

Bee disease scare over in Maryland

ADELPHI, Md. — Honey bees are buzzing again in Adelphi; nectar is flowing in the apple blossoms of central Maryland, and the late-winter scare for North American beekeepers is now all but a bad memory.

This optimistic report comes from Dewey M. Caron, extension agriculture specialist at the University of Maryland in College Park.

The scare came in the form of a tiny parasitic mite bearing the scientific name,

Varroa jacobsoni. Two of these mites had been found dead last fall in a vial containing a drone honey bee collected in a Adelphi area by a University of Maryland entomology graduate student.

Honey bee colonies throughout Asia, most of Europe and parts of Africa and South America have been devastated by the *Varroa* mite since its discovery in 1904. But the dreaded pest was unknown

on the North American continent until its apparent Maryland discovery in 1979.

To make sure that the parasitic mite had not gained a foothold, some 27 central Maryland beekeepers with 84 colonies in a 30-square-mile area of Montgomery and Prince Georges counties voluntarily allowed their honey bee populations to be destroyed in late March by apary inspectors from the

Maryland Department of Agriculture.

The University of Maryland's 12-colony teaching apiary at College Park was included in this program.

All of the affected hives were hauled to a central location, meticulously disinfected, and painstakingly examined for any evidence of varroa infestation. None was found.

So the hives were restocked in mid-April with

new bees donated by the American Bee Breeders Association and returned to their owners.

Several state beekeepers organizations around the nation have contributed money to help reimburse the affected Maryland beekeepers for total or partial loss of their 1980 honey crop. Funds are being administered by a sub-committee of the Maryland State Beekeepers Association.

Robert M. Altman,

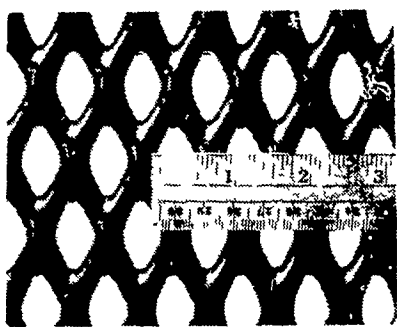
assistant secretary of the state Department of Agriculture, has recently written to plant regulatory officials throughout the U.S., assuring them that a varroa infestation does not exist in the bee colonies of Maryland.



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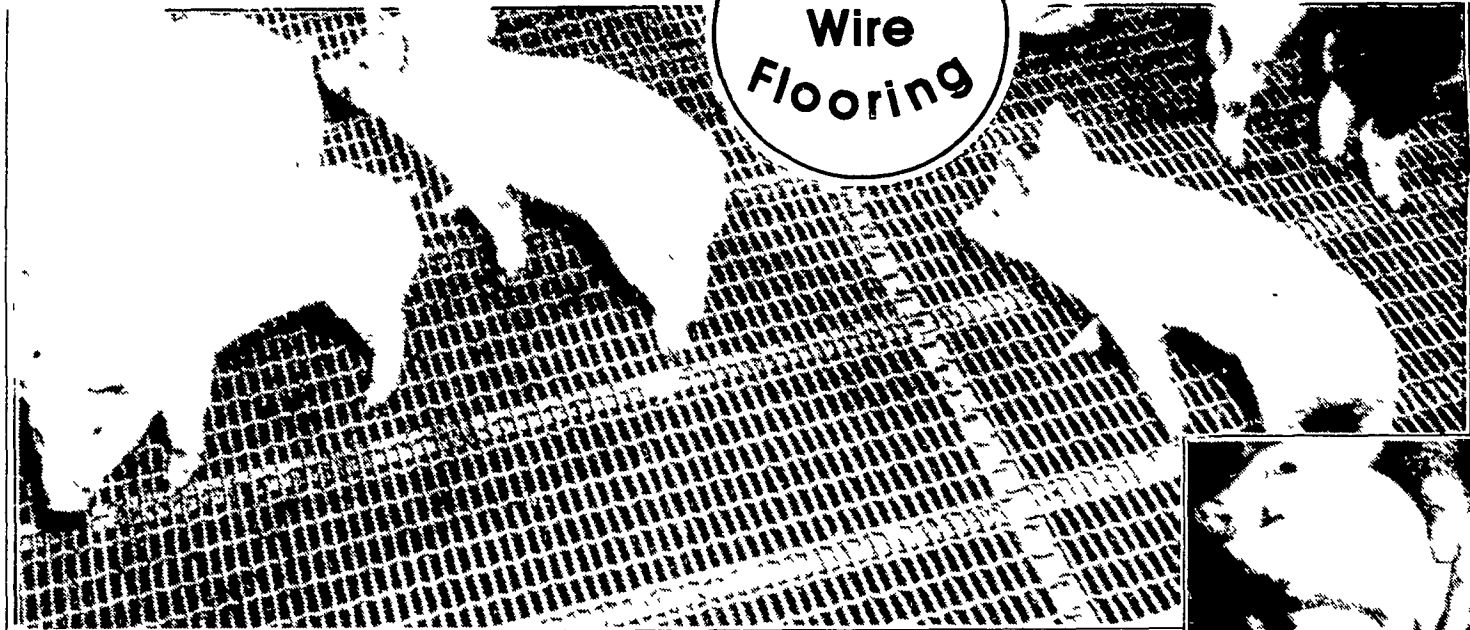
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