Southeast Idaho Bee Club provides opportunities for area beekeepers

The Situation
Pollinators have been a hot topic with the media for the past few years. This is due to the decline in pollinator populations including honeybee populations. The popularity of this subject has had a dramatic effect on the number of people who are interested in beekeeping. In Southeast Idaho a large number of beekeepers requested that University of Idaho Extension act as a catalyst in the formation of a beekeeping club.

Our Response
In 2008, the University of Idaho Extension assisted in the creation of a beekeeping club. The club was designed to offer educational workshops and to disseminate current information on starting bee colonies, evaluating and treating disease, preparing colonies for the winter, queen management, and harvesting honey from the hives. Other opportunities that the club was set up to offer included networking and assisting new beekeepers in making useful contacts and friendships with more expert beekeepers. The club was also set up to be a clearing house for information regarding beekeeping events in Idaho. Since the club viewed the mentoring of new beekeepers by more expert beekeepers to be vital, the club included a group of professional beekeepers.

Program Outcomes
The club grew to include over 80 members from seven Southeast Idaho counties. In the fall of 2010 club members completed a self evaluation of their knowledge of beekeeping before and after attending club events. They focused on the following areas: 1) colony start up, 2) evaluating and treating bee disease, 3) preparing bees for the winter, 4) managing the queen bee, and 5) harvesting honey. There was a marked increase in knowledge in each of these areas following participation in club educational events (see figure 1).

The benefits of club membership were also evaluated. Members rated the importance of each benefit on a scale from 1 to 10. Benefits evaluated included: 1) educational programming, 2) networking, 3) friendship and camaraderie, and 4) information on other beekeeping events. Educational benefits received the highest rating, while information on current events received the lowest rating (see figure 2).
Figure 2

Evaluation of Club Benefits

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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