

People & Places

Beekeeper: Honey sweet bonus for keeping hives alive

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

GLENOMA, Wash. — A honey bee bumps Dave Elliott in the head, and he takes that as a warning to step away from the hives. Bees sting and it hurts, not that Elliott holds that against them.

“Yes, I love our honey bees,” he says.

Elliott, 63, says he’s addicted to bees and the addiction fuels a commercial enterprise. He and his fiancée, Kathy Blake, sell honey and make honey- and wax-infused goods such as soap and candles.

They started selling their products at a farmers market. “It just blew up from there,” Elliott said. A year ago on Labor Day, they opened a store, Four Cedars Apiary, in an old post office in eastern Lewis County.

The post office is on land they already owned, 38 miles east of Interstate 5 and 99 miles west of Yakima.

Wild bees that swarmed the rural area piqued Elliott’s interest, and over the past 7 years, he’s trained himself to be keep bees, while building up hives.

“It’s been a lot of work. Good fun work,” he said.

Elliott said bees are good partners.

“All they want to do is work,” he said. “It becomes a synchronized effort between the beekeeper and the bees.”

Elliott capped his formal apiary education by passing the University of Montana’s online master beekeeper class. He wrote his thesis on treating wounds with honey. He has honey every day. “I



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Lewis County, Wash., beekeeper Dave Elliott battles varroa mites to help his honey bees survive.

don’t get sick,” he said.

Elliott said the main thing he had to learn about beekeeping was why so many of his bees weren’t staying healthy.

The main enemy is the varroa mite, he said.

Varroa mites are wingless and eyeless and can’t crawl far, yet they’ve managed to become the leading cause of bee colony losses, according to the USDA.

There are four known varroa mite species. The most destructive is the aptly named *Varrora destructor*.

The mites are parasites that live outside the

host and feed on adult bees and larvae. Bees afflicted with mites weigh less, have weaker immune systems and die earlier.

There’s more. Mites open wounds that become infected. Mites carry diseases, such as Deformed Wing Virus and Acute Bee Paralysis Virus.

Varroa mites evolved with Asian honey bees, which developed defenses to keep the mites in check. Asian bees remove mites from their fellow bees. Scientists call it “grooming behavior.”

Varroa mites in Asia

probably jumped to defenseless European honey bees in the 1950s, according to research published in 2020 in “Trends in Parasitology.” Varroa mites were found on European honey bees in Japan in 1957 and in Hong Kong in 1963.

Since European honey bees are a global commodity, Varroa mites spread throughout the world. By 1987, the mites were in the U.S.

“You’ll never be able to eradicate them,” Elliott said. “They’re nasty little buggers.”

To kill exposed mites, Elliott applies oxalic acid,

Western
Innovator

DAVE ELLIOTT

Age: 63

Hometown: Glenoma, Wash.

Occupation: Beekeeper; with fiancée Kathy Blake, owns Four Cedars Apiary in Glenoma.

Education: Master’s certificate in beekeeping from the University of Montana.

Website: <https://fourcedarsapiary.com/>

naturally found in many vegetables, such as spinach, rhubarb and chard. Varroa mites absorb oxalic acid and die.

Another defense used by Elliott is formic acid, an irritating pungent liquid produced by ants as a defense. Some birds put ants in their feathers to rid themselves of mites.

The Environmental Protection Agency has registered products with oxalic acid and formic acid to control varroa mites around honey bees.

“If you don’t get out there and treat the mites, the bees won’t get past Thanksgiving,” Elliott said.

“My sole goal is to keep those bees alive,” he said. “Now that we’ve learned to keep the bees alive, the honey is a bonus.”

OSU Extension agronomist retires after a growing career

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

After a childhood on a dryland farm in Montana and earning his master’s degree in dryland wheat production, Mylen Bohle’s professional career went in a different direction — irrigation research.

Bohle was the Central and Eastern Oregon agronomist for the Oregon State University Extension Service. He retired, kind of, on July 30.

Bohle and his wife, Diane, are moving from Prineville, Ore., to Corvallis, Ore., where he will be closer to the university and will work half-time to finish up several research and extension forage projects.

“The relationships I’ve had have been tremendous,” Bohle said of his career. “Working with all the different growers and producers, whether large acreages or small. ... I can’t imagine a better job. It’s been a great career.”

It was a profession and career that reeled Bohle in after he had earned bachelor’s degrees in agricultural economics and agronomy from Montana State University in 1975, spent three years in the Peace Corps in Tunisia and earned his master’s degree in crop science from OSU.

While finishing his mas-



Courtesy of Mylen Bohle

Mylen Bohle has retired as the Central and Eastern Oregon agronomist for the Oregon State University Extension Service after 32 years of providing information to forage producers.

ter’s work, Bohle was asked by Tom Zinn, an extension associate director, about taking a temporary extension position in Central Oregon.

Bohle accepted and moved to Prineville in 1989. Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties had no crops agent after two retirements and a transfer left the position vacant.

“This was an irrigated research position so there was a steep learning curve for me,” he said, noting his dryland background. “There was nothing like gaining experience and education along the way.”

After six months, Bohle accepted a permanent position. Through the following years, he worked on research

projects, helped form forage groups and visited with and provided educational materials to a multitude of producers. He worked with the 4-H program, with the Central Oregon Experiment Station, at research sites at Powell Butte and Madras, and at trial sites on private ground. He took over alfalfa and grass variety trials and started his own forage trials.

“The focus was on how to select an alfalfa or grass variety for a particular field on a particular farm in order to have some or a high resistance to diseases and insects,” Bohle explained.

He also studied the impact of different nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium on dif-

ferent types of hay and the resulting yield and quality.

Bohle helped a group of forage growers form the Central Oregon Hay Growers in 1995 and then the Oregon Hay and Forage Association in 1997. He helped grape growers form the Central Oregon Wine and Grape Growers Association in 2009 and was a founding member of the Oregon Forage and Grassland Council.

For many years, he was a member of a Northwest extension team that organized and held pasture and grazing workshops for producers in the western states.

Bohle was a co-editor and one of 37 authors who wrote “Pasture and Grazing Management in the Northwest,” a book that was released in 2010.

“He’s been a pivot point of information for new systems,” said Scott Pierson, a hay grower in the Silver Lake, Ore., area. “He was just a great directory to get the most applicable information into our hands, not just here in Central Oregon, but to growers all over the West Coast. We have all benefited from his research and his communication.”

“He knew something about every plant out there,” Pierson added. “He was a wonderful botanist. He improved our farm operation. He’s been a very important guy to work with,

not to mention, a really fun guy.”

For the last five years, Bohle has focused on water efficiency within different irrigation methods. He has encouraged growers to convert from mid-elevation sprinklers to low elevation sprinklers and to low energy precision application.

“Now there is a big push to mobile drip irrigation,” he said. “It’s been slower getting to that one than the others. I have seen some willingness, but they all cost money to do the conversions. A lot of people wait to see how it works out for a neighbor before seriously considering a change.”

“Water is the multi-billion-dollar question,” he added. “As one grower said, ‘It’s great that we talk about and see new irrigation technologies, but we still have to have some water to irrigate with.’”

Bohle said he will miss talking to producers, making farm and ranch visits, and offering educational advice based on research.

After finishing his half-time contract with OSU Extension, Bohle and his wife plan to move to Plevna, Mont., where they have 24 acres and will become small acreage producers.

“We will raise some forage, maybe a little grain and have some dryland acres to play with,” he said.

CALENDAR

SEPT. 3-26

Washington State Fair: Washington State Fair Events Center, 110 9th Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Open Labor Day weekend. Closed Tuesdays and Sept. 8. Website: <https://www.thefair.com/>

TUESDAY SEPT. 7

NRCS Idaho State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (virtual): 9 a.m.-noon. Group meets three times per year to advise NRCS and other USDA agencies on carrying out Farm Bill conservation provisions. Includes representatives of various natural resource and agricultural interests such as agencies, ag producers and tribes. Website: <https://bit.ly/3fUNorS> Contact: mindi.rambo@usda.gov

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 15

Small Farm School (outdoors): Clackamas Community College, Oregon City. Cost: \$60 (\$75 after Sept. 8). No registration at the door. Due to

space limitations, Small Farm School reserves the right to close registration on Sept. 1 or when 150 registrations have been received. Contact: 503-678-1264 Website: <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/smallfarmschool/>

OSU Extension’s Seed and Cereal Crop Production meeting (online): 8:30 a.m. Agenda: agronomic updates for grass seed from OSU south valley field crops Extension agent Christy Tanner; updates on slug control strategies from OSU Extension slug expert Rory McDonnell; and new technologies for weed control in grass seed from OSU assistant professor Caio Brunharu. One Oregon Department of Agriculture credit offered for each session. The session is free but you must register to get the credit. Register: <https://beaves/39d>

Oregon Farm Bureau Trap Shoot: 3 p.m. Albany Gun Club, 35305 Highway 20 SE, Albany, Ore. Join Oregon Farm Bureau members for an afternoon trap shoot and din-

ner. Help raise funds for OFB’s Political Action Committee, which supports candidates and ballot initiatives that are good for Oregon’s ag community. Contact: tiffany@oregonfb.org

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY SEPT. 15-16

Organic Produce Summit: Hyatt Regency Hotel, Monterey, Calif. The summit will feature ideas, information and insights of the organic fresh produce industry, as well as educational sessions. Website: www.organicproducesummit.com

THURSDAY SEPT. 16 OSU Extension’s Seed and Cereal Crop Production meeting (online): 8:30 a.m. Agenda: an update on the new USDA Agricultural Research Service entomology program from Seth Dorman, an entomologist recently appointed to the ARS Forage Seed and Cereal Research Unit in Corvallis; a pre-

sentation on the efficacy of common zinc phosphide baits for vole control from USDA biologist Aaron Shiels, who has been researching bait efficacy for the Oregon seed industry this year; and a report from Steve Salisbury of the Oregon Seed Council on the potential for using rodenticide bait stations. The session is free but you must register to get the credit. Registration: <https://beaves/39W>

TUESDAY, SEPT. 21

18th Annual Oregon Farm Bureau Classic Golf Tournament: 8 a.m. OGA Golf Course 2850 Hazelnut Drive, Woodburn, Ore. Join Farm Bureau members and supporters of Oregon agriculture for a fun day of scramble-format golf. Help raise funds for OFB’s Political Action Committee, which supports candidates and ballot initiatives that are good for Oregon’s ag community. Contact: tiffany@oregonfb.org



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To Reach Us

Circulation 800-781-3214
Email Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line 503-364-4431

News Staff

Idaho

Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise

Brad Carlson 208-914-8264

Western Washington

Don Jenkins 360-722-6975

Eastern Washington

Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon

George Plaven 406-560-1655
Mateusz Perkowski 800-882-6789
Sierra Dawn McClain 503-506-8011

Designer

Randy Wrighthouse 800-882-6789

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We want to publish corrections
to set the record straight.

Submit upcoming ag-related
events on www.capitalpress.com
or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

THROUGH SEPT. 6

Oregon State Fair: Oregon State Fair & Exposition Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. The Oregon State Fair continues through Sept. 6. Website: <https://oregonstatefair.org/>

THROUGH SEPT. 3

Idaho Grower Shippers Association Annual Convention: Sun Valley Resort, 1 Sun Valley Road, Sun Valley, Idaho. The event focuses on Idaho potato industry. Includes meetings of industry groups, updates on research, marketing and policy, recreational and networking events. Website: <https://bit.ly/3madkTP>

SEPT. 3-11

Eastern Idaho State Fair: Eastern Idaho Fairgrounds, 97 Park St., Blackfoot, Idaho. Website: <https://funatthefair.com/>