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2004 Provincial Apiarist Annual Report

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Beekeeping Industry Statistics

Number of Beekeepers: 2650

Number of Producing Colonies: 72,000

Average Yield/Colony (lb/kg): 92.93/42.15

Total Estimated Crop (LB/kg x 1000): 6,690/3,035

Colonies Wintered Last Year: 71,000

Average Winter Mortality (%): 17.9%

Diseases and Pests

Disease/Pest	Number of Colonies Inspected	Number of Beekeepers Inspected	Disease Colony Incidence (%)	Disease Beekeeper Incidence (%)
AFB	10,783		1.9%	
EFB	10,783		1.6%	
Chalkbrood	10,783		3.8%	
Sacbrood	10,783		1.05%	
Tracheal Mite			45%	

Varroa Mite			98%	
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Other: Three areas of Apistan® resistance. One area of Check-Mite™ resistance.

Comments

The bees finally started to bring in a surplus of honey the last two weeks of August. New Liskeard and Kingston have excellent crops and most of Ontario will come in just below an average crop. The weather this summer has contributed to this situation. When you have a good day of weather the plants will have nectar available the next day when the bees can gather it. The bees if they are really strong can gather 15 to 20 pounds of nectar in a day. The bees will eat 3 to 5 pounds per day when they are at peak population. In order to store surplus honey - the the beekeeper calls his honey crop - the bees have to bring in more than they consume. This season, if you look closely, you can see in the stored honey how they would bring in some honey, cap it and then eat into it. This did not change much for a lot of colonies until the later part of August and into September. The honey crop that was achieved really shows the resilience of the bees.

Having so many days this summer when the bees could not forage led to a major swarming problem for most beekeepers. 20% of the bees are the field force. When these old bees are held in the hives with inclement weather for long periods of time, such as we have experienced this summer, the bees feel congested and tend towards swarming. Often if the weather changes the bees will tear down swarm cells that they have started. No such luck this summer. This season, they swarmed!

The estimated crop for 2004 is 92.93 pounds per colony as compared to 121.18 pounds last year. This gives a total crop of 6,690,970 pounds. The average price for honey in 2003 was \$2.03 per pound. The price of bulk honey continues to drop and is currently as \$1.15 to \$1.20 per pound. A very interesting statistic is that beekeepers sold a higher percentage (45.84%) of the 2003 crop retail as compared to 2002 at 29.2% of their sales.

Beekeepers wanted to increase their numbers this year. They reported a 17.9% winter loss overall in Ontario. By the time they split up colonies, beekeepers had a small gain in numbers over last year. The total colonies for the province are estimated at 72,000 for 2004 compared to 71,000 for 2003.

Moving bees to pollinate blueberries was a big issue this year as Check-Mite™ resistance had been found in New Brunswick. After a great deal of negotiation, it was agreed to allow bees to move back to Ontario from an isolated area in northern New Brunswick where the bees were not exposed to New Brunswick bees. A large number of colonies were also moved to pollinate blueberries in Quebec and returned to Ontario.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) changed the embargo on queen bees from mainland United States to a permit system on May 19, 2004. CFIA said that they would develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each individual province to give the provinces the names of beekeepers that obtain an import permit. This is now in place. Under the Bees Act of Ontario it is required that an importing beekeeper obtain a permit to bring any shipment of bees into Ontario. An application form has been developed and is on the OMAF web site. Ontario will accept queens from the United States under the CFIA permit.

Sweet corn spraying did not lead to many reported spray problems this year. The protocol was reworked between the processors and the beekeepers. The major change was that the beekeeper must now contact the processors and let them know where their bees are that they want to be contacted about if the processors have to spray in the morning.

There was a major media incident about "Killer Bees" this summer at Merlin in the Chatham area. This went on for about one week and every swarm that people saw in the area was reported to someone as "Killer Bees". A sample of the bees that was collected by the local bee inspector and was sent to Tucson, Arizona where it was tested using the accepted

morphometric technique to determine Africanization and it came back as 0.999 probability of being European. This media attention has made many citizen of Ontario aware of the possibility of introducing Africanized bees here.

American Foulbrood (AFB) continues to show up around the province. Samples of AFB are sent routinely by the bee inspectors to the USDA Bee Lab at Beltsville Maryland where they are tested for resistance to Oxy-tetracycline. The samples are mostly in the very susceptible area but a few are moderately susceptible to Oxy-tetracycline. No samples have shown resistance to date. Dr. Steve Pernal of Agriculture Canada Bee Lab at Beaverlodge Alberta is very close to submitting the data to add bees to the Tylosin and Lyncomycin labels for AFB control.

Honey Bee Tracheal Mites continues to spread and show up in more samples each year. They are not everywhere in Ontario yet. The Formic Acid appears to be controlling the HBTM well. Those beekeeper that make the effort to use HBTM resistant stock do not report problems with HBTM. Where there are problems, it is usually a beekeeper that has just had HBTM move into his area and he has not been using Formic or incorporated the resistant stock into his bees.

Small Hive Beetle has not been detected yet in Ontario. The bee inspectors and beekeeper are watching for them. The bee program receives calls from observant beekeepers that see various beetles in their colonies but when they are checked out they have not been Small Hive Beetles.

Varroa mites in Ontario have created a great deal of pessimism amongst beekeepers this fall. Apistan® resistance does not appear to have spread from the previously known areas. It may well be masked as many beekeepers have switched to Check-Mite™. The big news this fall was that Check-Mite™ is not working in some beeyards close to the St. Lawrence River in the Iroquois-Cornwall area. Three of these beeyards where Apistan® had not been used for five seasons, responded to Apistan® treatment at excellent levels. In some of the other locations, neither product seemed to work. It appears that this failure of the Check-Mite™ is directly related to resistance to coumaphos. In the same beekeeping operation the beeyards to the north have very few mites after Check-Mite™ treatment. This resistance leads to the need for alternative treatments right away.

Formic Acid in the application form of the Mite-Away II pads is close to final registration with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) of Health Canada.

Oxalic Acid is being put forward by the Canadian Honey Council for a generic label to PMRA. It will take 15 months from submission to receive a label for use. It appears to be a very good tool to control the Varroa mites.

As the season was difficult where over all expansion was not achieved, production is down, the price has slipped from the all time high, and now Check-Mite™ resistance rears its head, beekeepers are understandably somewhat depressed. The bright spot of this year is that Dr. Ernesto Guzman has arrived on the Ontario scene as a bee researcher in the Department of Environmental Biology at the University of Guelph. We welcome Dr. Guzman with the enthusiasm of new beginnings that offer great potential and we look forward to working with him over many years ahead of his career here in Guelph.

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