beekeeping. Unfortunately, the demand for nucs is greater than the supply here in Kentucky. Prices for nucs are typically slightly higher than for packages, but there are advantages to nucs that make this added cost worthwhile. When you buy a nuc, you are getting a queen that is established and laying. (You should see both her eggs and young larvae.) You'll also receive three or four frames covered with bees, along with a couple of frames of capped brood from which new bees are emerging. The queen, which should be a new young queen, will have already been accepted by the bees in the nuc, so there is virtually no danger of rejection, as sometimes occurs with new packages. The queen should also have been laying eggs long enough that the beekeeper who made up the nuc can be confident of her quality. Sometimes with a package (fortunately not very often), the beekeeper discovers that his new queen was insufficiently mated, the queen dies in the cage, or the bees don't accept her. These problems are avoided with a nuc. Plus the bees do not go through the stress of traveling in a package several hundred miles. Many beekeepers recommend that new beekeepers buy only nucs, though, because of the low supply, this is not always possible. Maybe that will change someday in Kentucky, but we are not there yet.

**Pitfalls of buying nucs**

Unfortunately, I have seen nucs purchased by beekeepers in the past that were not a good value for the purchaser. It can be difficult for beekeepers just getting started to evaluate nucs. Recommendations from experienced beekeepers that you trust can go a long way. Here are some standards for what you should expect, and questions you should ask the beekeeper from whom you are buying nucs. These questions can also help you compare nucs that are being offered for sale at different prices by different beekeepers.

- When you first talk to a beekeeper selling nucs, ask how long he has been keeping bees. Occasionally beekeepers with only a couple of years experience decide that selling nucs is a fast way to make some money. I would be concerned about buying nucs from beekeepers with less than three years experience. Don't be shy about asking other beekeepers about the experience and skill level of the beekeeper offering the nuc. If you are looking for disease and pest free nucs, they need to come from skilled beekeepers, who are proficient at keeping their bees alive.
- Ask when the beekeeper treated his hives for varroa mites, or what his varroa levels were like this spring. If he says he does not treat for varroa, make sure he is checking the hives for varroa levels. Ask if his hives have had American Foulbrood. There have been cases of nucs being sold infected with Foulbrood. And did the brood come from his own hives? Some beekeepers buy brood and bees from other beekeepers to make nucs for sale. There is nothing wrong with this, but you should know where the brood and bees came from. Will he guarantee that the hive is disease and pest free, and guarantee the queen for at least a brief period of time?
- Take a veil and ask the beekeeper to open the nuc. The hive should contain at least three drawn combs, and may contain one or two sheets of foundation. If the bees are drawing out the new foundation, this indicates that they have been in the nuc more than a few days – which is a positive. If they have not drawn out the new foundation, that is an indication that the nuc was made up more recently. Look at the drawn comb. Does it look fresh? While it will likely not be newly drawn comb, it should not be more than 2-3 years old. The beekeeper should not be culling his old comb to make nucs. Very old comb can harbor disease (a downside of buying nucs). If you're not sure how to evaluate what you will see in the nuc, get a more experienced beekeeper friend to go with you to check it out.
- If the nuc has been made up for more than a week, you should have an opportunity to see large areas of eggs or fresh larvae, which is another plus. Look at the new eggs uncapped brood on the comb. Is the queen laying in most of the available cells? If the larvae development is further along, watch out for drone cells scattered in amongst the worker larvae. This may indicate a poorly mated queen.
- Ask if this is a purchased queen and if so, from whom was she purchased? Some beekeepers will make nucs without installing a queen, but allow the nuc to raise a queen. A queen raised from a swarm cell or supersedure cell has the potential to produce a quality queen, but queens raised by the insertion of a frame of eggs are into a queenless nuc result from "emergency cells", and these cells sometimes produce poor quality queens. Watch out for stubby queens with short abdomens – this appearance is indicative of poor quality queens. If the nuc contains a queen raised from a queen cell placed into that nuc, make sure that she has had enough time since emerging to get mated, and that the nuc contains her eggs. I would never buy a nuc containing a virgin queen or a queen cell instead of a mated queen. While you can learn a lot about a queen from looking at the eggs & larvae (remember that the capped brood in the nuc is probably from the parent colony unless the nuc has been made up for more than a couple of weeks), also notice the queen herself. Her abdomen should be long in relation to her thorax and head. Ask how long she has been out and laying? As I said before, she should have been out long enough to be laying eggs, and have her own larvae present (this only takes a few days after egg laying begins).

Keep those smokers lit and your bee veils on!

Phil Craft

State Apiarist  
Kentucky Department of Agriculture

**Intermediate Beginners Beekeeping Class**

There will be an intermediate beginner's beekeeping class on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (Saturday) at the Anderson County Extension Office in Lawrenceburg (1026 County Park Road – directions go to: <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/anderson/directions/>). The class will begin at 10:00AM and run until about 11:30AM. If the weather cooperates, we'll take a lunch break at a local restaurant, and then do a beeyard session. So bring your veils and whatever protective clothing that you normally wear.

This class will focus on summer management, and is designed as a follow-up to the beginner's session at the winter Bluegrass Beekeeping School. Curriculum should be helpful for new beekeepers and those with limited beekeeping knowledge. No charge for the class and pre-registration not required. Kentucky State Apiarist Phil Craft will conduct the class. For more information contact Phil Craft.

**Allen County Beekeeper's Field Day—June 7, 2008**

Allen County Beekeepers Association will host a beekeeping field day on Saturday, June 7, 2008 at the home of Gordon Vernon (3583 Brownsford Road, Scottsville KY) for Beginners Beekeeping and Queen Rearing. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts. Breakout sessions with hands on will be offered through out the day for beginning beekeeping and queen rearing. Bring a sack lunch and drinks and chips will be furnished.

**KY State Beekeepers Assoc. Education Project**

One of the most popular services that the Kentucky State Apiarist offers is free apiary inspection visits. For those of you not familiar with these apiary visits, they can best be described as educational inspections. When doing these visits, the beekeeper and I open the beekeeper's hives and look for any disease, pest, or management problems that may be present. If problems are found, I try to give advice or offer solutions to solve the problem(s). These visits are also hands-on question/answer/educational sessions, since this is a great opportunity for the beekeeper to ask questions, both while we have hives open and before and after we get into them.

However, I have a problem. I am a one person apiary program here at the KY Dept. of Agriculture, I provide a variety of services to beekeepers across the entire state, and many apiary visits require more than local travel. I am hard pressed to visit every beekeeper that would like for me to visit them. So in 2005, to extend my inspection program, the idea of the Kentucky State Beekeepers Apiarist program was born. This is a joint program of my office here at the Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture and the Kentucky State Beekeepers Assoc. (KSBA). This program allows qualified Kentucky beekeepers to be appointed as *KSBA* Apiarists, and they make apiary visits similar to those that I make. Beekeepers appointed as *KSBA* Apiarists must be experienced Kentucky beekeepers (5 years beekeeping experience is one of the preliminary requirements), pass a written examination, and go through a training session that I conduct with them. These *KSBA* Apiarists conduct the same type of apiary inspections that I do, and are compensated a small amount for each inspection from grant funds (no charge to the beekeeper). I continue to conduct visits myself – as my schedule allows, but this program is a means of reaching and helping more beekeepers than I am able to. We now have a total of 15 beekeepers appointed and trained as *KSBA* Apiarists. They are conducting or ready to conduct visits throughout Kentucky. *KSBA* Apiarists are located in the following communities (or nearby): Bowling Green, Corbin, Elizabethtown, Frankfort, Georgetown, Lawrenceburg, Lexington, Louisville, Mayfield, Owensboro, and Scottsville.

We are very much in need of more experienced beekeepers to assist with this program. If you think you have the beekeeping experience and proficiency to make these visits, contact me for more information. If you're interested in having someone (myself or one of the *KSBA* Apiarists) make an apiary visit with you, let me know. This is a free program.

Phil Craft, State Apiarist  
Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture  
100 Fair Oaks, Suite 252  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
Phone: (502) 564-3956

*Bee Farm Tour at Stone Hill Honey*

The article below was written shortly after our first tour back in 2006. We added a hayride around the farm in 2007 and a little extra to the cost of the tour. This year 2008, we have a three-acre lake stocked with bluegill, bass and catfish, so for an extra fee those touring the farm can also bring their fishing gear and fish for a limited time. This will add extra time to the tour, but we have found most people end up staying longer than planned anyway once they get to our Bee Farm. This is one of the most enjoyable parts of beekeeping that Paul and I do as a team. We have groups booking tours already for this spring. I have even been asked about customizing the tours for older teens and women's groups to include demonstrations on balms and creams. The tours will always vary from year to year, and that is one reason customers return year after year.

So can you do tours at a bee farm? We decided to try this new venture at Stone Hill Honey and boy, are we having FUN!!

On our first tour, we had the local YMCA Day Camp. We knew they would be bringing about 30 kids ranging from 6 to 12 yrs old, but when that big long school bus pulled up our driveway and around to our main building, we just knew we were in trouble. They were making a familiar noise I remembered from my days of chaperoning school field trips. This time we were on the other end of the trip serving as hosts. We could hear Jenny, the lead counselor saying to the group, "You don't touch anything that doesn't belong to you, and when you go in this building you don't own anything in there, so don't touch anything." I thought to myself, "WHAT WERE WE THINKING?" I welcomed the group of 34 children, 5 young adult counselors and the bus driver to our bee farm.

Once they were all settled in their seats, Beekeeper Paul introduced us as he gave a quick overview of what activities would take place in the next one-two hours. He then had 6 children at a time try to find the queen bee in our observation hive. He had already explained that the girl bees did all the work to which one enterprising young boy exclaimed, "All Right!!!" We then had everyone to watch the video, The Honey Files, A Bees Life, which is very entertaining for children of this age (most adults can even learn from this video). Paul then used a real hive (without the bees) and showed how he works it and how the bees work it. As he demonstrated a piece of equipment such as the smoker or hive tool, he would pass it around for each child to handle. We then divided the group into two groups.

Paul took group 1 to our honey kitchen to give them a demo of the extraction unit explaining how honey is extracted. He then lead them around front to my herb garden where they observed a working garden hive from a safe distance as well as honeybees on the many blooming herbs. I showed group 2 how to make beeswax rolled candles one time. Then they each made one candle. They then returned to the observation hive for a closer look. I then offered them a taste of our honey, and everyone wanted to taste it. When Paul returned with group 1, we switched groups and started over.

By then, the money was out in every little hand. I quickly handed evaluation forms to all the adults and started selling honey, honey candy, honey stix, coloring books and more. I was amazed at the amount of money that these children showed up with. One little boy even bought one of our Bee-O-Pac Comb Honey's and wanted to eat it before he left. I suggested he wait till he got home to share with his family. Some of these children were buying candy by the pound. I just hope it went home.

Paul got excellent reviews from the adults while I was doing the selling. Ed, the bus driver, was so pleased with our parking arrangements. He also said it was the best tour he had been on this year. He drives for the school system and suggested we put together packets for local school principals. Paul told him we were afraid we didn't offer enough activities. In response he said, "How could you cram anymore into one-two hours?" He took some of our brochures to hand out at the schools. The counselors said they had a great time, and the kids had a blast. Each evaluation was very positive, and all but one said they would be interested in knowing more about beekeeping. We're always looking for more beekeepers, aren't we?"

Submitted by: Betsy Stone, KSBA Secretary

6005 Hatchett Mill Rd, Spottsville KY 42458-9726 (270) 826-2762, bpstoneky@bellsouth.net

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**June 7, 2008**

**Intermediate Beginners Beekeeping Class**  
**Anderson County Extension Office, Lawrenceburg KY**  
*Http://ces.ca.uky.edu/anderson/directions/*  
**10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**June 7, 2008**

**Annual Allen County Beekeepers Field Day**  
**Contact: Gordon Vernon, 3583 Brownsford Rd, Scottsville KY 43264**  
**(270) 622-8313 or email glvernon@nctc.com.**  
**8:30 a.m.—3:30 p.m.**

**June 21, 2008**

**KSBA Summer Conference Meeting @ W.T. Kelley's**  
**Contact: Kent Williams, President**  
**580 SR 385 N. Wingo, KY 42088-8703**  
**(270) 382-2348, kvwilliams@wk.net**  
**9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

**July 10, 11, 12, 2008**

**HAS Annual Convention at Marshall University**  
**Huntington WV**  
**Contact: Gabe Blatt, President**  
**3554 Haneys Branch Road, Huntington, WV 25704**  
**Phone/Fax: 304-429-1268, gabebblatt@prodigy.net**

**August 4-9, 2008**

**EAS Annual Convention at Murray State University**  
**Murray KY**  
**Contact: Kent Williams, President**  
**580 SR 385 N. Wingo, KY 42088-8703**

**4-H Essay Contest Result**

Dr. Tom Webster, Kentucky Apicultural Extension Specialist, announced on March 26, 2008 that Danielle Jarboe is the 2008 Kentucky State 4H American Beekeeping Federation Award winner. The American Beekeeping Federation sponsors an essay contest in conjunction with the agricultural 4H program.

Every year the theme is different and challenges the students to stretch their knowledge and ability through the writing of an essay. This year's theme was "The Results of Honey Bee Pollination in My Community". As many may know vegetables like cucumbers and pumpkins cannot be grown without honey bee pollination and many hives are rented each year in our area for pollination of those crops.

This is the second year that Danielle has participated and won the award both for local and state competition. The final three national winners are to be announced in late April or early May for the 2008 national award. Danielle is the daughter of Sheila and Charles Jarboe of Utica.

Submitted by Carol Mark

Kentucky State Beekeepers Assoc.  
Bobbie Vernon, Editor  
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## **Kentucky State Beekeepers Association, Inc.**

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**The Kentucky Bee Line is published bimonthly, by and for the members of the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association, to offer news about happenings within the Association; to keep current on events within the state and in other parts of the country; to inform beekeepers about local conditions relating to honey bees and beekeeping; to share ideas and techniques; to act as a forum; and to help in promoting the art of beekeeping and production of honey.**

**You are invited to join the Kentucky State Beekeepers Association. Membership dues are \$10.00 per year. Renewals are due prior to the expiration date on the first line of the mailing label. Local Associations may send your dues at \$9.00 per member and keep \$1.00. Send checks, payable to KSBA, to the KSBA treasurer: H. D. Overholt. Be sure to include your address including zip+4 and your telephone number.**

**Subscriptions to other beekeeping journals are available at a discount when you become a member of KSBA. When subscribing to these publications, be sure to identify yourself as a member of the *Kentucky State Beekeepers Association*.**