

BEE AWARE

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News and Notes from The Texas Apiary Inspection Service



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Hurricane season is here again. Generally, this is the brood, but when it dries out, it is very difficult to get through November when we can expect heavy rains and high winds. Normally, I do not write on this subject, but the last two years in Texas have included severe hurricanes along the coastal area. Weather is the single most important factor both to the plants as well as to the honeybees.

Hurricane Ike caused extreme damage to the honeybee by destroying their nests. It is estimated that 8,000-12,000 colonies disappeared along the coastline. Beekeepers have no idea where they went or how far their equipment was scattered. Also, bees were gone out of 5,000-10,000 colonies. However, the equipment, honey and brood frames were in good shape. The high winds suck the adult bees right out of the boxes, leaving only empty hives. I guess you can call this "disappearing bees".... After the storm, flooding occurs in low areas causing more damage to the remaining colonies. Water and silt will cover the nest or frames and cause more damage to the colony. Not only will it kill

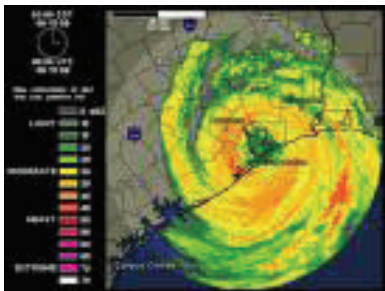
the brood, but when it dries out, it is very difficult to get out the silt inside the wax cells or frames. It's like having cement inside the hives. Many beekeepers believe it is better to replace the old frames with new frames and start over. Cleaning up after a major storm is not an easy job for the beekeeper.



Inclement weather can also have an adverse effect on plants or vegetation in the environment. Trees will be blown down, branches will be broken off and debris will be scattered everywhere. This is normal and what many people expect. However, let's look at this picture from another view point and go one step further. Hurricane Ike caused 25-30 foot waves that went many miles inland, leaving salt water on our land.

This will kill or hurt the vegetation in the coastal area. Some plants or trees cannot tolerate salt water. Therefore, this will cause the vegetation to die or be severely hurt the plants.

Pollen production takes in a much broader range of plant species than nectar. Both are essential to honeybee nutrition. This could cause bee problems or affect the honey flow for several years. Natural rainfall will have to leach the salt out of the soil in order for the vegetation to return to its' normal condition.



In conclusion, it seems that severe weather is changing the land use picture and seriously affecting beekeeping. Open fields of honey plants continue to be replaced by a hostile environment (storms, dry weather, high winds, etc.) making profitable beekeeping difficult.