

## On the Road with the BC Queen Breeders' Project

By Elizabeth Huxter, Project Manager

### June 1st Testing of Bergenske Survivor Stock and Cranbrook Field Day at Lance and Bobbie Cuthill's



Cuthill's Field Day June, 07

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two stocks.

My husband Terry and I traveled over to Cranbrook the evening of June 1 to help test some of the remaining Bergenske survivor stock. Last year Lance Cuthill requeened both a few of his own and some of the remaining Bergenske hives with grafts from three of the top Bergenske queens. These queens were mated in Grand Forks. He also wintered hives headed by other sourced 2006 queens. None of these hives were treated for varroa in the fall of 2006 or the spring of 2007 so we could compare the viability and mite build-up of the

The yard to be tested, Joe's Yard, had 12 hives and was situated in the most scenic spot possible, as the pictures only begin to show. We didn't have a lot of time to take in the scenery since we only had five hours to assess the yard before helping with Lance's Field Day. Our aim was to select one to three breeders from the Bergenske stock. We began by reading the sticky boards that Lance had inserted three days previous. The mite levels were high in all the hives originally from the Joe yard. The 24-hour natural drops ranged from 7 to 43. (For comparison to other areas, the chokecherry flow was just ending here.) The Bergenske stock showed less damage from the high mite levels. This probably relates to the stock being developed in the area, giving it the advantage of adapting to the local environment and secondly the stock has weathered previous years of high mite loads.



Assessing Lance's Joe Yard, June 07

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We chose two Bergenske hives for grafting based on their brood, pollen and honey reserves, as well as behavior and brood pattern. Two frames were then used to demonstrate grafting queen

cells for the field day participants. The cells we grafted were then donated to Lance and any of the beekeepers who wanted to try the stock. (These virgins, in Lance's case, were essentially isolated for mating back to Bergenske stock giving us at least a small population of pure Bergenske stock.) We hope to stay in touch with the interested participants to see how the queens winter and build-up in the spring.

### **June 23 Project Field Day at Jinglepot Apiaries, Nanaimo, BC**



Joe's yard and Rocky Mts.

We had another great field day at Sol Nowitz's Jinglepot Apiaries. Larry Lindahl and Sol organized the event. The first part was a demonstration, by Brenda Jager, of the methods we trialed to get eggs from some of the best project queens to Vancouver Island without taking any comb. The accompanying pictures show the Jenter kit set-up developed by Sol. The selected queens in Grand Forks were isolated on the Jenter frame overnight and the cups with the eggs were transferred to a Jenter frame that had not been in contact with bees. This frame was mounted in the

incubator bag (a cooler with the hot water bottle). Then the incubator bag was transported to the ferry terminal in Horseshoe Bay. Sol came over from the island to pick up the parcel and then ferry them back to Nanaimo where he transferred the eggs to waiting hives to feed the soon to hatch larvae. Sol outlined his preparation experiments that lead to him determining what temperatures and humidity worked best.

Then Rodney and Jo Moody, of Rod-Jo Moody Apiaries, showed some of the specialized equipment they use and gave us a great outline of how they manage their hives and select their queens. They have been breeding and selling Vancouver Island queens for 29 years.

Bob Mitchell brought the side-by-side builder they use Sol putting cups with eggs into Jenter frame at Babe's Honey Farm where he manages the queen rearing. The cells are raised in the center box that is queenless and the two outer boxes have queens which keeps the center cell-raising box well supplied with young nurse bees necessary for good cell building.

Bob Liptrott demonstrated the larvae transfer system he uses at Tugwell Creek Apiaries. Then Brenda Jager and I demonstrated our hygienic testing method that we use to help find bees that might show the Varroa Sensitive Hygiene (VSH) characteristics.

After lunch we had the chance to see Sol's queen insemination workplace. Then Stan Reist set up his computer projector to allow everyone to see some of the data we have been collecting on the project queens. After which, we broke up into small discussion groups.



Sol Nowitz



Sol putting cups with eggs into Jenter fra.



Bob Mitchell with Side by Side Builder.



Rod Moody and specialized Equipment



JenterIncubator Bag