

Semi annual report West Kootenay - March 2021

A very mild winter to mid February, a few 5 day spells with minus 8 or 10 night time temperatures, a lot more of minus 4 to plus 3 type conditions. Snowfall down where the bees are has been low with some rain and lots of cloudy days. Bees were flying in some yards in mid December on plus 6 sunny days - not your usual Xmas present! And then a 10 day or so cold snap for the end of February, minus 10 to 18 depending on your site.

Winter survival has been mixed at 10-25% losses, and some higher. The area had a significant dearth from late July to mid September 2020 in much of the West Kootenays - some keepers had reported lower than usual bee numbers going into the winter. The small clusters may have led to higher mortality particularly as the cold snap hit when the numbers would have been near their lowest.

The club continues to not gather in meetings, and has not gone to Zoom yet. There have been discussions that in the spring (if the COVID rules allow) the club may meet outside with members staying apart at the right distance and with masks - this will be figured out as things unfold.

Axel Krause will lead a beginners course again through Selkirk college but only with 6 students - a low number which allows for distancing and safety. There were several people wanting to take the course who won't be able to. The club has set up a mentoring list of more experienced beekeepers who can connect remotely or maybe outside one on one with new keepers to help keep things going - will have to wait to see how the uptake is but it could be very positive in keeping us all in touch and helping.

Jeff Lee and Amanda Goodman Lee again organized shipments of hive boxes and frames for iotron treatments at Sterigenics in the Fraser Valley. A BEE BC grant is paying for the transportation, the beekeeper pays for the iotron treatment - this is a great opportunity for keepers to clean up equipment in a very cost effective manner. This was completed through February and early March in time for the spring season - thanks to Jeff, Amanda, Lance Sundquist and Axel Krause for organizing and making it happen.

There are more suppliers selling nucs and packages this spring in the area - good news after the challenges of last year. There also continues to be a number of new people starting beekeeping - good news all around.