

Bee School to 15 Hives in 5 Years



Randy Smith, Clermont County Beekeeper
March 24, 2018
Southwestern Ohio Beekeeper School

Smith Homestead
Saltsir, Ohio

- Bees
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Poultry
- Maple Syrup
- Lumber Milling

Objective:

- Share my beekeeping story with you
 - Successes (and failures)
- Not necessarily recommendations; perhaps there are some nuggets within the story that you find useful and interesting.

Agenda:

- Reasons I keep bees
- Start-up expenses
- Years 1 and 2 - \$ lost, some frustration
- Year 3 and beyond – sustainable growth at least cost
- What's next

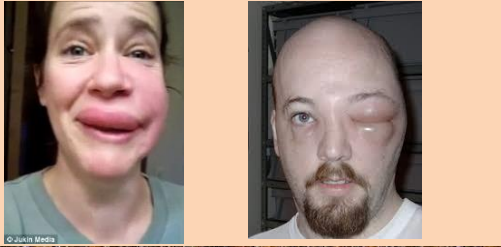
Why I keep bees

- Honey
- Pollination
- Fascination and Fun?
- Other products?- wax, propolis, pollen

Fears?

- 2000, the World Health Organization reported that in the USA, that.....
- *only 54 deaths attributable to bee stings – from a population of 281 million people (Census data).*
- In the same year, there were 15,517 murders in the USA (FBI crime figures)
- More than 20,000 people in the USA died from flu (U.S. Centers for Disease Control)
- On average, 90 people are killed every year in the U.S. by lightning. [NOAA Technical Memorandum NWS SR-193]

Fears?



Start-up expenses

• Hive Kit	\$300
– (includes bottom board, 2 deeps, 2 mediums, frames and foundation, inner and outer cover)	
• Bee Jacket	\$50-\$150
• Gloves	\$10-\$20
• Smoker	\$25-\$40
• Hive tool	\$5-\$15
• Bees	\$120-\$150
Total	\$510- \$675

Labor



Year 0 - 1

- Bee school, a lot of research and reading
- Excitement (and anxiety)
- Started with 2 hives
- Package Bees



Coming out of year 1 going into year 2

- 1 of 2 hives survived
- Purchased a bunch more package bees
- Purchased 2 nucs
- 1 swarm

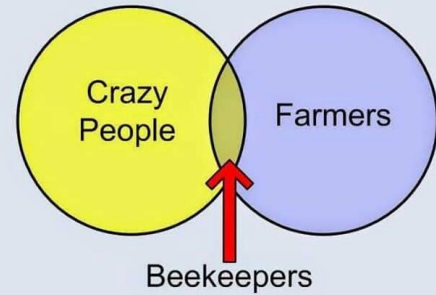
Coming out of year 2, going into year 3

- Dead package bees
- Nucs/ swarm survived
- \$ lost/ Frustration
- 5 hives



Insanity

- the state of being seriously mentally ill; madness; extreme foolishness or irrationality
- “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”



Conclusions after year 2

- In spite of failures, I still enjoy working bees
- Honey and pollination benefits



- No more packages
- Bees and equipment are expensive

Questions moving forward

- What are my goals?
- Is there a formula?
- How many hives is ideal?
- Are bees livestock?
- Is there such a thing as a “feral” colony?
- How can I continue to feed my growing obsession for bees without going broke?

Year 3 Goals

- Grow my apiary at least cost
 - Splits from overwintered nucs
 - Swarms
 - Build my own equipment
- Add some color (tired of looking at all white)
- Have fun, bee creative

Year 3 Splits

- Splits
 - 5 frame nuc
 - 1 frame eggs/open brood
 - 2 frames capped brood
 - 1 frame honey
 - 1 frame pollen



Year 3 Swarms

- Swarm calls vs trapping
- Built 10 traps
 - scrap materials
 - dimensions are 19" long by 7" wide and 16" tall.
 - hold 4 frames, a frame of dark brood comb, a partial frame of honey and 2 empty frames.
 - a few drops of lemongrass oil.
 - hung from trees at eye level
 - Placed April 15, dispersed throughout the property
- Demo trap set-up

Year 3 - Swarm trapping

- 10 traps, 10 Swarms



Year 3 - Swarms

- Fishing for bees

<https://youtu.be/mq2oH--2mc>

Fishing for bees



Equipment

- Built bottom boards, bodies, covers
- Added some color!
- Acquired some used plastic bottom boards and covers
- Foundationless
- Purchased frames



Don't be afraid to get a little creative
Have fun



Year 3

- 16 colonies
- Only cost is frames
- Ran out of equipment, drawn comb



Year 4

- Status quo on growth
- 20 total traps, 10 swarms
- Didn't split
- More honey
- Overall more confident in my ability

Challenges



- Ohio Sensitive Crop Registry- <http://www.agri.ohio.gov/scr>
- Talk to your local farmers

Some other items worth mentioning...

- Bee suit/gloves > Jacket > Veil
- Marked queens
- All mediums
 - pros and cons
- Top entrances
- Foundationless

Progression



Marked Queens

- Much easier to find the queen
- Helps me determine whether it's my own swarms that I'm capturing



All mediums

- 3 mediums = 2 deeps
- Pros- lighter- 60 lbs vs 90, same size equipment offers flexibility for moving frames around, doing splits
- Con- more frames



Top Entrances

- Pros- weeds, mice, varmints, foragers closer to honey. Ventilation?
- Cons- cleaning?



- I sometimes offer both bottom and top during heavy flow

Foundationless frames

Pros- cost, bees build what they want

Cons- Hives need to be level side to side, new comb can be delicate to work with.



2018 Goals

- 25-30 traps
- Multiple trap and hive locations
- Learn to raise queens via grafting

My favorite bee resources

- Local bee club meetings, bee school
- Web
 - Ohio Beekeepers Facebook page
 - Ohio Phenology Calendar
 - Ohio Beekeepers Association
 - Beesource- Michael Bush, Fat Beeman, Michael Palmer, Sam Comfort, OD Frank
 - Hivetracks

Thank you for coming!

- Questions?



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