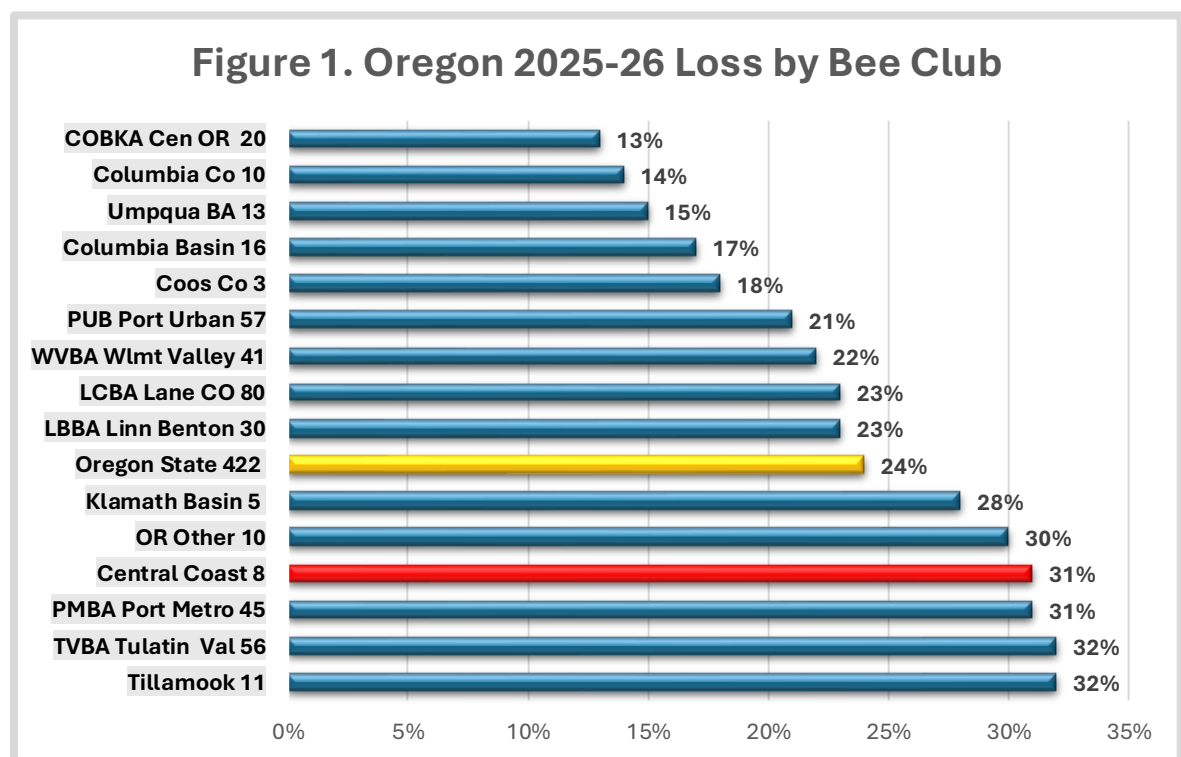


At the February meeting I discussed the pnwhoneybeesurvey. I encouraged members who overwintered colonies to complete the survey once you have looked at your overwintering results. The 17th annual PNWsurvey is open during March and April. <https://pnwhoneybeesurvey.com/> (click on !Take the Survey!). It should take less than 5 minutes. This year, once again, you can fast track your responses and only provide information on overwintering successes/losses and not include your managements.

This season, 422 Oregon beekeepers, an increase of 170 from the previous year and 147 above the 10-year average response rate of 275 (range171-416) responded. **Overall loss rate was 24.4%.** Eight Central Coast returns were received, compared to nine last year). **CC loss rate was 30.6%.** It was a record year for returns. Thank you.



The loss rate of 30% was lower than last year, 44%, and the previous year, 39% when there were seven CC respondents and previous in 2022-23 season when four respondents had a 22% loss. There were 49 total colonies, range 1-23.

The loss rate is computed by subtracting spring numbers from those of the fall by hive type. Three individuals had 8-frame Langstroth and one was lost – 33% loss. Six CC respondents managed 42 fall 10-frame Langstroth hives and lost 12 = 28.5% loss. Statewide 24% of 8-frame colonies were lost and 22% of 10-frame Langstroth

hives were lost. For Central Coast, the single top bar hive was lost and of three “other” hives one did not survive – 33%. Two were not identified as to type – the single long hive survived.

Not everyone had loss – one individual did not lose their single hive. Two individuals lost one hive; four lost two overwintered colonies and one individual lost five colonies. the heaviest loss.

The six individuals with one to 4 colonies lost half their colonies while the two individuals with 10+ colonies lost 21% individuals. The three individuals with 4 to 8 years of experience lost 50% while the Six individuals (43 colonies) with 10+ years’ experience lost 28% of fall colonies. Statewide, as colony number increases and as years’ experience increases there is improved overwintered success as they did for Central Coast members.

When asked for probable reason for loss, four CC respondents said varroa mites and queen issues and two said moisture and starvation (more than one choice was possible. When asked for an acceptable level of loss, two individuals said none, one said 10% and five said 25%, the median and close to actual loss.

Why do colonies die?

There is no easy way to verify reason(s) for colony loss. Colonies in the same apiary may die for several reasons. Examination of dead colonies is at best confusing and, although some options may be ruled out, we are often left with two or more possible reasons for losses. A dead colony necropsy can be of use. Opinions vary as to what might be an acceptable loss level. We are dealing with living animals which are constantly exposed to many different challenges, both in the natural environment and the beekeeper’s apiary. Individual acceptable choices varied from zero to 25%. Note that some “reasons” are not likely to be the actual reason for loss but secondary factors, such as mice, skunks and wax moths, except for unusual circumstances.

The major factor in colony loss is thought to be mites and their enhancement of viruses especially DWV (deformed wing virus), VDV (Varroa destructor Virus - also termed DWV B) and Israeli and chronic paralysis viruses. But we do not have a test for these viruses. It was interesting that queen problems were also the most frequently indicated reasons along with varroa mites as leading reasons for loss.

Declining nutritional adequacy/forage and diseases, especially at certain apiary sites, are additional factors that result in poor bee health. Yellow jacket predation is a constant danger to weaker fall colonies. Management, especially learning proper bee care in the first years of beekeeping, remains a factor in losses. What effects our changing environment such as global

warming, contrails, electromagnetic forces (including human disruption of them), human alteration to the bee's natural environment and other factors play in colony losses are not at all clear.

There is no simple answer to explain the levels of current losses nor is it possible to demonstrate that they are necessarily excessive for all the issues our honey bees face in the environment. It was encouraging to see from survey responses that overall losses this past year, 24.4%, were still at a low level. More attention to colony strength and the possibility to mitigate colony weakness in the fall may help reduce some of the losses. Effectively controlling varroa mites will definitely help reduce losses as fewer mites will result in less virus damage.

Colony Managements

The survey asked for information about management practiced by respondents. This year individuals could FAST TRACK through the electronic survey and not answer questions on management, though none did among the Central Coast respondents; statewide 50% used FAST TRACK. The survey inquired about feeding practices, wintering preparations, sanitation measures utilized, screen bottom board usage, and mite monitoring. Respondents could select multiple options and there was always a none and other selection possible. Since small numbers skew results I refer Central Coast members to the statewide report. Compare your overwintering losses with that larger data base. If anyone would like the raw data I would be most happy to send.

I discussed spring mite control (critical for beekeeping success) and how to keep colonies from swarming, also management that can improve overwintering success at the March meeting. I shared those power points with the club.

Thanks to all Central Coast members for participation in the annual pnwhoneybeesurvey. I encourage you once again to consider completing one again next year.

Dewey M. Caron June 2026