

Iron County 4-H Beekeeping News

Iron County, Utah

April 2024

Last month's club activity

At our last beekeeping activity, we covered these subjects:

- Assembling and painting woodenware
- Hive location
- Preparing for package arrival
- Installing package bees

Next club activity

Our next meeting will be on Saturday, April 12 at 9 AM at my home, 714 South 1175 West, Cedar City. Come right into the back yard through the gate on the south side of the house. Bring your protective clothing if you have them. I have suits and veils for those who don't have their own. As always, parents are welcome to attend.

We will cover the following topics:

- Use of protective clothing
- Lighting smokers
- Smoker fuels
- When and how to use smoke
- Installing package bees
- Installing nucs
- Feeding packages (syrup and pollen)
- Hive inspection
- Swarm prevention



April in your bee yard

The bee population is growing fast to take advantage of the nectar and pollen that is out there. Your bees can run out of room faster than you expect -- especially if you have Carniolans or Russians. If they run out of room, they'll swarm. Swarming is a natural instinctive behavior and it is how a mature colony multiplies into additional colonies.

Swarm prevention is vital for good honey production. Swarm prevention is a challenge, and sometimes after doing everything to prevent a swarm, they still swarm. If a colony swarms, half of the bees leave -- \$160 worth. The remaining colony is less likely to produce a good honey crop that same year due to the reduction in bees.

If you are lucky enough to catch the swarm that emerged from your hive, the good news is that you now have another colony, but the bad news is, it will not provide a honey crop that year. More bad news: If you don't catch it, the swarm will likely take up residence in your neighbor's home, a park, or a schoolyard. A wise beekeeper manages bees to avoid swarming.



To prevent swarming, keep an eye on your hives to make sure you give them extra space when needed. If they are covering all but 3 frames you should add a new box to your hive.

It is wise to have water located near your hives in your yard so the bees do not use to your neighbor's bird bath, or dog or cat water dish, swimming pool, or hot tub. There are many methods on how you water your bees:

- In-hive feeders
- Frame feeders
- Boardman feeder (entrance feeder)
- A bucket or pan with sticks or corks floating in it to prevent bees from drowning
- A bird feeder or pan with rocks or marbles in it to prevent bees from drowning
- Chicken feeders
- A slow drip from an outside faucet

Dwindling (where old bees die off faster than new bees emerge) is common this time of year because temperatures, weather, and food sources are less than ideal. If you have been feeding through the winter or early spring because your hive is low on stores, keep doing it; changing weather can force the bees to stay in the hive and they don't have the ability to forage. The warm weather is bringing out the early blooming plants and the bees are now aggressively seeking pollen for the brood. Dandelions, willows, fruit trees and some berries are now in bloom and are the major source of pollen for the first part of the season.

Now is the first real month of work for the year. You will need to check your hives on a warm day for eggs, and signs of diseases and parasites. Clean the bottom board to save the bees some work.

If you wintered your hive in more than one box and the bottom box is empty, you should reverse the brood chambers (move the brood to the bottom box). If the colony is strong and is already covering much of both boxes, there is no need to reverse the boxes.

Elected club officers:

- Adeline Kofford
- Vice President – TBA
- Owen McAfee

Other announcements

The 4-H registration year runs from October through September. **If you haven't registered as a 4-H member for the 2024-25 year, please do so right away** at 4h.zsuite.org/. If you need help with the process, call the Iron County 4-H Coordinator, Tanya Hibler at (435) 267-1754.

Club members are encouraged to set personal goals for the year including keeping a record of the progress of their bees, expenses, lessons learned, and other aspects of their beekeeping hobby. You can enjoy some competition by preparing one or more entries in the county fair such as honey, wax, and candles. All this is part of your workbook (<http://tinyurl.com/c9j72xc>) and can also be part of your 4-H Portfolio (see <http://utah4h.org/htm/general-forms/portfolios/>).

When you've completed your beekeeping workbook and a full year of successful beekeeping, please call me to set a date and time to go over your workbook and what you've learned so you can earn your *Iron Beekeeper* certificate.

In addition to the New Jersey 4-H beekeeping manual (<http://tinyurl.com/786xsro>), members are also encouraged to read at least one other book on beekeeping such as *First Lessons in Beekeeping* by Delaplane, *The Backyard Beekeeper* by Flottum, *The Beekeeper's Handbook* by Sammataro, or *Beekeeping Basics* (free PDF download at <https://tinyurl.com/y587rsrv>) by MAAREC. I have several beekeeping books you may borrow. There are two very good magazines: *Bee Culture* and *American Bee Journal*.

We have a club website at www.ironbeekeeper.org and the Utah beekeepers' Association has a beekeeping webpage at www.utahbeekeepers.com. These websites have links to a lot more online learning opportunities as well as several vendors from whom you can buy equipment and bees.

The club is on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/IronBeekeeper/.

Some free opportunities to learn more about beekeeping:

- Randy Oliver's First-Year Care - <https://tinyurl.com/sborlfg>.
- A 13-lesson YouTube course in beekeeping is available at www.tinyurl.com/nrzgbe9.
- Another online course is at www.ohiostatebeekeepers.org/beekeeping_class/.
- Brushy Mountain Bee Farm has some very good videos at <https://tinyurl.com/yvu5g9pf>.
- The Northwest New Jersey Beekeepers Assn has some great videos at <https://tinyurl.com/y2f5eo72>.

The 4-H program offers leadership opportunities for youth at the county level in addition to within our beekeeping club. If you are interested, call Emma Whitmore, at (435) 586-8132.

I am always available to answer questions or to help you with your bees. Feel free to call me any time.

Please share this letter with your parents and interested friends.

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