



SURVEY OF APICULTURE IN OKLAHOMA

W. E. Jackson, *Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

Statistics on apiculture show that Oklahoma has done even better than some of the larger honey producing states by making progress from year to year. Aside from seasonal declines, which occur generally in all states, Oklahoma has made yearly gains both in number of hives and in pounds of honey produced since 1890. The recent federal census put Oklahoma twenty-third in rank in number of colonies, placing it near Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Mississippi and not far from Colorado.

In some parts of the state losses have occurred but in other sections there have been gains. I personally have inspected fourteen colonies that developed from a start of four this season. A complete survey of bee-keeping in Oklahoma, under way but far from being complete, has furnished reports from all parts of the state and it is believed from the information available that a gain has been made even during the "Bee Depression." Considering that the average annual increase has been maintained there should be around 65,000 colonies and more than 15,000 people keeping bees in the state at the present time.

If an imaginary line was drawn through the middle of Oklahoma from the northern to the southern boundary, you would find 20,000 colonies on the west side and 40,000 colonies on the east side, while the west side produced 430,000 pounds and the east side 480,000 pounds of honey, or 44 per cent for the west side and 56 per cent for the east side. This rate of com-

parison holds true as far back as we have statistical proof, except of course during seasonal changes. In number of beekeepers the east side of the balance would tip low with over 8,000 as weighed against upward of 3,000 on the west side, however, in contrast we find that an average of 22 pounds of honey per colony is produced on the west side and 12 pounds of honey per colony on the east side. Forget the east and west side comparison data for a moment. Here are the figures from a survey of Cleveland County, which has just been completed. The report lists 181 people owning bees and a total of 957 colonies in the county. The last federal census listed 184 beekeepers and 1,076 colonies.

Grady County ranks first in the state in honey production with 74,000 pounds, this being the yield from a total of 1,700 colonies. This gives Grady County a 40 per cent greater production than Pottawatomie County which ranks second in the State. LeFlore County leads the state with the greatest number of beekeepers and also has the largest number of colonies with a total of 2,400, but drops to 12th place in honey production. There are approximately 500 beekeepers in the county.

Since July the Apairy Department has inspected over 3,500 hives and over 2,500 of these were inspected in three counties. In all these inspections only 37 cases of American foulbrood appeared. Of the 3,500 hives inspected in the state, a total of 1,129 box hives were found. Of 1,476 colonies in McCurtain County approximately 741 or more than one-half were in box hives. Altogether 394 yards in 28 different counties have been inspected. In this state wide survey, it has been found that in so far as winter stores are concerned, colonies located in the northeast part of the state are in much better shape than in the other sections.

A seasonal spread of honey plants, the elimination of box hives and the proper control of American foulbrood are the major problems of beekeeping in Oklahoma.

