

COMMUNITY

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Allied News
Grove City,
Pennsylvania

Better bee genes help local hives

Beekeeper breed traits into queens as natural defense

By CAROL ANN GREGG
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Jeff Berta, Slippery Rock, dims the lights to keep stray bees at bay as he points out the details of a varroa mite on the screen of his laptop computer. A microscope is connected to the computer, and the image is from a slide under the lens of the microscope.

The varroa mite is one of several enemies of the honeybee. Beekeepers are learning new methods of combating this blood-sucking pest that are helping improve honeybee populations.

Bees naturally groom themselves. In 2003, while observing grooming bees in a hive, Dr. Greg Hunt, from Purdue University, noticed that some of the bees were biting off the legs of the varroa mites on them. Hunt continued to research the behavior and began sorting out the bees that were attacking the mites. By selecting the bees from the hive that were exhibiting this behavior, Hunt was able to develop a strain of queen bees that carried this trait.

"By 2007, the percentage of mite-biter bees increased to 5 to 7 percent," Berta said. Beekeepers in Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Pennsylvania have been working with the scientists at Purdue to increase the number of hives that carry this mite-biting trait. Some of the hives now contain 70 percent mite-biting bees.

The citizen scientists in the beekeeping community in Pennsylvania are also working to produce hardy bees that can survive the cold winters. Charles Vorisek, president of the Pennsylvania Beekeepers Association and owner of Vorisek's Backyard Bee Farm, Linesville, has grafted larvae from a queen that has survived the past three winters. The resulting queens have been taken to Purdue to be artificially inseminated by the mite-biting bees. These inseminated bees will be brought back to western Pennsylvania to produce more queens that should carry these two beneficial traits.

Queen bees that come from Southern stock don't deal well



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Charlie Vorisek, Linesville, points out queen bees in the queen cages. These queens will travel to Purdue University to be artificially inseminated.



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Beekeepers Al Machinski, left, of McKean; Charlie Vorisek, Linesville; and Jeff Berta, Slippery Rock, prepare queens to send to Purdue University for artificial insemination.

with the winters of the Northeast.

At a summer field day at Vorisek's farm, beekeepers from northwestern Pennsylvania will have the opportunity to acquire one of these queens and have it established in a nucleus hive from their own colony.

The grafting of larvae from the honeycomb is a very delicate process. The beekeeper uses a thin, curved tool to lift the larva into a small plastic cup containing royal jelly for the larva to eat. The larva continues to be fed by worker bees

and develop into a queen. Just before it hatches, the plastic cell is attached to a queen cage that contains a nurse bee and some candy to feed the new queen. This queen then can be put in a hive to begin to lay eggs that contain the new improved genetics.

The field day is an opportunity for many beekeepers to improve the genetics of their hives. When they return their hives to their own colonies, they can share this genetics with other beekeepers in their neighborhoods, Berta said. Each beekeeper's hive will

remain at the Vorisek farm for two weeks so the new queens can mate with drones that are from winter-hardy stock. This will insure that the queens will produce eggs that carry the improved, desired traits.

Though this effort by these citizen scientists will impact the survivability of honeybees, it is not the complete answer to colony collapse that has gotten the attention of the public, as well as, beekeepers and scientists. They continue to study and determine the factors that impacted so many hives several years ago.

Research continues into the many factors that impact honeybees and other pollinators that are so important to food production.

Berta raises bees at his farm, Always Summer Herbs, near Slippery Rock. He also raises bedding plants in the spring and herbs that are available throughout the growing season. His bee business has become the majority of his business that includes honey products and selling hives and queens to other beekeepers.

Berta said that the efforts of these beekeepers would produce bees that can survive northwestern Pennsylvania winters as well as combat the varroa mites.

CAROL ANN GREGG is a freelance writer focusing on agriculture and business in western Pennsylvania.

Ceremony set for Grove City GED students

A commencement ceremony for GED students at the Grove City Education Center for Adults and Butler County Community College will be 7 to 9 p.m. Aug. 10 at the Succop Theater on BC3 campus in Butler. A reception will follow. As many as 20 students who earned their high school equivalency diplomas in the 2016-16 school year will participate. The public is invited.

Located at 118 S. Center St. in the Olde Town Grove City office suite, GCECA offers free one-on-one tutoring and small-group instruction in GED readiness and adult basic literacy skills such as math, reading and personal computing. Hours are 6 to 9 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon Tuesdays and Thursdays, and by appointment. English as a Second Language classes are from 1 to 3 p.m. Sundays.

The nonprofit agency operates in partnership with the BC3 Adult Literacy department with support from the Grove City Area United Way. For information, contact Sandy Marwick at 724-458-7270 or gcedcenter@gmail.com

ORGANIZATIONS

Mercer County Federation of Clubs

The July 25 meeting was held at the American Carpatho Russian Citizens Club in Sharon. Attendees were welcomed by Gerald (Jay) Jones.

The meeting was opened by first vice president Mary Ellen Flynn with the pledge and a moment of silence. Guests were Frank Zelinsky from Career Link, and Col. Larry Scheetz from Veterans Affairs.

Roll call showed three officers and three trustees present, and 22 clubs. There will be a final picnic meeting at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 10 at the Sharon Elks Lodge. Everyone is welcome to attend. The picnic will be on Aug. 14 at the Shriners on Lamor Road.

Tickets are available through your club. Extra tickets are available from finance officer Tom Masters. There are several upcoming events:

■ **Aug. 4 to 8** – Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Moving Wall) will be in Hermitage, next to John Flynn's Funeral Home, 9 p.m.

■ **Aug. 14** – Moonlight Karaoke at the Carpo Russ club, Aug. 20 Knights of Columbus in Greenville "Summer Blast" donations are welcomed for more info, contact Duke at 724-591-6245.

Veterans Court is progressing; there have been seven who have graduated and six more will be graduating soon. Congratulations and best wishes to these veterans.

There will no meeting in August due to the picnic. The next meeting will be Sept. 26 at the Grove City VFW, 220 Blair St., Grove City. Mary Stafford said Grace and all enjoyed a light supper.

Fredonia American Legion Auxiliary

The July meeting of the Fredonia American Legion Auxiliary was an informal meeting with six members attending. Community service hours were 145.

Fifteen hundred more poppies were received and Deb Cogley will make bouquets to use at the Veterans Day dinner.

The Auxiliary will have a table at Fredonia Old Home Week Aug. 16 to 20, and will hand out flags and march in the parade. Volunteers will be needed.

Regatta at Lake Arthur starts Sat.

The Regatta at Lake Arthur (Moraine State Park) returns this week on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Live bands, a laser show and fireworks will end Saturday's events with another fun filled day on Sunday.

A complete list of times and events can be seen at www.lakearthurregatta.org and click on the schedule of events.

Barkeyville Church of God Peach Jam Fest

On Saturday, Aug. 13, the church is having its second-annual Barkeyville Cof-fee-house Peach Jam Fest. This free event will be from 2 to 8 p.m.

Live entertainment will be all day. Special guest Randy Stonehill will perform from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Bring your lawn chair for a day of food, crafts, fun and of course Chambersburg peaches. The church is at 5433 Route 8, just north of Harrisville.

Slippery Rock golf outing

Slippery Rock Volunteer Fire Company and Rescue Team will be hosting the Tiny Davis Golf Memorial Outing

this Saturday at the Oakview Golf Club, 160 Ralston Road, Slippery Rock. Registration starts at noon with a 1 p.m. shotgun start.

There will be a four-player scramble, 18 holes, carts, snacks, refreshments and a catered dinner. Cash prizes for first-, second- and third-place teams will be awarded. There will also be a dollar hole-in-one contest valued at \$10,000 along with hole-in-one prizes on all par threes. Prizes for the top fire/EMS department teams with two members playing will also be awarded.

The cost is \$300 for a four-some. Registration deadline is today. For more information or to registration: srfireco@hotmail.com or 724-794-3817.

YMCA Camp/ARMCO Park Movie Night (Drive-in Night)

A movie will be held Friday

at 8:45 pm at the YMCA Camp/ARMCO Park, at 341 Center-ville Pike. This free community will feature "Big Hero".

This will be a drive-in night. If you choose, you can build your own car before the movie. Car building begins at 6 p.m. All supplies are provided to make your car and a snack will be provided. Info: Jamie at jknauuff@bcfymca.org or 724-287-4733 x107.

Feed My Sheep Food Cupboard July statistics

Families: 156; new: 7; total of family members: 406
Adults: 207
Elderly: 68
Children: 131
Slippery Rock area: 76
Slippery Rock borough: 56
Harrisville: 24
Items needed: Chunky Soup

Pancake and sausage breakfast

The Slippery Rock Senior Center will hold a breakfast for \$2 on Wednesday, Aug. 10, at 9 a.m. at the center. The center is located at 155 Brachton Road in Slippery Rock at the corner of Brachton and Harmony roads.



BOBBIE JO COMES
Harrisville-Area
News



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In my many adventures out and about I come across unique signs and odd things. I am still not sure how to cross in the crosswalk on this one, apparently upside down. So beware of the pedestrians that may cross while upside down.