



Lisa Britton/For the EO Media Group

Ron Bobo inspects frames that will be used for his honeybees when they return to Baker Valley later this spring.

Like to eat? Thank a honeybee

By Lisa Britton
For the Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Bees don't bother Ron Bobo.

In fact, he and his brother, Jake, played among the honeybees.

"They'd run their Hot Wheels through the bees," said their mom, Carolyn.

Ron, 18, has spent nearly his entire life around his parents' honeybee business K&C Honey.

He has, through years of experience, developed a healthy respect for these insects.

He flips through photos in his phone and holds it out with a smile.

It shows his face with one eye swollen and red — a result of lifting the hood on his beekeeper suit when an angry bee was near.

Bee stings go along with the honeybee business.

"We used to have a wall of shame," his mom, Carolyn, said with a laugh.

Ron is the fourth generation in his family to work with honeybees. He bought his first hives at age 12 and now owns 48.

"I've never really been shy of the bees," he said. "If you're scared of them, they sense fear. I'm always in a good mood when I'm around

bees."

On this sunny and windy March day, the Bobo family doesn't have much in the way of bee supplies. That's because, from early February through early May, the bees are busy pollinating crops in other states.

Many foods depend on honeybee pollination including almonds, apples, cherries, apricots, pluots, and oranges.

"One out of every three bites relies on a honeybee," Ron said.

The first is almonds in California near Turlock.

In the past, the Bobos wintered

their hives in California, which meant trips every two to three weeks to feed the bees.

"That got expensive," Carolyn said.

This winter they kept the bees in a Baker Valley potato cellar that can maintain a temperature of 42 degrees to prompt bees to hibernate.

"Bees don't sleep — they go into power-saving mode," Ron said.

The temperature must be at least 56 degrees before the bees fly from the hive.

Ron's dad, Keith, keeps the bees in the almond trees until mid-

March, then moves the hives to apple and cherry orchards near Desert Aire, Washington.

In the almonds, the hives stay in place. In the fruit trees, hives must be moved — at night — to different places requested by the orchard owners.

The bee business, Carolyn said, isn't for everyone.

"You get stung by bees and work weird hours," she said with a smile.

During the spring pollination, the bees don't produce enough honey to harvest for human consumption.

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