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# OF BEES & HONEY

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NEWSLETTER JULY 2008

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## THE WORKINGS OF WINTER

Winter in the Highveld is just a normal working season for a beekeeper, in contrast with other parts of S. Africa, and in the temperate world for that matter, where hive repairs are usually the main duty.

The difference is "*aloe greatheadii*" or "*davyana*", as beekeepers like to call it.

South of the Magaliesberg Mountains this plant flowers in June and July. On the North side it comes into bloom a month later. Which is odd, considering that it should be the other way round.

The reason for this is that there is an increase of a few degrees in temperature between one slope and the other, and the North one is the warmer side, to the point of being frost free. Normally these conditions should favour early blooming.

These are South Africa's Aloes from which bees make honey.

**ALOE DAVYANA** – Is a very good nectar and pollen plant and colony strength is rapidly built up. Honey is very light, medium density and fine granulation. It makes an excellent and highly sought after creamed honey with exquisite taste

**ALOE MARLOTHII** – This tree aloe is very valuable to strengthen colonies in winter. Honey is dark brown, has a strong, unpleasant aroma and unusual caramel flavour.

**ALOE MUTANS** – Similar to *davyana*, also quick granulation, but with a little more straw colour and taste. This plant is not as abundant, and not much honey is harvested from it.

One of the characteristics of the Aloe flower is the richness of their pollen, which in one species from the Eastern Cape can contain a staggering amount of about 55% protein. Aloe *davyana* has about 35%, which is still massive.

The result of such protein content is the quick brood rearing and

subsequent widespread swarming. In addition, the bees suddenly show a very aggressive behaviour, with fierce defence of their hives.

It is quite common for even beekeepers to feel quite unsafe, to put it mildly. Even with all the protection given by veils, thick gloves, double layers of denim... that they use.

Unfortunately there isn't much research done in S. Africa about medicinal properties of our honeys, which frustrates me no end.

I did approach Prof. P Molan of Waikato University, a world authority on honey who is also credited with discovering the super healing properties of the world famous "manuka" honey.

My intention was to seek his advice on how to remedy our situation of no research. He advised me to find funding for post graduate students to do research on this matter.

Pretoria university has done some interesting research on aloe pollen composition and the above figures are proof of that. The head of the relevant department has also been approached.

Hopefully there may be some positive results in the future, specifically on aloe *davyana* honey composition and medicinal properties.

The reason for my interest in this honey is because of the widespread belief among beekeepers (but it should be mentioned here that this belief is theoretical) that aloe honey has a high concentration of the trace element selenium, an antioxidant and cancer fighter/preventer.

There is a story told by beekeepers about a Korean national that had come to Johannesburg for stomach cancer treatment. Somehow during the weeks he had to wait for the treatment to start, he came across something he found to be an irresistible treat. It was our aloe honey,

of which it is said he ate to his hearts (and stomachs) content.

As the story goes, when the time arrived for the radiographies to be taken, the doctors could not find the tumour he was supposed to suffer from.

On his return to his homeland it is also said that he went on spreading far and wide the health wonders and superb taste of the "magic" white honey from South Africa.

To add some veracity to part of the story, it is fairly easy for me, at the Organic Market, to recognise a Korean customer from any other Oriental person. The only reason that brings them to my stall is to buy a specific honey... Aloe honey. On occasion and if available, even by the box full.

Although the Korean Government did impose prohibitive customs taxes on imported honey to protect their local produce, whenever there is a good crop of aloe *davyana* one or two container loads seems to find a way in.

The negative side to moving bee hives to the main aloe *davyana* flowering area, which is in the Hammanskraal and Rust-en-Winter areas, is that more than half of those hives will become infested with the cape bees, *apis capensis*, and may eventually be lost.

These swarms have to be caught over various provinces by specialized crews. Small scale beekeepers believe that in time and as a direct result of these activities some areas could be drained of viable bee concentration. They also believe that the prime aloe areas should be left free of beekeeper's hives for some years, so that in time the intruder cape bees will disappear. It would also be helpful if the Government would enforce such a ban.

It may sound a paradox, but the smaller beekeepers are the ones that suffer most from the infestation, even if they don't place their hives in the

prime aloe areas for quite some years now. The reason for this is because when the aloe season comes to an end, the commercial beekeepers move their infested hives to other flowering plants, namely citrus and blue gums plantations. From these new locations the *capensis* bees in their infested hives spreads to others hives in the same area, but now belonging to someone else.

One of the main reasons for the large hive infestation at the aloes, as we have seen, it is due to the generalised swarming that occurs there. After the old queen swarms out with half of the swarm, for the next two days the hive become queenless and as a direct consequence of it, defenceless to such a threat. The great concentration of hives in the small area of the aloes does not help the situation either.

The cape worker bees are not only able to mimic *apis scutellata* queen pheromones, so as to fool the local bees to treat them as queens, but they have another unique trait. This is their ability to lay fertile eggs, even without ever having been inseminated, thus literally cloning themselves.

It must be said that all honey bees can lay infertile eggs, from which only drones appear. This ability happens when their ovaries development has not been suppressed by queen pheromones. Queens's non-inseminated eggs also become drones.

When the Cape bees are in their own habitat they are as diligent as any other type of honey bees, but when brought to the Highveld they become totally parasitic. When this happens they become solely dependent on the labour and stores of the fast dwindling original local workers. Even before this stage arrives, these *scutellata* are so confused by so much queen pheromones that they even end up killing their own queens, as if they were the intruders. Suffice to say that this is a new and totally bizarre behaviour.

# BEE STING VENOM & CANCER

<http://health.usnews.com/articles/health/healthday/2008/06/18/experimental-therapy-beats-back-one-patients.htm>

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"...Immunotherapy, which engages a patient's own immune system to fight cancer, is an emerging science. The method holds the promise of being much less toxic than other treatments, though recent research has pointed out that it may not be as safe as once hoped. Research shows several instances where a patient's own immune system kicked in to oust a cancer without help from sophisticated new technologies. Dr. Vijay Trisal, assistant professor of surgical oncology at City of Hope Cancer Center in Duarte, Calif., recounted two such cases:

- A woman whose melanoma had spread to her lungs, brain and other parts of her body, was stung by a bee and subsequently recovered not only from the bee sting but also from the cancer.

- A man with advanced melanoma stepped into a poison ivy patch and experienced a similar recovery.

Similar happenings have been recorded for other types of cancer...>>

(This article in full plus others on the same subject can be found on my website [www.thehoneybear.co.za](http://www.thehoneybear.co.za) in section "Medicine from the Bees" and the sub-section "Cancer Treatment".

The above research could corroborate some information once given to me.

It was about an old Natal beekeeper that decades ago used to treat skin cancer sufferers with bee stings. The person passing on this information was adamant that it was common knowledge in those parts that the day after the area of skin cancer was stung by bees, all sorts of material would start to ooze from it.

I was also informed, with the same strong confidence and belief, that after that the cancer would go into permanent remission. Further corroboration may be found in an article on my website, which mentions that science in Europe cannot find a single case of a beekeeper that died from cancer. The article further mentions that

the only case found worldwide of a beekeeper that died with certified cancer happened in Hawaii. He was an older man who took up beekeeping as a hobby in later life. Technically speaking, he could not even be classified as a beekeeper in the standard sense.

There is something I should mention about the usually long living beekeepers:

"Beekeepers who booze die young!"

Unfortunately it seems that bee venom and alcohol do not tend to mix all that well...



## THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Honey taken before going to bed will help the brain to create serotonin, which not only helps to easily fall asleep, but also in an absolutely natural and content way.

It also feeds the brain throughout the night, which is by far the longest period without any meals.

New research on the "Improper Regulation of the Serotonin System" can be found on my website.

## FEEDBACK

Feedback on the contents of this first newsletter would be most appreciated.

I would also like your opinion on the desirability of the high concentration of information in it.

## NEW PRODUCTS

For a while I have been spending a fair amount of time working on something as if driven by an obsession.

All I was doing was trying to create a unique honey based product.

The main criterion was that it would have such punch that it would be irresistible to all the senses, and not only to the taste buds.

Finally, I began testing it at the Organic Market and noticed that immediately after some young women tasted the product their eyes would close and signs of a general paralysis would appear to overcome them.

Then they would exclaim:

"Oooh myyy good...!!!" .

A few deep and spaced "mmmm...", "mmmm..." would follow...

And then the usual question would

be raised:

"What is this...???"

A number of men weren't far behind in their spontaneity...

A common adjective from all was that it was "wicked".

The new product is called "Honey & Nuts".

The one with Macadamia Nuts was the one most tasted and raved about. The Pumpkin seeds version was not far behind.

I also have the Almond one.

**PUMPKIN SEEDS** are a great source of the minerals phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, iron, copper and Zinc. The product was created with the prostate health of men and both men and women's bone mineral content in mind, so to prevent or treat osteoporosis

**ALMONDS** are very taste and the most nutrient rich tree nut around. They are an excellent source of magnesium, manganese and of unsaturated fats. Good source of fibre, copper, riboflavin and phosphorus. Great anti-oxidant with high levels of alpha tocopherol vitamin E.

**MACADAMIAS** have a very high proportion of mono-unsaturated fat. They contain no cholesterol, are high in fibre and reduce incidence of heart disease. They contain Vitamin B1, B2, B5, B6, E, plus Niacin and Folate. Minerals include potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, calcium, zinc, copper and iron. Anti-oxidants include polyphenols, amino acids, selenium and flavanoids.

The nuts in all of these products have been roasted to perfection, ground and creamed in honey by myself. The honeys have been specifically chosen so that when put together with a given roasted nut, they would

sublimate each other's aromas and tastes.

Your opinion on this new product would be most appreciated. Comparisons between it and the well known hazel nuts & chocolate paste would also be welcome.

Who knows? I may soon start spending time playing with chocolate, honey and nuts... Any reason why not?

A young woman created a recipe for the Honey & Macadamia while spending a Sunday with her boyfriend. It basically consisted of blending and creaming it with whisky, and in the process creating in her opinion a stunning liquor.