

August 2012

The Buzz

Well, the bees are buzzing and this looks like it will be a good year. That is if the mosquitos are any indicator of honey production. Now I don't mean because they are tiny, fast, and vicious but because most times usually bring out their numbers. Moist times also bring out the plants, materials that allow the honey bee to do its job. I have two hives this year and boy am I in trouble on one of them. The bees are gluing the lid down. When I loaded the bees I always use three deep supers; bottom two are full of frames, top one empty. Inside of this I put the feeder jars, pollen patty, and anything else I think I need. My hopes are that the queen will get started on the frames and keep busy until the need to feed is gone. I then fill the empty super with frames or just take it completely off and begin stacking the honey supers. Well somehow I missed a little hole under the lid of the five-pound package and so right off the bees started flying out of the top and not the bottom. After checking to see if the queen releases, I leave them alone for about two weeks. It wasn't long that I notice that the queen instead of working the bottom supers and frames had migrated to the underside of the lid and thus the bees began building comb down. Man has that lid gotten heavy. It was funny to watch those bees and when they began to start pulling pollen their legs were too large to fit through the "hole" in the top so pollen began to pile up outside the hive as it fell off of their legs. Things have changed inside the hive and they are now using the bottom entrance. Next I am going to drill a hole through another bottom board and the current lid, block off the bottom entrance and stack a

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HAY, HAY, HAY

Back at it again. Am I the only one running behind on putting up the hay? The fertilizer was a little late but the grass is coming on. This year two types of spreaders were used. The old reliable drop box covers 10' each pass and the cone shaped reaches out to close to 25'. Each takes a different calibration or setting for application. The grass grows faster and greener with each application.

My question for the educated ones is this: How much fertilizer can I apply before my marginal costs equal my marginal returns? I ask this because last year my reliable drop box got unreliable the first time around the field, and resulted in a very heavy application. In the fall that strip/row was lush, way ahead of the others, and this spring it is the same. If I just did that one very heavy application over the whole field I would not have needed to reapply for at least two more cuts. I am going to guess that "over" fertilization will last into three cuts. I don't know about you, but time, machinery and labor would have been 1/3 or even 1/4 of what it is turning out to be. The life of the hay farmer!



While all the cuts to the farm bill keep happening I ask you why not to the weather service? How many times are the predictions correct? Hey, its raining outside, it must be time to cut. My son is helping and that is a huge plus, but we still got beat by the rain on one field. I know that there are some who are wrapping all their stuff, getting off of the field much quicker, but that may take some equipment changes. More equipment? Well, if that is what it takes. Until next time, say hay!

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Bees (continued)

honey super on the new bottom board and so on. It should be fun. The four pound package is crusing along fine but you can see a difference in the bee population. I will set my hose to spray on shower and focus on the front area of the hive. You will see your bees start to "stack up" and though they may not like it is kind of neat to see. Remember the honey flow is short up her and usually during July so don't let those frames alone after the end of the month. Get your honey or the worker bee will! You will need to get ready to begin feeding again if you plan on trying to winter them over. Happy Bee Keeping!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Are you busy? Now what kind of question is that to ask a farmer in the spring/summer season? Crazy; just like I feel most of the time. At issue is the farm bill and what it means to Alaskans. No, we don't have the quantity of major crop producers like other states, but what we do have is the support, FSA, USDA, University funding and the like that benefit from a strong farm bill. Our offices have adapted, just like us, to our environment and conditions. Lots of amendments to cover like: (Begich) To require the ARS to operate at least one facility in each state, or to provide and improve housing in rural areas for educators, public safety officers, and medical providers, and their households, or To require publication of names and amounts of individuals who receive crop insurance premium subsidies, along with the crop insurers' underwriting gains and related information. More amendments (Murkowski) like: To guarantee loans for rural water development and disposal, To make commercial fishermen eligible for certain operating loans, To reauthorize the Denali Commission, To include fisherman and others involved in aquaculture as farmers/farms. More, (Paul, KY) Authorize the interstate trafficking of un-



pasteurized milk and milk products that are packaged for direct human consumption, (Sanders, VT) authorizes schools to purchase locally and regionally grown fruits and vegetables. There is much more and our organization on the national level keeps track and maintains a position based upon the wishes of the membership. Well, it is in the Houses hands now. But back to Alaska and woe to this weather pattern. The vegetables are struggling, it is just too cool yet for good growth. I enjoy baseball and every year I say this is the year I get to go watch our local miners play only to end up farming during most games. I have been working on a new logo that anybody could use based upon "BUY LOCAL." It is over at the local design shop in Palmer. Markets are not the problem, production is. Happy days are here again. -Bob



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