

PLAIN TALK ABOUT VARROA INFESTATION AND HONEY BEE COLONY DEATH

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Taking on the responsibility of honey bee care and maintenance is a fascinating covenant. There is this unwritten agreement between the beekeeper and the honey bees. If the beekeeper provides for the bees, the bees will thrive for the beekeeper. All beekeepers feel an almost mystic connection to their honey bees.

But, what happens when the unthinkable occurs and the bees in which you've made this personal investment start to become ill or die? Kubler-Ross defined the 7 stages of grief for humans a number of years ago, but a beekeeper experiences a similar emotion when the creatures he/she has cared for lovingly die inexplicably. The loss of this relationship can be quite painful.

For those of you who have lost hives to varroa and/or other maladies, we're proposing the 7 steps concerning hive death and the response of the beekeeper.

1. **Denial** – there are no varroa mites or disease in the hive.



Deformed Wing Virus

3. **Realization**-OMG! There are more than just a few dead bees and I see a lot of mites.

2. **Ignoring the Obvious** – Well, there are a few dead bees and I do see mites, but that's normal.



Deformed Wing Virus



Sticky board covered in mites

4. **Anger and Frustration** – More bees are dying and I'm doing everything that I can. Why won't it stop? It's not my fault!



Parasitic Mite Syndrome

6. **Depression/Feelings of Inadequacy**- They're dead, all of them are dead! I tried my best, but my best wasn't good enough. Maybe I'm just not cut out to be a beekeeper.



Winter Dead Out

5. **Bargaining** – Please, please, please let the miticide treatment work. I'm willing to do anything to keep my bees alive. Maybe if I try to go a holistic treatment, I can make them well. Give me some little sign of hope, anything. But, nothing works...



Mites on pupae

7. **Acceptance** – I have to understand that varroa mites are a part of beekeeping. In order to make sure this doesn't happen again, I need to do regular varroa checks and have a better understanding of how to treat the situation. This requires **EDUCATION!** I need to read beekeeping books and journals, take a class and attend state-wide meetings to find out the most comprehensive, up-to-date information about beekeeping.



Hygienic-variety bee killing a varroa mite



Varroa mite under a microscope

Remember: Honey bee disease and death is not just a tragic incident that only affects the beekeeper, it is a **Public Health Issue** that affects all of us.



Healthy foods, grown only because of the existence of pollinators such as honey bees

