

NEBEEC

The Beekeeper's Digest

Issue 12

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Welcome to the NEBEEC Beekeeper's Digest!

NEBEEC (Northeast Beekeepers Education Collaborative) brings beekeepers the best available and most current knowledge for practical beekeeping success. This monthly newsletter provides summaries and highlights of:

- Presentations to local bee clubs
- Journal articles
- YouTube videos
- Podcasts
- Research updates

NEBEEC also has an opt-in, collaborative Slack-based community for members to interact in. This community also has an embedded and customized AI chatbot for answering members beekeeping questions.

Forward this newsletter to other beekeepers you know! Spread the word.

To subscribe, find previous issues or join the NEBEEC Slack community – visit nebeec.org

Suggestions or feedback? Write us at nebeec@gmail.com



Beekeeping Nuggets



The 2027 North American Honey Bee Expo (January 7-9, 2027, in Louisville) has been announcing speakers recently. There are many popular returning speakers and many new and exciting ones. Among the speakers announced so far are: Bob Binnie, David Burns, Fred Dunn, Maggie Gill, Krispn Given, Jeff Horchoff, Zac Lamas, Eric Oliver, Ferhat Ozturk, Michael Palmer, Cory Stevens, Rogan Tokach and Robyn Underwood.

As of July 2026 Yellow-Legged (a.k.a, Asian) hornets have been found in North Carolina — continuing their northward movement.

Good news/bad news from EAS 2026. I was surprised to find that I'd passed 3 of the 4 exams and missed passing the 4th by a small margin. I definitely plan to go back in 2027 to try to finish off the 4th. As I expected, my ability to listen to any of the conference content for the first 3 days before the exams were completed was very limited. Not expected was that I would have to leave immediately after I finished my exams so, unfortunately, I don't have content to report on despite there being a wealth of great talks.

Upcoming Events



Connecticut Beekeepers Association — September 10, 2026, 6:30-8:00pm EDT. Bill Hesbach leads the CBA monthly Q&A for members on Zoom on the 2nd Thursday of each month.

<https://www.ctbees.org/upcoming-events>. These meetings are also recorded and are available for replay via the CBA website and (currently) made public on their YouTube channel.

MDAR Honey Bee Education Days — September 11, 2026, 1-3pm. “Fall Management”. University of

Massachusetts Agricultural Learning Center Farm, 911 North Pleasant St, Amherst MA and Bristol County Agricultural High School Standish House Admin Building, 28 Center St, Dighton MA.

Norfolk County Beekeepers Association – September 14, 2026. 7-8pm, “Less Stress Overwintering Using Condensing Hives” – Russ Holden. Norfolk County Agricultural School, 400 Main Street, Walpole, MA.

Connecticut Beekeepers Association – September 17, 2026, 6:30-8:00pm “Tropilaelaps: The Next Global Threat to Honey Bees” with Dr. Maggie Gill. I had the pleasure of seeing Maggie speak about Tropilaelaps twice in person at NAHBE in January. She is continuously bringing new details to light about Tropilaelaps and I’m sure will again at this talk. Dr. Gill is also confirmed as a speaker at NAHBE 2027.

At Home Beekeeping Series – September 29, 2026, 7:30-8:30pm EDT, Dylan Ryals of Purdue University will be presenting on “Breeding Better Bees”. See <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/bees-pollinators/at-home-beekeeping-series/>

MDAR Northeast USA Honey Bee Update Lunch & Learn Series – October 2, 2026, 12-1:30pm. This excellent series is back for 2026. It brings together apiary inspectors across the northeast to talk about the state of bees and beekeeping in the region. Registration required. https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_y5hKOVHyTuep7N7BoovQvA

Connecticut Beekeepers Association – October 8, 2026, 6:30-8:00pm EDT. Bill Hesbach leads the CBA monthly Q&A for members on Zoom on the 2nd Thursday of each month. <https://www.ctbees.org/upcoming-events>. These meetings are also recorded and are available for replay via the CBA website and (currently) made public on their YouTube channel.

MDAR Honey Bee Education Days – October 16, 2026, 1-3pm. “Fall Management”. University of Massachusetts Agricultural Learning Center Farm, 911 North Pleasant St, Amherst MA and Bristol County Agricultural High School Standish House Admin Building, 28 Center St, Dighton MA.

Worcester Beekeepers Association – October 17, 2026, 8:00am-4:00pm. Fall Conference with speakers Dr. Jen Tsuruda and Dr. Julianna Rangel Posada. Free for members, \$10 charge for non-members. Information can be found at: <https://worcestercountybeekeepers.org/event/october-17-2026-46th-annual-speakers-conference/>

At Home Beekeeping Series – October 27, 2026, 7:30-8:30pm EDT, Meghan Milbrath from Michigan State University will be presenting on “European Foulbrood”. See <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/bees-pollinators/at-home-beekeeping-series/>

Massachusetts Beekeepers Association – Fall Meeting, November 14, 2026, 8:00am. Franklin Elks #2136, 1077 Pond Street, Franklin, MA. <https://www.massbee.org/event-6797654>

North American Honey Bee Expo – January 7-9, 2027. Kentucky Exposition Center, 937 Phillips Ln, Louisville, KY. I’m looking forward to going back this year! <https://www.nahbexpo.com/>.

American Beekeeping Federation – January 12-16, 2027. Moody Gardens Convention Center, Galveston, Texas. <https://abfnet.org/2027-abf-conference/>

Notes From Recent Live Events



At Home Beekeeping Series — July 28, 2026, Dr. Rogan Tokach, North Dakota State University, “Varroa Control: Understanding What to Treat and When”.

Editor’s Note: This talk was a basic survey of current choices for mite treatment but notably did not mention Norroa. We are lucky in the Northeast to still be able to use Formic Pro quite reliably even if we need to search for temperature windows more than in the past — I don’t envy beekeepers in warmer climates who can’t. But I think we are still in need of a non-destructive long-treatment oxalic acid product — I continue to see significant comb cannibalization in hives that have had VarroSan used in them.

Takeaways:

- Without treatment, colonies typically die within 12 months due to mite infestation.
- The effectiveness of mite treatments is influenced by brood presence, temperature, and hive status (e.g., honey supers present).
- Synthetics: Amitraz (Apivar, Amiflex), fluvalinate (Apistan), coumaphos (Checkmite Plus) — widespread resistance, restrictions on use.
- Organic Acids: Oxalic acid, formic acid — no known resistance.
- Others: Thymol (Apiguard), hops beta acid (HopGuard)
- Some treatments (notably Formic Pro) are safe and effective only within tight temperature ranges. This has made it almost unusable in the US south and increasingly difficult to use when needed in the Northeast due to hotter summer temperatures.
- Only Formic Pro kills reproductive mites — making it challenging to control mites during the prime season with other treatments. Clearly, we need another answer.
- Amitraz resistance is increasing among commercial beekeepers; about 33-35% have resistance above the 30% threshold.
- There is no documented resistance to oxalic acid or formic acid in varroa mites.
- An Auburn study compared Apivar, Formic Pro, HopGuard, and oxalic acid vapor.
 - Apivar, Formic Pro, and HopGuard were more effective than the control and oxalic acid vapor at maintaining mite levels.
 - Only Apivar group had 100% colony survival.
 - Formic Pro is sometimes associated with higher queen loss.
 - Extended-release oxalic acid (e.g., VarroSan) is good for maintaining low mite levels, not for reducing high infestations.
 - Homemade oxalic acid pads were less effective, especially in the Southeast US.
- Combining extended-release oxalic acid with fast-acting miticides (e.g., Apivar, Amiflex) did not significantly improve mite reduction when starting levels were high.
- Artificially creating a brood-less period (e.g., splitting with queen cells) enhances the effectiveness of oxalic acid treatments.

- Single oxalic acid dribble post-brood break can maintain low mite levels for 77+ days.
 - Robotic heat chambers (Beewise Bee Homes) can maintain mite levels by killing mites in capped brood without harming bee pupae.
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Podcasts



Beekeeping Today Podcast — August 17, 2026, “Using CO₂ to Fight Varroa Mites with Aakash Manaswi”. Aakash is a 10th grader who has been working on a CO₂-based system to kill varroa for a few years — along with some other projects. This is another approach people are working on for Varroa mite control, and, for example, Mann Lake sells a simple CO₂ injector for the EasyCheck jars. But Aakash is taking this to a more serious level.

Takeaways:

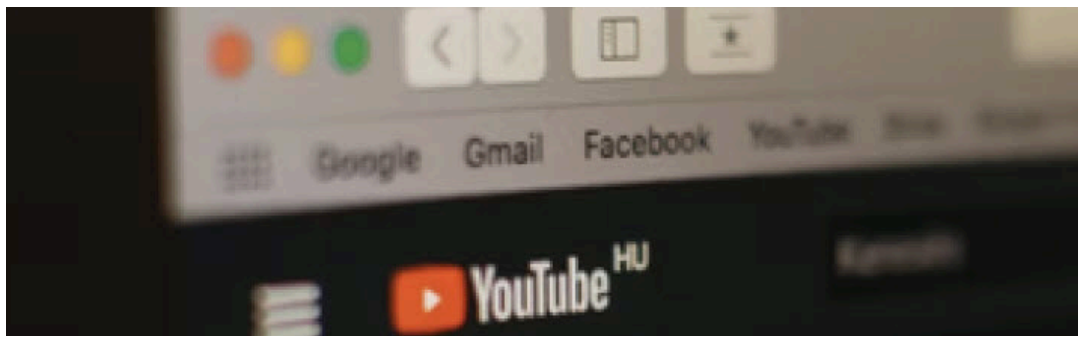
- Aakash became interested in bees in 3rd grade — observing how a Varroa infested colony had very low activity.
- Aakash’s studies led him to understand that Varroa mites have a much lower tolerance to blood acidity than honey bees due and to the possible use of CO₂ to exploit this. His project/product is called the “Mite Blower”.
- The Mite Blower is a hive lid that releases a controlled CO₂ stream which acidifies varroa blood and causes them to detach from the bees.
- The lid has nine tubes which are connected to a CO₂ tank. Flow is regulated at 2 liters per minute — a rate that Aakash arrived at after a 3-year lab and field study.
- The study compared CO₂ treatment to synthetic miticides, monitoring bee survival, immunity, digestive and reproductive health.
- Aakash is being mentored by scientists at 3M, the USDA (Dr. Charles Stahl), and the University of Florida (Dr. Cameron Jack, Marie Ensach).
- Results showed that mite populations were significantly reduced within 1-3 days of treatment.
- The suggested treatment regimen is once every four weeks with each treatment lasting one minute.
- A 200-pound CO₂ tank costs about \$200 and provides thousands of treatments. So, a commercial operator can potentially drastically reduce mite treatment material and labor costs.
- Importantly, CO₂ does not penetrate capped brood cells.
- Aakash plans are to distribute the Mite Blower prototype to beekeepers across Florida and beyond to get field feedback.
- Invited to participate in the North American Honeybee Expo’s Next Gen program. I’m hoping Aakash is there — he will be very popular!

Two Bees in a Podcast — July 28, 2026, “Varroa Biology and Pesticide Research with Dr. Kirsten Traynor”.

Takeaways:

- Kirsten began with an undergraduate degree in English Literature at Kenyon College, Ohio. Her interest in pollinators started after planting a wildflower meadow on a Maryland farm, leading her to a beekeeping course and her first hive.
- Varroa destructor can interpret honey bee brood chemical signals to optimize its own reproduction.
- Ongoing research with PhD student Yakun Zheng is investigating the effects of multiple mites in a single brood cell, finding increased brood mortality.
- Four Varroa control methods were compared:
 - Intensive drone comb cutting (no chemicals)
 - Queen caging and brood removal
 - Drone brood cutting plus formic acid treatment
 - Synthetic chemical treatments only
- Key Findings:
 - Intensive drone comb cutting significantly reduces mite populations (as low as 500-2000 mites vs. up to 8000 in untreated colonies).
 - Early removal of mites prevents exponential population growth.
 - Labor-intensive methods are more feasible for hobbyists than commercial beekeepers.
 - Drone brood cutting also suppresses swarm tendencies.
- Dr. Traynor hopes to study Varroa on its original host (*Apis cerana*) to understand natural resistance and co-evolution.
- Dr Traynor did a comparison of Germany and US pollen samples:
- US findings:
 - In the US, High diversity and concentration of pesticide residues (over 215 types analyzed).
 - Colonies with higher fungicide residues showed increased disease and queen turnover.
 - Field experiments found sublethal pesticide effects, such as abnormal queen replacement behavior and increased brood cannibalism.
- Germany findings:
 - Analyzed for over 475 pesticide residues; diversity present but at much lower concentrations.
 - Only 5 out of 2700 samples exceeded hazardous levels, often due to beekeeper-applied wood preservatives(!)
 - Stricter EU regulations limit available pesticide active ingredients, especially insecticides.
- Research in Apple Orchards where copper was used as an organic fungicide led to increased copper in pollen but not in nectar or honey.
- Bees prefer uncontaminated sugar solutions, but normal copper doses did not negatively affect bee health or longevity.

YouTube Channels



British Beekeepers Association – “Impact and Early Management of *Vespa velutina*”, Dr. Peter Kennedy. August 20, 2026. The Asian or Yellow-Legged Hornet infestations in Europe and the US continue to worsen and are having huge impacts to honey bees and other pollinators.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KlN6_fajWY.

Takeaways:

- First seen in France in 2004 but now established across much of Europe including Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany.
- First detected in the UK Channel Islands in 2016.
- In the USA, first found in Savannah, Georgia, 2023 and traced genetically to Asia. Has since spread to South Carolina and North Carolina.
- In New Zealand, detected in Auckland in 2023.
- Major predator of honeybees—especially foragers returning to hives.
- Honey bee colony losses attributed to *Vespa velutina* are 30% annually in France and up to 50% in parts of Italy.
- Honey production is less affected in regions where main nectar flows are early and more severe in areas with late-flowering crops such as northwest Spain. This is due to the biology of *Vespa velutina* whose nest populations build through the year.
- DNA studies show hornets feed on over 1400 species with 90% from seven orders (bees, wasps, flies, etc.).
- 43 of the 50 most common prey species are pollinators. There is a potential for large scale disruption of pollination in affected areas as a result.
- Presence of hornets at hives can halt bee foraging, leading to stress, disease, and poor overwintering.
- *Vespa velutina* also directly feed on ripe fruit including grapes, apples and pears and can cause significant yield losses.
- Nests are increasingly found in urban areas, raising the risk to people.
- Early response to infestation in each area is nest eradication but nests are often hidden and/or high up.
- One technique for nest location is tagging hornets to track them back to their nests.
- Various companies are working on tracking and identification technologies.

Recent Journal Articles of Note



Bee Culture, September 2026 – “A Closer Look: Winter/Summer Bees”, Clarence Collison, p14-17. In Dr. Collison’s articles, there are a series of important points on a particular topic with major study references punctuating each section. This makes it very easy to deep dive into any area of interest.

Takeaways:

- Winter (a.k.a Diutinus) bees live up to 10 times longer than summers bees. They emerge in late summer and autumn, survive through winter, maintain the colony, and initiate brood rearing in early spring.
- Vitellogenin is the major storage protein and is in much higher quantities in winter bees, supporting longevity and brood rearing during pollen scarcity.
- Arylphorin is a newly identified storage protein and is also elevated in winter bees.
- Fat bodies and hypopharyngeal glands are enlarged in winter bees - supporting nutrient storage and future brood feeding.
- Decreasing brood rearing in fall is strongly correlated with the onset of winter bee production.
- Drop in pollen supply is a key environmental trigger for the transition.
- Requeening can delay winter bee rearing, indicating internal colony signals are important.
- **Studies show that fall pollen supplements do not significantly enhance winter bee survival or spring colony performance.**
- Bees overwintered indoors have higher protein and lipid reserves, indicating better physiological condition. The implication is that investing in fall pollen supplements is not necessarily beneficial and that overwintering conditions are more critical.
- Winter bees can mount a stronger immune response to bacterial challenges due, primarily, to higher levels of vitellogenin
- Winter bees are as active or more so than spring bees – but a small subset performs most flights.
- In one study, some biomarkers are upregulated under warmer conditions simulating global warming - indicating that winter bees may experience higher stress under very warm conditions.
- Understanding triggers of winter bee rearing can inform colony management for better overwintering survival. In particular, the conditions (nutritional, viral, etc.) that winter bees are raised in can be improved with knowledge of when they are raised.

American Bee Journal, September 2026 – “The Mystery of Honey Bee Navigation”, Bill Hesbach, pages 987-991. There is always something new to learn about honey bee navigation.

Takeaways:

- Jean-Henri Fabre’s experiments (some designed because of correspondence with Charles Darwin) showed bees could orient home even after being intentionally disoriented, suggesting complex navigation beyond simple path memory.

- The Waggle Dance communicates — direction, distance and floral odor. But recruited foragers use their experience and terrain knowledge for actual source location. Young bees perform special flights to learn the landscape around the hive.
- On orientation flights bees hover, arc, then spiral away from the hive, memorizing visual features iteratively.
- Even a single orientation flight can enable effective homing; prior flight experience enhances learning.
- Bees remember vertical structures, skyline, and arrangement of landscape features.
- Bees use the sun's position as a compass, compensating for its movement with an internal circadian clock.
- When the sun is obscured, bees detect polarized light patterns using specialized photoreceptors in their compound eyes which allows bees to infer the sun's position.
- Bees estimate distance traveled by the amount of visual motion (a.k.a., optic flow) experienced as they fly. Because of this, bees flying higher or over water report shorter distances in their dances(!)
- Bees learn and use prominent landmarks to structure their routes. Familiarity with terrain enables more efficient and flexible navigation.
- Bees use multiple brain regions for navigation:
 - Optic Lobes: Process visual motion.
 - Central Complex: Involved in compass orientation and path integration.
 - Mushroom Bodies: Crucial for learning and spatial memory.
- Because of all this, the waggle dance is most effective when recruits already have experience with the local landscape.

American Bee Journal, September 2026 — “The Greater Wax Moth: Hive Enemy and Medical Ally”, Samira A. Akant, DVM, pages 999-1001. Before reading this article I was completely unaware of the wax moth's potential use in medicine and plastic recycling — quite interesting.

Takeaways:

- *Galleria mellonella* is a moth from the Pyralidae family, targeting honey bee colonies.
- Adult females do not feed - they locate weak hives via olfactory cues and lay 300-1,000 eggs in crevices or neglected combs.
- Larvae feed on beeswax, bee larval feces, cocoons, pollen, and hive debris.
- Larvae burrow through combs, spinning silken tunnels ("galleries") that protect them from bees resulting in:
 - Structural comb collapse (galleriosis)
 - Death/suffocation of bee larvae and pupae
 - Colony population decline and possible abandonment or death if untreated
- Visual signs include: (1) Blackened, powdery, and moldy combs, (2) Accumulated debris on hive bottom boards, (3) Larvae and pest evidence visible upon inspection
- Strong bee populations filling their cavity naturally defend against moths.
- Spraying *Bacillus thuringiensis* (e.g., Certan, B402) kills larvae but is safe for bees and humans.
- Paradichlorobenzene (PDB) is permitted in the US for off-hive equipment if followed by thorough aeration.
- Freezing combs at 0F-10F for 24-48 hours kills all eggs and larvae.
- Regularly replacing old brood comb and cleaning bottom boards removes breeding sites and larval food.
- Screened bottom boards improve ventilation and allow larvae to fall out, preventing pupation in the hive.
- Sugar, vinegar, water, and banana peel traps lure and drown adult moths, placed away from hives.
- Wax moth larvae have an immune system similar to mammals:

- Can be maintained at 37°C (human body temperature), enabling realistic disease and drug studies without mammal use.
 - Used for drug screening, toxicity testing, and studying pathogen virulence.
 - **Wax moth larval hemolymph contains peptides with anti-cancer properties.**
 - These peptides induce apoptosis in cancer cells (e.g., cervical and lung cancers) while sparing healthy tissue.
 - Compounds (e.g., gallericin) from larvae are templates for new antibiotics effective against resistant bacteria (e.g., MRSA).
 - Wax moth larvae can digest polyethylene (PE), a major plastic pollutant. Gut bacteria and enzymes break down PE into harmless compounds like ethylene glycol providing a potential industrial application for plastic waste recycling.
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Research Updates



Frank D. Rinkevich (29 Aug 2026): **Application of carbon dioxide for dislodging Varroa destructor for monitoring infestation yields inaccurate results**, Journal of Apicultural Research, DOI: 10.1080/00218839.2026.2711491.

Editor's Note: As I mentioned in the Beekeeping Today podcast with high school student and researcher Aakash Manaswi, CO₂ is now being promoted as a viable method for dislodging varroa from bees when sampling. This may be very attractive to beekeepers reticent to use methods which kill bees, but Dr. Rinkevich's study should temper that. But — Aakash's device is fundamentally different than the methods being promoted currently for monitoring.

Takeaways:

- CO₂ can anesthetize bees and potentially dislodge Varroa mites without killing the bees.
- The Varroa EasyCheck system optionally uses a CO₂ injector for field use and laboratory tanks allow for higher-volume CO₂ application.
- The method is attractive for beekeepers wishing to avoid euthanizing bees, but its efficacy is largely untested.
- Experiment run:
 - Colonies established with Varroa-susceptible queens; no miticides used.
 - Approximately 300 bees sampled and subjected to CO₂ dislodgement using one of handheld CO₂ injector (Varroa EasyCheck system) and laboratory CO₂ tank.
- After CO₂ treatment, remaining mites were recovered using a soapy water wash.
- Efficacy was calculated as the proportion of total mites dislodged by CO₂.
- Results:
 - Varroa EasyCheck injector: 16% efficacy.
 - Laboratory CO₂ tank: 40% efficacy.

- Efficacy increases with higher Varroa loads and more bees. At low infestation rates (common in early detection), efficacy dropped below 10%.
- So - soapy water or alcohol washes remain the gold standard.

Geoffrey R. Williams, Kristen Traynor, Dan Aurell, Maggie C. Gill, Kitiphong Khongphinitbunjong, Rogan Tokach, **Tropilaelaps mercedesae: rapid geographic expansion in a novel honey bee host**, Trends in Parasitology September 2026.

<https://www.cell.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1471-4922%2826%2900198-4>

Editor's Note: Not yet published to my knowledge is the finding that *Tropilaelaps* has been found in Türkiye. A continuing problem with the spread of *Tropilaelaps* is that new country detection is occurring well after initial infestation and responses, which are only reactive, are occurring far too late. Import and transport bans are proving completely ineffective in stemming the flow of *Tropilaelaps* as a result.

Takeaways:

- *Tropilaelaps mercedesae* was historically limited to southern and eastern Asia parasitizing only the giant honey bees species.
 - Parasitization of *Apis mellifera* began in the 1960s with expansion into Western Asia and Eastern Europe is recent and accelerating.
 - The spread is likely driven both by the human movement of infested colonies and natural bee behaviors.
 - Mites invade brood cells, lay eggs soon after capping, and complete development before bee emergence.
 - Dispersal phase for *Tropilaelaps* is brief - most mites re-enter brood cells within 48 hours.
 - *Tropilaelaps* cause physical injuries, deformities, reduced flight/learning, and increased mortality.
 - Infestation leads to reduced colony strength and honey production.
 - Mites feed on larval/pupal hemolymph, create multiple wounds, and can transmit viruses (e.g., deformed wing virus, acute bee paralysis virus).
 - Giant honey bees have evolved migration-induced brood breaks, absconding, and enhanced grooming to control mite populations.
 - *Apis mellifera* has shown some hygienic behavior (e.g., removal of infested brood) but is generally more susceptible to *Tropilaelaps*.
 - *Tropilaelaps* rapid reproductive cycle and lack of dependence on adult bees enable faster population growth under continuous brood conditions.
 - Due to *Tropilaelaps* biology, detection and monitoring mechanisms differ from Varroa.
 - The most sensitive monitoring method is uncapping brood and capturing fallen mites with sticky boards.
 - The next best is "comb bumping" to knock mites off and molecular (DNA/eDNA) methods which aren't available to beekeepers yet.
 - A major problem with detection and surveillance is low awareness in areas where *Tropilaelaps* aren't yet established.
 - Symptoms are often mistaken for Varroa and small mite size and lesser visibility prevent or hinder detection.
 - Brood breaks are effective due to mites' inability to survive long periods without brood.
 - Contact miticides are less effective due to the mite's brief presence on adults; formic acid is promising.
 - Colonies are sometimes infested with both *Tropilaelaps* and Varroa at the same time.
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