

Adams County beekeepers

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proper humidity level by circulating air within the hive.

Bees have a number of enemies, Schroeder added, including the weather which can get too severe for them. In the winter, he explained, the bees cluster within the hive. "They actually form a chain, with the outer ones keeping the inner ones warm," he stated. At the center of the cluster the temperature is around 93 degrees, a temperature which must be maintained to raise young. Mice and skunks are two other enemies which beekeepers must contend with during the winter months, Schroeder added. Both rodents are capable of seriously damaging the hives.

Another enemy of the insects is disease. A goal of the Adams County group is to prevent disease through control and prevention methods, Schroeder said. He explained that American foulbrood and European foulbrood, two serious diseases which affect bees, are easily transmitted by robber bees from stronger colonies.

"They severely weaken the colony and in the advanced state of the disease, beekeepers are sometimes asked to destroy a colony to prevent the spread of the disease," he said.

Ironically, bees are needed in orchard growing areas to pollinate the fruit crop, but because of some spray materials being fatal to the bees, orchards are among the worst areas to keep bee hives, Schroeder said.

Orchard spraying has an adverse effect on the bees, although growers do not usually spray insecticides during the blossom period when bees are actively working the flowers. However, once the blossoms are off of the tree, the bees move to work the clover or other nectar bearing growth in the orchard. This is where the damage is done, Schroeder explained. He added that how and when sprays are

applied can have a bearing on whether or not the bees will be affected by the spray.

Honey is not the only by-product produced by the bees. Pollen, which is high in protein, is obtained from the bees and is becoming a popular health food item. Propolis, used as a base for varnishes, is also produced. Beeswax which is removed from the cappings formed over the honey, is used extensively in the cosmetics industry and makes the finest candles. The wax is also used to build the foundation for the frames which are placed in the hives. Bee venom is also used to treat rheumatoid arthritis and in desensitizing people who suffer allergic reactions.

One colony of bees can produce 50 to 60 pounds of surplus honey in one year, according to Schroeder. A good amount of the honey produced locally is also sold in the Adams County area, he went on to say.

"Some beekeepers take their honey to market while others sell it locally," he added.

The last word in successful honey production is to have strong and healthy bee colonies, Schroeder stated. That is the aim of the Adams County association.



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