Honey: The fight about the sweet gold

[1]

The diligence of the bees is proverbial. Tirelessly, they set up their lives for the Queen to feed and protect her and to safeguard the survival of their people. But man has already used his diligence for a long time to him the bees are now only a means to an end. They should produce as much honey as possible and pollinate their crops.

Is honey accaptable for vegans?

Since honey is produced in large quantities, similar problems arise as with all other products obtained with the help of animals. Ecological and animal interests are sacrificed for profit. There are around 30,000 to 40,000 bee species worldwide. However, only one species meets all criteria for commercial use, the Apis mellifera. Of this honeybee, 20 subspecies were bred and distributed.

Man comes into polay

As in dairy production, industrial honey production has nothing to do with the production of honey, as our grandparents still knew. Wild bees are scarcely present, and the majority of beekeepers rely on the breed of the European Honeybee because it is easier to deal with. When the attitude of 10 bee colonies was the rule, more than 30 colonies are now being held in order to achieve a profitable business. In Germany, about one million bees are held by more than 80,000 beekeepers. These cover approximately 20% of domestic demand with about 25 000 tonnes of honey per year.

However, the Swiss are among the largest honey blenders worldwide - on an average they consume about 1.3 kilograms per head per year. With around 3,200 tonnes of honey per year, local production covers about one third of the needs in Switzerland. In order to obtain more honey, a large portion of honey comes from abroad. Imported honey however,is highly problematic. The handling of the bees in large industrial enterprises is not appropriate, not respectful and therefore not acceptable. In the US, five per cent of beekeepers keep 95 per cent of honeybees. It is obvious that there is no more room for individual colonies, let alone individual bees.

In the film «More Than Honey», a beekeeper from the USA is introduced, who is managing an almond farm with the help of 200 million bees. The cooperation with the farmers plays an important role, as both sides profit: the beekeeper gains the honey and the almond trees of the farmer are simultaneously pollinated. When the bloom is over, the bee crickets are loaded and driven nonstop nonstop two days to another area of ??the USA where the bees carry on their tireless work. The heat and stress caused by the long transport in darkness and noise causes up to 20% of the bee peoples to die during the journey.

«The manipulative industrial beekeeping is the same as in the pig fattening and cattle breedingt.»
Markus Imhoof, in his film «More than honey»

Weakened Bees

With an average of 4.7 colonies per square kilometer, Switzerland is one of the countries with the highest bee biases in the world.1 What this means for the ecosystem is obvious: the one bee species visibly displaces all other species. This results in a genetic impoverishment. The consequences have been visible for a long time: Diseases among bee colonies are spreading increasingly epidemically. The disease resistance of the bee-stems is diminishing. This was especially confirmed in 1997 by the appearance of antibiotics at the import site in Switzerland. The Swiss authorities have responded promptly: They simply set a high limit, which now officially permits the presence of antibiotic residues in honey (see: Vegi Info 2/98, page 20). In principle, the supply of antibiotics is also prohibited in the case of bee strains throughout the EU. However, chemical agents against the feared Varroa mite are still used. Residues of these can also accumulate in the honey.

Bees need their honey for themselfs

For commercial reasons, conventional honey production removes so much honey from the bees that they have to be fed sugar water to overwhelm. This is cheaper than dispensing a portion of the honey, but has negative effects on the health of the bees.

Bees are hurt and killed during honey production

During the "honey harvest" many bees, larvae and often also grown bees are killed. While there are already some approaches to solving this problem, they have not been widely used. The worst is the «harvest» of honey from wild bee populations: as a rule, such a «harvest» does not even survive a quarter of the bees. Most animal protectionists do not care about this, since you have no closer relationship with the bees. Bees, however, are interesting beings with a complex social behavior. They are also capable of exchanging detailed information among themselves (e.g., a flower meadow location).

Bees are artificially fertilized

To breed the perfect working bee, conventional beekeepers artificially fertilized the bees. To do so, they press on the male bees to simulate a mating situation and thus take their sperm from them. After the sowing, the animals die and the beekeepers inject the sperm of up to ten drones into a female bee.2

The complex social life of the honeybee

Honey bees have a distinct social community - more than all other bee species. Their whole life is about the Queen's fortune. If the queen dies, a successor must be immediately taken.

The queen

For his purposes, man artificially engages in this process by holding bees without a queen. The bees are in turmoil and care only for creating a new queen. In their desperation, all the larvae (about 50) provided by the beekeeper are supplied with a special feed juice - the royal jelly. Since there can only be one queen, the first queen who hatches will kill all the competitors who have not yet hatched. To prevent this, the beekeeper has to intervene at exactly the right moment and separate the queen immediately after hatching, together with a few other bees - her court. This way, new bee colonies are created for industrial honey production and as pollinators. As a normal mail package the queens are dispatched all over the world. The goal is to breed as much adapted and meek queens as possible, in order to reduce the risk of stinging beekeepers.

The mystery of the loss of colonies

DEN Grund für das Bienensterben gibt es nicht. Als Hauptverantwortlicher wird oftmals der Einsatz von Pestiziden und Fungiziden genannt. Dies hat sicher seine Berechtigung, denn durch den Einsatz von Chemie nehmen die Bienen diese durch die Blüten auf und geben sie auch an ihre Jungen weiter. Diese sterben dann entweder ab

oder kommen verkrüppelt zur Welt.
Dass weltweit nur noch eine Art von Honigbienen in der industriellen Produktion verwendet wird, kann sich das Immunsystem nicht an die lokalen Umstände anpassen und Parasiten wie die Varroamilbe kann sich rasend schnell in allen genetisch identischen Völkern ausbreiten. In ganz Nordamerika und China gibt es kaum ein Volk von Honigbienen, das noch ohne die Beigabe von Antibiotika überleben könnte, da sich bakterielle Brutkrankheiten schon so stark ausgebreitet haben. Betrachtet man das Mysterium des Bienensterbens unter dem Aspekt der industriellen Massenproduktion, so ist das, was momentan geschieht, nicht weiter erstaunlich. Im Gegensatz zu Schweinen, Hühnern und Rindern, die von jeglicher Natur abgeschottet in dunklen Hallen gehalten werden können, sind die Menschen bei der Honigproduktion auf die Zusammenarbeit mit der Natur angewiesen. Das Bienensterben ist ein eindeutiges Aufbäumen der Umwelt gegen diese widernatürliche Behandlung.

There is not ONE reason for the rapid dying of the bees. The use of pesticides and fungicides is often the main responsibility. This is certainly justified, because by the use of chemistry, the bees take it through the flowers and pass it on to their young. These then either die or come crippled to the world. The immune system can not adapt to the local conditions, and parasites such as the Varroa mite can spread rapidly in the genetically identical colonies. In all of North America and China there is hardly a colony of honey bees that could survive without the addition of antibiotics, since bacterial brood diseases have already spread so strongly. If we look at the mystery of bees dying in terms of industrial mass production, what is currently happening, it is no surprise. In contrast to pigs, chickens and cattle, which can be kept isolated in dark halls by any nature, humans depend on cooperation with nature in the production of honey. The dying of the colonies is a clear rearing of the environment against this unnatural treatment.

«When the bees die out, mankind will follow four years later.»
Albert Einstein

A life without bees in China

Many fruits and nuts grow only because they were pollinated by the bees. For a long time humans have tried to copy this pollination asefficiently and precisely as in nature, but so far without success. What Albert Einstein has proclaimed as a scary scenario for the whole world has already become a reality in China. Under the Mao regime, it was ordered to kill all the sparrows because they were breaching the wheat intended for feed. At that time millions of birds were killed. As a result, however, there was an insect plague, since they no longer had any natural enemies. This was done with pesticides, with the result that there are hardly any insects and certainly no bees in parts of China. Some farmers have now begun to lay their own hands and dust with small brushes every single flower of the apple.

How healthy is honey?

Honey is praised above all in the whole-value kitchen, although it is mainly composed of carbohydrates ("calorie bomb") and contains only a small amount of vitamins, minerals and enzymes. Although the honey is almost 80% sugar and the rest mainly water, it has some health benefits in comnparison to industrial suger, but also shares many disadvantages. For example, the honey attacks the teeth even more than the household sugar. However, since the household sugar contains no minerals, enzymes and vitamins at all, the (natural, unheated) honey is superior in this respect. Honey, by the way, should only be consumed raw, so never heat it above 40 degrees Celsius! It is therefore unsuitable for baking and cooking. For children under 12 months the use of honey is generally discouraged since traces of a bacterium called Clostridium Botulinum may be present. This causes a rare form of food poisoning (botulism) in babies and very rarely also in adults.

Without bees there is no honey

The question is not whether there will be a world without bees, for new bee species have been discovered which are more robust and resistant than the overgrown European honeybee. But the dying of the bees wants to tell people something important: "Stop continuing to exploit animals at the expense of the environment for indifference and profit." With the decision to go without honey and products that contain honey everyone can contribute.

Bernadette Raschle

Letzte Aktualisierung: 20.04.2017
Fussnoten:

1. Agrar research Switzerland, «Beekeping in Switzerland: Facts and meaning»[2], 2005
2. Pro Sieben, Galileo-programm ,31. Juli 2002, «Artificial fertilization of bees»

Weitere Infos:
Englische articles about honey/bees:

- Elliot L. Gang: The buzz about honey, The Animals Agenda [3], Nov./Dez. 1997. Very informaitve and critical article about honey.
- Why Honey is Not Vegan [4]
- Busy Bees [5], Vegetarian Ressource Group

Source URL (modified on 04/20/2017 - 10:39): https://www.swissveg.ch/node/2245?language=en

Links
[1] https://www.swissveg.ch/node/2245?language=en
[2] http://www.agrarforschungschweiz.ch/artikel/2005_03_937.pdf
[3] http://www.animalsagenda.org/
[4] http://www.vegetus.org/honey/honey.htm
[5] http://www.vrg.org/journal/vj96nov/bee.htm