

Development of a Commercial Beekeeper's Field Guide

Project Leader: Dennis vanEngelsdorp

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Objectives for current year:

- Develop a hand-held pocket field guide that provides basic information on managing commercial colonies. The guide will be designed to be easy to use and written so it will be accessible by both beekeepers and their crews.
- Include high quality graphics to increase understanding of management practices that will help reduce colony losses and improve colony health in commercial beekeeping operations.
- Disseminate draft of the manual to several commercial operations and leaders in the field for review prior to final printing.

Background:

The Bee Informed Partnership, through the success of the Technical Transfer teams, have unprecedented access to commercial beekeeping operations providing them with a unique insight into effective management plans. This combination of in-field experience coupled with data-derived best management practices creates a unique opportunity to share these insights with other beekeepers. In doing so, this first commercial beekeeper field guide is produced with the hope of significantly improving colony health in commercial operations as well as guiding the next generation of new commercial operations. This guide is modeled after field guides for other agricultural industries including ones for soybean and corn producers, and the guide produced by the Almond Board for almond growers.

We were able to gather all technical transfer team members for a 3-day summit in July to begin producing the text around a highly detailed outline and work will continue throughout this fall to add details to the outline.

The guide is divided into sections by management practice and includes case studies of successful operations, crew operation, truck prep, home base requirements, a beekeeper's calendar, basic bee biology, pollination preparation, safety, equipment, honey production, Varroa, queen rearing, colony management, disease diagnosis, basic botany, apiary management, problems and a quick reference guide (knots, conversion charts, etc.).

Funding for printing the manual has been approved, and a graphic artist has been found to produce the illustrations as it is expected that photos and drawings of actual practices will be more useful than text.

This field guide can or may be used as a highly instructive training manual for an operation's crew, increasing its effectiveness beyond a field guide. As the commercial beekeeping community is faced with an aging workforce, the need for a reliable, single source of information for those wishing to enter this field is imperative. Once a print version is in production, it would also be possible to create a mobile app to be used on smartphones.

We are currently planning on an initial printing of 2,000 manuals and the BIP Board has approved funding up to \$12,000 to print the guide. We intend to have a draft for review by several commercial beekeepers and leaders in industry. We are scheduled to have this guide available by summer of 2017.

Project Cooperators and Personnel:

Cooperating Personnel: Bee Informed Partnership Tech-Transfer Team members, Katie Lee (UMN), Rob Snyder (UCCE), Ellen Topitzhofer (OSU), Ben Sallmann (UCCE), Megan Mahoney (TAMU), Dan Wynn (OSU) and Karen Rennich, Bee Informed Partnership Executive Director

For More Details, Visit

- Poster location 112, Exhibit Hall A + B during the Almond Conference; or on the web (after January 2017) at Almonds.com/ResearchDatabase
- 2015 - 2016 Annual Reports CD (15-POLL2-vanEngelsdorp); or on the web (after January 2017) at Almonds.com/ResearchDatabase
- Related project: 16-POLL5-Sagili/vanEngelsdorp