

Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



January, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our first meeting for 2014 will be Tuesday, January 14. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I've often wondered what the most important thing is in managing hive pests and disease.

An A: This is a great question (?) since keeping bees includes "things" like hive components, tools, and medications. It also includes "things" the beekeeper does (beekeeping practices).

The second part is easiest: regular hive inspections are critically important to maintaining a healthy colony. The beekeeper must stay on top of the hive's vigor, honey and pollen stores, brood development, etc. Observations during these inspections are what should guide the future course of action such as feeding, adding boxes, requeening, hive treatments, etc. Focusing on strong healthy hives is the key to managing pests and disease.

What if we mean a "thing" that we can order out of the bee supply catalogue? Catalogues are full of stuff including the "things" we prescribe based on our inspections. Most beekeepers would agree that the screened bottom board is the most important "thing" in the hive stack. Varroa mites are insidious parasites. They cling to bees and feed on them, shortening their lives to the detriment of the whole colony. A mite that loses its grip on its host just waits to jump aboard the next bee to come along. The screened bottom board lets them wait outside the hive. Mites that fall off (or are

groomed off) by other bees are not likely to find a new host on the ground below the hive.

November Meeting Notes

Forty-nine members and guests attended our last meeting of 2013.

George Rodriguez reported on the Texas Beekeepers Association's annual meeting in Plano. One piece of business at the meeting was an increase in individual, family and club dues starting in 2014. Also, the TBA plans to list on its web site those members names with local honey for sale as well as those that do removals. While he had the floor, George announced that the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association had published a cook book and he had a few for sale at \$8 each (they were quickly snapped up).

Harrison Richardson also attended the TBA meeting and he reported on some of the program topics, including the presentation by Jerry Hayes who writes the popular "Classroom" article for the American Bee Journal. Harrison also reviewed some of the honey bee research that is ongoing. Mississippi State University Extension has published a comprehensive report on small hive beetles that you can "Google" and download. An important recommendation in the report is to sanitize slimed comb with a 5% bleach solution to kill yeast spores that can cause honey to ferment. Randy Oliver, another frequent contributor to the ABJ, reported on the results of double-blind studies of pollen substitutes for

feeding bees.

Will Rainey, member of the Harris County Beekeepers and Brazoria County Beekeepers, has been volunteering at the Houston Arboretum. He reported that they are looking for a volunteer to coordinate an adult beekeeping program.

Jack Richardson presented a short "show and tell". He showed how to add chicken wire to a frame to hold comb from cutouts. He also gave pointers for assembling hive bodies and supers. Well-made equipment should last for many years. He recommends painting inside the finger joints before assembling boxes. Assemble the box with quality wood glue, making sure that the sides are "square". Carefully caulk even tiny cracks and prime the wood before at least two coats of quality light-colored house paint that you buy at a bargain because the colors were mixed wrong.

Kelly Morris reported that he has started taking a Pepcid and a Benadryl before working bees to avoid allergic reactions.

Door prizes:

Brazoria County Beekeepers Assn. cook book - won by Doug Rowell

ceramic skep honey jar (donated by Stephanie King) - won by Greg Pendley

soft sided 6-pack cooler (donated by Albert Smaistrila) - won by Jerry Emerson

wildflower seeds (donated by Jerry Emerson) - won by Cynda deBons

Treasurer's Report

Our November, 2013 balance was \$3,464.62. Since that time we collected \$5.00 in dues (one new member at \$5.00), spent \$8.00 for one of the Brazoria County Beekeepers recipe books for a November meeting door prize and submitted our Texas Beekeepers Association dues for 2013 and 2014. Our treasury balance is \$3,411.62, consisting of \$42.00 in cash (to make change) plus a Wells Fargo checking account balance of \$3,369.62.

A financial summary and property inventory for 2013 is presented below. The main highlights are the 103 paid members at year-end and the \$1,243.75 in donations received:

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2013 Financial Summary

Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2013)	\$1,771.83
Income	
member dues paid (103 at \$5.00)	\$515.00
donations	\$1,243.75
extracting equipment income	<u>\$120.00</u>
Total Income	\$1,878.75
Expenses	
Texas Beekeepers Assn. dues	(\$50.00)
meeting door prizes	(\$8.00)
outreach flyers	(\$100.00)
outreach educational banners	<u>(\$80.96)</u>
Total Expenses	<u>(\$238.96)</u>
Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2013)	\$3,411.62

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2013 Property Inventory

<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>
Four Framed Beekeeping Posters	various	unknown	Jeff McMullan
Learning Hive	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
Red Wagon	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
Extracting Equipment	8/19/2011	\$583.33	Jim Lynch
Dadant Junior Bench Extractor with stand			
stainless steel double sieve			
serrated cold uncapping knife			
uncapping fork			
Dadant uncapping tub set			
Solar Wax Melter	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
Frame Assembly Gear	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
Workmate portable work bench			
foundation form board			
wire crimper			
eyelet punch			
spur embedder			
wiring device and wire			
frame assembly jig			
Outreach Banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan

Super Painting Contest

At our January meeting we will review the rules for our Super Painting Contest to be judged at our March meeting. Decorated shallow or medium supers (8 or 10 frame) can be entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older). Winners will be determined by member ballot and announced at the March meeting. In addition to awards, winners get bragging rights for a whole year.

Elections

At our November meeting, Jack Richardson was appointed to head a nominating committee for the election of officers. Jack will report on the committee's slate of nominees at our January meeting. We will be voting after additional nominations from the floor. If you are interested in serving as an officer, please let Jack know.

Dues Are Due

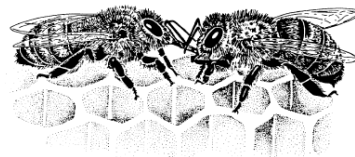
Membership dues for the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association are \$5.00 for the calendar year. All member dues for 2014 are now due. Don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting.

Our member rosters show who has not yet paid dues by their names being *in italics*. Of course everyone's name is that way at our first meeting of the year, but if you don't get this chore done, your name will show up in dreaded italics on our member roster.

Refreshments Sign Up and Swarm Call List

Our Association provides coffee and lemonade and members volunteer to bring a snack or dessert to the monthly meetings. At our January meeting, volunteers can sign up to provide refreshments for our 2014 meetings.

We'll also pass around a swarm call list that will be used to direct folks that contact our organization to members that capture swarms or do cutouts or those that want free bees.



**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent - Horticulture
Fort Bend County
Jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
(281) 342-3034 X 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

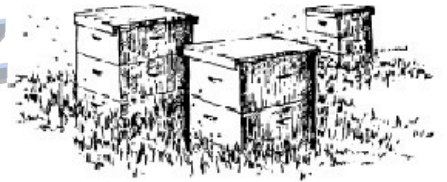
Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating. If you have special needs in order to participate in this program, please contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of Fort Bend County at (281) 342-3034.



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February, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, February 11. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Gerard and Lisa Howard (something salty) and Sharon Moore (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our February meeting.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: Why does honey crystallize?

An A: Honey is a concentrated solution of sugars (mainly glucose and fructose) that honey bees make from the nectar of flowers (or sometimes other sweet liquids). Worker bees gather nectar on foraging trips and carry it back to the hive in their "honey stomach", an organ that is akin to a bird's crop. In the hive, it is transferred from bee to bee as it is partially digested before being stored in the comb cells, first near the brood nest for easy access and later in our supers.

Hive ventilation reduces the water content of the stored nectar to about 18% or less at which point the bees seal the cell with a cap of beeswax. This is an important step since honey is "hygroscopic" which means it can absorb moisture from the air. If left open (either in the hive or on your kitchen counter), the moisture content increases as it removes moisture from the air. At its low moisture content, honey will fatally desiccate (dry out) living organisms so it cannot spoil. When properly stored in a sealed container, honey will last indefinitely (there was honey in King Tut's tomb!). If the moisture content increases very much, it can ferment. (We always extract only capped honey to assure the moisture content is low.)

Freshly extracted honey that had been stored in the warm hive can be

crystal clear, but, eventually, all honey will likely crystallize.

Crystallization begins with an increasingly cloudy appearance. A layer of sugar crystals may accumulate at the bottom of the jar or the whole thing can become solid. The time that this takes to happen is determined by the relative concentration of the different sugars (i.e. the floral source of the nectar), its storage temperature and the presence of bits of solids. Some honey crystallizes quickly while others may stay liquid for months and months. In fact, grocery store honey has been heated so that it can be pumped through filters to remove any solids that might initiate crystallization.

Some people prefer crystallized honey, spreading it like peanut butter on a piece of toast. While it tastes fine, the sugar crystals are usually very coarse, crunchy and not very palatable. Crystallized honey is well suited for cooking or sweetening tea. "Creamed honey" is honey that has been deliberately crystallized, but its texture is managed to create very fine crystals.

Honey stored in the refrigerator will crystallize quickly, so it is best stored in the pantry or on the kitchen table. On the other hand, honey stored in the freezer doesn't crystallize. It gets incredibly thick, but not frozen. It is best to defrost "frozen" honey quickly in warm water so that it spends little time at 55° or so, the optimum temperature for crystallization.

To liquefy crystallized honey, we need to get the temperature up so the sugars go back into solution. Setting the honey jar in a bowl of hot water from the tap is the safest way to do this. Microwaving honey risks making a terrible mess in the microwave oven. We've heard other ways that we would not recommend, like all day in the car with the windows rolled up or in the attic on a warm fall day. In either of those situations, the honey jar should probably be in a plastic pail or something.

Another characteristic of honey crystallization is important to know! As sugar crystals form, the moisture content of the remaining liquid honey goes up. If it goes up enough, (and living yeast is present) it can ferment. Gases formed during fermentation can burst a closed container, making an even bigger mess than the microwave depending on where it has been stored).

January Meeting Notes

A head count revealed sixty members and guests at our first meeting of 2014. There were sixty names on our sign-in sheet...amazing! B. Bohus was accompanied by her friend A. Gendes from Hungary who was in Houston visiting her daughter. She received a hardy beekeeper welcome.

At our November meeting, Jack Richardson was appointed to head a nominating committee for the election of officers. Jack reported that he managed to brow beat the current

officers to stand for re-election. There were no nominations from the floor and the election was unanimous.

PhD student Jason Graham was in our area on business and offered us a presentation on honey bee research and research activity at the University of Florida.

Many different organizations are involved in honey bee research or help fund research efforts. Ongoing work at the University of Florida includes honey bee husbandry, pesticide effects, Africanized honey bees and honey bee ecology. They are also working on the ecology and conservation of native pollinators. Companies like Bayer, Monsanto and Syngenta have honey bee research programs while other companies, organizations and foundations provide financial support. The USDA has been doing honey bee research for many decades. The Department of Defense is researching how to take advantage of the honey bee's extraordinary sense of smell to locate land mines!

Jason likened research efforts to a "scientific conversation" where researchers collaborate through published works as simple as notes and ideas to peer-reviewed scholarly papers published in academic journals. When a researcher is considering a subject, the first step is a literature search to join the "scientific conversation" about the topic. Researchers today have access to Scholar.google.com, a freely accessible search site that indexes the full text of scholarly literature across many disciplines.

Jeff McMullan entertained us with a fascinating tale with an unexpected outcome. He had long wondered why most hive tools were just paint scrapers that were painted orange to help find them in the grass. Even hooked-end tools, which seemed to have been intended as a hive tool from the get-go, didn't work well. Jeff was convinced that he kept losing them because they were really too big; a hive tool

should fit and stay in your pocket.

Jeff was politely told by beekeeping supply houses that it sounded great but it wasn't available. He knew that, but no one was the least bit interested in making his hive tool ideas happen. Undaunted, he eventually had THE PERFECT POCKET HIVE TOOL manufactured himself! It will be in the Dant catalogue due in your mailbox in a few days. Or...he had a few with him if you wanted one from the guy that made it all happen: \$5 each.

We had 51 new and renewing members pay their dues at our first meeting for 2014. Dues of \$5.00 for 2014 are due if your name is in italics on our roster.

Door prize winners this month:

A bee pin (donated by Michael Pawelek) - won by Albert Smaistrila

A queen catcher (Albert Smaistrila) - won by Benny Phillipp

Coozies (Bill Busch) - won by Denise Billings and Verosa Phillipp

THE PERFECT POCKET HIVE TOOL (donated by Jeff McMullan) - A. Gendes

Grapefruit from the King's garden - Cinda deBons

FBBA ball cap (Bill Busch) - won by Gene deBons

A honey bee pen and honey candy (George Rodriguez) - won by Margaret Smaistrila and Bill Busch

An entrance feeder and honey candy (Bill Busch) - Herman Hoot and George Rodriguez

Treasurer's Report

Our January 2013 balance was \$3,411.62. Since that time we collected \$255.00 in dues (51 members at \$5.00 each) and got a \$5.00 donation. We spent \$10.00 on a Fort Bend Beepepers ball cap for Jason Graham. Our treasury balance has increased \$250.00 to \$3,661.62.

Super Painting Contest

At our January meeting, Jack Richardson presented the rules for our Super Painting Contest to be judged at our March meeting. Decorated shallow or medium supers (8 or 10 frame) can be entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older). Winners will be determined by member ballot and announced at the March meeting. In addition to awards and prizes, winners get bragging rights for a whole year.

A New Year's Resolution

We are making a few changes to improve our meetings: We will be called to order at 7:30 pm so that we have thirty minutes to enjoy our snacks and get our visiting done. We will plan a 30 minute program that is appropriate for our beekeeping calendar while leaving plenty of time for questions and comments.

We meet in a large room to accommodate the number of folks that attend. We are going to improve on the PA system for the meeting and expect every speaker to use it. Everyone is encouraged to sit near the front of the room. Please be courteous to others during the meetings and refrain from any conversations that aren't addressed to the whole group. Thank you for your cooperation.

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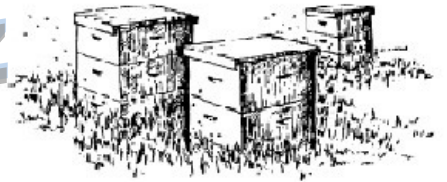
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March, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, March 11. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Amber Philipp (something salty) and Verosa Philipp (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our March meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: When is swarm season?
And what's a swarm anyway?

An A: A new member quietly asked these questions after our February meeting, wondering what it means to have their name on the "swarm call list". Certainly there were others present wondering the same thing. Comments and questions are an important part of our meeting, so don't be shy.

The term "swarm" is used different ways, including by some who refer to a colony of bees as a swarm even if they are quietly living in a managed hive. The more common use of the term is to describe bees that are in search of a new home.

There are two kinds of swarms: reproductive swarms and absconding swarms. Reproductive swarms appear most often during the spring while absconding swarms can be at almost any time. Absconding swarms have been driven from their home by overcrowding, pests or disease or some other condition that has made their home uninhabitable for them. Absconding swarms can be due to such things as overheating on hot summer afternoons or abandoning comb that has been "slimed" by small hive beetle larvae. Because it contains an entire honey bee colony, an absconding swarm is often larger than a typical reproductive swarm.

Reproductive swarms are an important part of the honey bee colony's life cycle. The survival of a honey bee colony is dependent upon the queen laying eggs and the rearing of brood. This provides the individual bees that sustain the colony. A reproductive swarm is the way new colonies are created by honey bees. In the spring when the colony is strong and nectar and pollen are plentiful, the honey bees may begin preparations for a reproductive swarm. The old queen slows down her egg laying and trims down for her upcoming flight. The colony begins feeding a number of larvae that will develop into queens. The new queen cells are usually located at the bottom of the brood comb and are referred to as "swarm cells" because one of them will be replacing the old queen who will be leaving with the reproductive swarm.

Producing a new colony is a risky process for the honey bee colony. The old queen leaves with about half the workers in search of a new home. The existing colony's population will be much smaller and they must successfully defend their home. They also must replace the departed queen with one that is accepted by the colony after she emerges from her queen cell. She must kill her rivals and successfully return to the colony from a dangerous mating flight. Only then can she begin laying eggs and emitting the scents

(pheromones) that regulate the colony unity.

The swarm is at grave risk too. Since a queen is not a strong flyer, the reproductive swarm usually settles in a cluster that is not too distant from the hive. They must find a suitable place to live and begin foraging for food and raising new bees in order to survive. Because their queen is old, they may even be faced with raising a new one within a few weeks. The new queen larvae are reared in "supercedure queen cells" that are few in number, usually just two or three but maybe more. While "swarm cells" are near the bottom of the frame, "supercedure cells" are usually in the middle of the brood nest area of comb.

As the swarm cluster waits, scout bees search for a new home. A basic beekeeping skill is to capture the cluster of bees and introduce them into a managed hive. This task seems scary, but it is really pretty easy. If the cluster is shaken so that it falls into the beekeepers box, all the bees will soon be inside. You can put the hive on the ground, snip off the branch they're on then shake the swarm at the entrance. The bees usually rush inside. Old comb and a few drops of lemongrass oil help entice the bees inside. In fact, a box with old comb or a trap with a few drops of lemongrass oil will often entice a swarm to move in, maybe a good idea for unexpected swarms from your hives so bees don't move where they wouldn't be welcome.

Super Painting Contest

Don't forget to bring your entry in our Super Painting Contest at the March meeting. Decorated shallow or medium supers (8 or 10 frame and deeps are ok too) can be entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older). Winners will be determined by member votes and announced at the meeting as part of our program for the night. In addition to great awards and prizes, winners get bragging rights for a whole year.

February Meeting Notes

There were 43 members and guests that signed in at our February meeting. Special guests included Tom Keith (Roy Nash's brother-in-law) and Greg Pendley's little brother, Rev. Jim Pendley from Jacksonville, Tx.

We had 19 more new and renewing members pay their dues for 2014, making our roster stand at 70 paid members. Secretary-Treasurer Jeff McMullan showed the Association's roster from February, 2010, just four years ago. There were only 18 names on it! Most were at the night's meeting.

Our program was "*Feeding Bees...soup to nuts*" by Jeff McMullan. It addressed the "When", "What" and "How" we feed bees.

"When" do we feed bees? sometimes never. But, when establishing a new colony or when stores are low, feeding can make the difference in whether the bees survive. It is important to understand that feeding bees may stimulate behavior in response to the artificial flow of nectar. The unexpected food source may prompt vigorous brood rearing that will quickly exhaust stores if the feeding stops. It is good advice to continue feeding until ample nectar is available.

Bees can be fed carbohydrates (honey, sugar syrup, dry sugar or sugar candy), protein (pollen substitutes) and supplements or meds

(feeding stimulant, amino acids, antibiotics, etc.). Carbs can be in the form of liquid feed (sugar syrup, corn syrup or honey) or dry sugar or sugar candy. Honey can be in the form of a frame from a more successful hive. Sugar syrup for spring feeding should mimic the water content of nectar (50% water by weight). Fall or winter feeding should be 2:1 sugar (two parts sugar to one part water). Feeding dry sugar or sugar candy is less likely to stimulate egg laying.

There are many choices in liquid feeding individual hives including entrance feeders, hive top feeders and internal feeders. The simplest feeder is a zip lock bag of syrup on top of the frames in an empty super. Razor cuts or pin holes allow workers access to the feed. Each feeding option has it's pluses and minuses.

Open feeding bees needs to be approached with caution to avoid drowning the inevitable cloud in search of free food. Chicken waterers make good bee feeders if proper cautions are taken. Drowning can be a problem when feeding individual hives as well.

While adult bees subsist mostly on carbohydrates, protein is needed to raise young. Bees can be fed dry pollen substitute or patties made of pollen substitute and syrup. Most "store bought" patties include supplements like feeding stimulants, vitamins and amino acids. Pollen patties are usually fed inside the hive. The quantity should be kept small since small hive beetles enjoy the patties as well. Bees don't seem to recognize dry pollen substitute fed inside the hive, so it works best to open feed it in a tray sheltered from the wind and rain.

Bee supply catalogues feature many feeding supplements as well as antibiotics for bacterial diseases delivered to the "patients" in syrup.

Door prize winners this month:

A rosemary plant (donated by Jerry Emerson) - won by guest Gordon Heflin

Honey bee rubber stamps (donor unknown) - won by Gerard Howard and Harrison Rogers

A Czech cookbook (Albert Smaistrle) - won by Roy Nash

A pint of Herman Hoot's Brazos Bend Honey - won by guest Carolyn Boyd

Honey bee dish towels (donor unknown) - won by Lisa Howard and Jack Richardson

Treasurer's Report

Our February 2014 balance was \$3,661.62. Since that time we collected \$90.00 in dues (18 members at \$5.00 each) and got a \$1.00 donation. We spent \$50.00 on the Association's share of printing costs for flyers for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,702.62 consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$3,662.62 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

A Few Changes

We have made a few changes to improve our meetings: We will be called to order at 7:30 pm so that we have thirty minutes to enjoy our snacks and get our visiting done. We will plan a 30 minute program that is appropriate for our beekeeping calendar while leaving plenty of time for questions, comments and updates.

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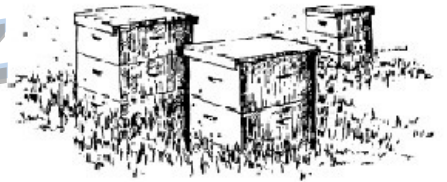
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April, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 8. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Dave and Tracey Grimme (something salty) and Bill Windrow (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our April meeting. social time We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I caught a swarm and put them in a nuc. Hoping to make sure they would stay in the box, I decided to keep them closed up in the shade on the patio over night. The next morning they were all dead. I'm heartbroken at the sight! What happened?

An A: This is a painful lesson. As they say, experience is a difficult teacher since the test comes first!!

Honey bees maintain the temperature inside the hive at 90 - 95 degrees F all year around. In the winter, the bees flex their flight muscles to generate heat to keep the hive warm. And they cluster closely together to maintain heat when it is cold outside. During our Texas summer, the hive must be cooled. The bees ventilate the hive by fanning at the entrance and bring in water to cool things down by evaporation. That is why a convenient source of water is so important for your bees.

Despite mild temperatures and the shaded location, the swarm overheated and the bees died. In fact, the loud buzzing heard coming from the nuc in late afternoon was a frantic effort to cool the hive. The result was the opposite of what was intended by the bees: the fanning effort generated even more heat, the temperature soared until

the noise stopped and the bees died.

If you plan to leave bees closed up, you need to make sure that there is adequate ventilation to prevent overheating. While outside temperatures seem mild, thousands of bees generate a lot of heat. A screened bottom board helps a lot and a screened cover insures the free flow of air as the bees try to stay cool.

Honey Containers

As discussed at our March meeting, many of our Association members use containers purchased in bulk from bee supply houses or from Sailor Plastics:

(http://www.sailorplastics.com/Honey-Containers_c_7-1-3.html).

The cost per container is substantially less with the large quantity (200 or more containers and lids in a single box). But because of their large size, shipping on these individual big boxes is about \$40 each. According to Sailor Plastics, we can reduce shipping to about \$15 or less per box by ordering in quantity and shipping by truck on pallets (each pallet holds twelve to sixteen boxes).

To take advantage of these savings, we will be placing a group order with Sailor Plastics. If you want in, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the April meeting. We emailed copies of the form and we'll have a few more available at the meeting. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to

choose from the many choices in containers and lids that are available.

Jack Richardson will collect the forms. We plan to place the order as soon as we have forms and deposits in hand. We are requiring a \$50 per box nonrefundable deposit, so make sure you get your order right. And be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

The Association's entire order will be shipped on pallets by truck and shipping costs will be divided equally by the total number of boxes ordered. You will have to pick up your order at Jack Richardson's in Sugar Land (or make other arrangements with Jack).

Make your \$50.00 per box deposit checks out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. The balance on your order will be due at pickup. If you change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance. It is ok for members to get together to split a box, but one of them must place the order for the full box and lids.

Meeting Time

We have made a few changes to improve our meetings: Start time is still 7:00 pm, but we will be called to order at 7:30 pm so that we have thirty minutes to enjoy our snacks and get our visiting done. We will plan a 30 minute program and be sure to leave plenty of time for questions, comments and updates.

Super Painting Contest

We hope to have begun a fun annual event at our March meeting: our inaugural Super Painting Contest. Jack Richardson spearheaded the competition since he figured that we were all assembling and painting boxes in late winter anyway.

A total of 23 decorated boxes were entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older). Beekeepers from age 7 to 70 entered their art work.

The colorful boxes were displayed in the lobby of the Community Center. Winners were determined by popular vote; everyone was a judge!. Jack was pleased that "participation was terrific and everyone was wearing a smile!" We'll most certainly do it again next year.

First Place Winners received a ribbon, a mini-smoker trophy and a \$50 gift certificate from Dadant. Second Place earned a ribbon and a \$25 gift certificate from Brushy Mountain. Third place finishers received a ribbon. At the top of the kids division was Emily Dunbar, followed by the second-place entry of Emily and Sam Skidmore. Danielle King took the third place ribbon. Sarah Wicks won the Teen Division, followed by Reba Talafuse and Carolyn Perkison. In the Adult Division, Daryl Scott's super won first place. Bill Windrow captured second, and Rosie McCusker's entry took third.

March Meeting Notes

55 members and guests attended the March meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. "First timers" Corey and Angie Kelly are from Needville. Others at their first meeting included Preston and Argelia Pitts from Sugar Land and Chris Henson from Katy who described themselves as "not yet" beekeepers. Steve Kubena is interested in bees and wondered if someone would like to locate hives on his property in Needville. TAMU vet student Katy Moore attended with her mom while home for spring break.

Teacher Kathryn Hijazi and four of her students at St. Catherine's Montessori in Houston attended at the behest of Jeff McMullan. Jeff is working with the class to establish hives on the school grounds and "encouraged" both Kathryn and the students to decorate supers to enter in our contest. Sarah Wicks and Carolyn Perkison placed in the TEEN division.

Long time Association member Gene deBons has been contemplating "Why Do We Keep Bees?" for some time. He presented his findings at our March meeting.

Gene has concluded that the basic answer to this "why" question is our fascination with many things about bees. Some keep bees as a connection to ancient human history: humans and bees go back together thousands of years. Writings from the time of Columbus refer to bees as the source of "sweetness and light" (honey and candles). Even further back in history are biblical references to the "land of milk and honey".

Our fascination with bees can also focus on their amazing behavior. Their role in the natural world can fuel our interest in natural history and the environment. Some keep bees to improve their gardening success or to lend a hand or advance knowledge in the face or pests and diseases that decimate bee numbers. Some keep bees because they can make money to finance their hobby or even make beekeeping their career.

Gene cited Gene Stratton-Porter's book "The Keeper of the Bees" and Dadant's "The Hive and the Honey Bee" as guides to why we keep bees.

After a short break to cast ballots for our painting contest, Jeff McMullan gave a short presentation on the youth programs by other bee clubs in our area. Clubs provide mentors to kids interested in keeping bees. In addition to a mentor, sponsored youth get bees, hives and gear in exchange for a two year

commitment to keeping bees. A key element is a presentation at each monthly meeting.

Door prize winners this month:

Flower pot swarm traps (donated by Bob Hentschel) - won by Chuck Bunkers and Roy Nash

A soft-side six pack cooler (Albert Smaistrila) - won by Jay Roussel

A squirrel feeder donated by Joe Telafuse - won by Bob Hentschel

A spearmint plant donated by Jerry Emerson - won by Jeff McMullan

Treasurer's Report

Our March 2014 balance was \$3,702.62. Since that time we collected \$60.00 in dues (12 members at \$5.00 each) and got a \$10.00 donation. We spent \$41.60 on web site development software and \$195.79 on prizes for the super decorating contest. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,535.23 consisting of \$50.00 in cash (to make change) and \$3,485.23 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

Check It Out

Check your address label for this newsletter. If your name is in italics, you have not yet paid your dues for 2014. You can mail in your \$5.00 annual dues to Jeff McMullan, Fort Bend Beekeepers Association, 74 Hessenford St., Sugar Land, TX 77479.

TEXAS A&M
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Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent- Horticulture
Fort Bend County
Jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
(281) 342-3034 X 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

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Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



May, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 13. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Doug Rowell (something salty) and Mike Jurek (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our May meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: One of my hives was queenless with lots of bees, but only scattered drone brood to be seen. I gave them a swarm cell that I found in my other hive to get them back on track with a new queen. Checking later I found the queen cell with the side all chewed out, unlike the "trap door" in the end that would indicate that a new queen had emerged. The colony continued to dwindle and I ended up having to combine them with my other hive. What went wrong?

An A: Given the benefit of hindsight, you figured out that the scattered drone brood was the product of a laying worker depositing unfertilized eggs.

In what seems like a desperate attempt to at least allow drones from the doomed colony to contribute to the survival of the species, a young worker in the queenless colony begins to lay eggs. Eggs from a laying worker can be seen on the sides of the brood cell since her abdomen is not long enough to deposit the egg on the bottom of the cell. And quite often she lays several eggs in a cell. These unfertilized eggs develop into drones who do not gather nectar or pollen. The colony's female workforce inevitably declines as aging bees die. Sometimes the hive falls victim to robbers or small hive beetles when there aren't enough guard bees to defend their

home.

Another key observation that you made is that the damaged queen cell and the missing queen pupa are the result of a colony that thought the laying worker was a fertile queen. Your intended replacement was killed. Usually the bees quickly tear down the old queen cell, so the "assassination" was likely within a day or so.

Beware that there may be risk involved in combining a laying worker colony with a stronger queenright hive. A "newspaper combine" lessens the chance of conflict with the laying worker. Place a sheet or two of newspaper between the two hives. A few slits in the paper encourage the bees to chew through, combining the hives.

It is better to rid the hive of its laying worker(s). Move the entire hive a few yards away and then brush all

the bees off onto the ground one frame at a time. Put the bee-less frames back in the boxes and return the hive to its original location. The bees quickly return: all except the laying worker. The theory is that the laying worker is a younger bee that has not oriented herself to the hive's location. Rid of the lost laying worker, the queenless colony can now be safely requeened or combined with less risk of problems..

Treasurer's Report

Our April 2014 balance was \$3,535.23. Since that time we collected and spent \$2,873.25 on our honey container order. \$25 in dues (5 members at \$5.00 each) and got a \$250.61 in donations. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,810.84 consisting of \$29 in cash (to make change) and \$3781.84 in our Wells Fargo checking account.



Honey Containers

At our March meeting, we gathered individual orders for honey containers to combine into a single order from Sailor Plastics. Eleven of our members placed orders for a total of 35 cases of containers. We worked with the helpful Sailor folks to make it all happen. The bulk order saved about \$30 in shipping on each case, totaling almost \$1,000 in savings for our members.

April Meeting Notes

At our April meeting, Jack Richardson gave details for the purchase of honey bottles in bulk to save on shipping costs. Follow-up details are discussed elsewhere in this month's *Buzz*.

Albert Smaistrla just received two packages of Russian bees from Walter Kelley at a cost of \$115 each: for every swarm we do not catch over \$100 is flying away.

Jack Richardson gave a timely program on swarms including a table full of equipment to show. Jack's first swarm capture was in 1967. His first trap, a cardboard box containing a pheromone lure, was used in 1987. Following the cardboard traps, Jack moved to the much-discussed plant pots baited with pheromone and hung in trees. Now he most often uses nuc boxes with frames of old comb and lemongrass oil so that he is able to move the bees into hives on the frames instead of cutting them out of pots. He checks his traps often so they can be hived right away. He treats newly hived swarms with Check-Mite+ for varroa and small hive beetles. For better success in keeping the new swarms, Jack recommends using a frame of capped brood (no bees) from another hive.

Jack also reported on an essential oil mite treatment concocted by Dane Beito. Dane claims success in killing mites while it repels small hive beetles. He calls it "Beetle Juice".

Jack also addressed making splits. He uses one frame of brood with lots of bees and a queen cell. It is important that this small colony's entrance is reduced to about one or two "bee widths".

Gene DeBons presented more fascinating beekeeping history in April. First, from a 1957 book "Treasury of American Science," he reviewed a summary of current research in 1941 at the USDA Laboratory in Beltsville, MD. That lab had recently responded to beekeeper re-

quests for bees with longer tongues so they could reach into deeper flowers; with larger bodies so they could carry more payload; with gentle disposition so they would be easier to work; and with distinguishing markings like stars on their wings so they would be easy to identify. After some preliminary work, the lab scientists decided the development of all these characteristics would not be easy and they put the project on hold. While honey bee research has been going on for many years, the challenges are hugely different decades later.

Gene also related several tales from his 1940 edition of "ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture," by A. I. Root and E. R. Root. A. I. Root began beekeeping in 1865 when he lost a bet to a fellow field worker who said he could capture a swarm of bees that had just flown over the field. Mr. Root offered him \$1 if he could capture the swarm and he returned shortly with the swarm in a box. Mr. Root then began his learning about bees by finding Rev. Langstroth's book and by purchasing a queen for \$20 from the Reverend. By 1867 Mr. Root learned about a honey extractor from Germany. He copied that machine and within a couple of years he had 48 hives and had extracted 6,162 lb of honey, which he sold for \$0.25/lb.

A. I. Root was the first to manufacture extractors and wax foundation commercially in the United States. He also improved the smoker making it essentially the same as we use today. His bee supply company was located in Medina, Ohio, and today is a major supplier of beeswax candles, but not general beekeeping equipment.

For many years he contributed a column under the name "Novice" in his journal, *Gleanings in Bee Culture*. His view was that all beekeepers could learn from his mistakes and would not have to repeat those errors in their own operations. Mr. Root wrote the first edition of his book, "ABC of Bee Culture," in 1877. It was expanded in 1940 by

his son E. R. Root to include XYZ. A. I. Root died in 1923.

Boone Holliday spoke about the Extension Service Swarm List. He repeated last season's comments that initial contacts with county residents should not involve a fee, that we are providing a service to the community by assisting with bee calls. Members should contact his office if they wish to be removed from the Swarm List.

Sharon Moore showed the Fort Bend Herald spread showing results of the Super Painting contest held in March. She supplied photos and a write-up to the paper which were published.

Door Prizes:

Herman Hoot, Grape Vine donated by Nancy Hentschel

John Lynch, Gerber Daisy donor unknown

Clarence Thielemann and Jocelyn Kasmir, solar powered novelty bee "toy", donor unknown.

Check It Out

Check your address label for this newsletter. If your name is in italics, you haven't paid dues for 2014 and you will be dropped from our mailing list next month. If you'd like, you can mail your \$5.00 dues to Jeff McMullan, 74 Hessenford St., Sugar Land, TX 77479.

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County Extension Agent- Horticulture
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Fort Bend Buzz

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Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



June, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, June 10. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Daryl and Toni Scott (something salty) and Rosie McCusker (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our June meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I've had my bees for several months now and I'm beginning to feel like a real beekeeper. I bought a second hive and as soon as I get it put together and painted, I want to try capturing a swarm. We've talked about capturing swarms at Association meetings, but it all goes by me pretty quickly. What tricks and tips do I need to know before attempting to capture a swarm?

An A: The easiest way to capture a swarm is to have them move into an empty hive on their own. If you provide some old comb and use a few drops of lemongrass oil as an attractant, you may get lucky and have bees move in on their own. It is difficult to relocate a hive a short distance (like across the yard) so it is a good idea to put your bait hive where you would want it to stay when it is full of bees. Get on the Association's swarm call list while waiting for bees to move into your hive.

Make sure that when you leave on a swarm capture mission you have everything that you might need, more than just your veil or bee jacket and a box for the bees. Always have Off! or another insect repellent, a bee brush and plastic dust pan, paper towels, hand pruners and loppers, a sprayer full of sugar syrup with essential oils (see the recipe that follows), etc. Bees find a frame or two of old comb

almost irresistible so bring some along if you have it. A few drops of lemongrass oil add to the attraction. A step ladder may be necessary or check out the BEE JUG video on YouTube as an option for swarms high up in tree. Don't forget a strap to secure the hive and some way to close up the entrance.

Step one is to spray the swarm cluster with sugar syrup with essential oils. The bees are likely to be hungry and appreciate the treat. The essential oils establish a strong scent identity and sticky bees help contain the cluster.

If the bees are on a small limb, trim away others that are in the way then carefully cut the limb with one hand while you hold it still with the other. You should have your box on the ground below the swarm and ready for the bees with a frame or two of foundation or drawn comb. You can shake the bees directly into the box or shake the bees at the entrance (some think that the bees are more likely to stay if you let them walk into the entrance on their own). Then carefully return the other frames to the box. Leave the top open for a few minutes and observe for bees fanning scent to attract others. You can close the cover when most of the bees appear to be inside.

If the swarm is clustered on a big limb, fence or wall, a light cardboard nuc makes capture easier. You can hold the nuc below the bees and sweep them inside with a bee brush. It may take two or more

attempts since many of the bees will return to where the cluster had been. At some point you can brush all the bees away and discourage their return with a liberal spray of Off! (or cover the area with a paper towel soaked with the repellent).

When you get the bees home, beware of overheating. A frame of brood from your established hive will increase the colony strength and encourage them to stay.

Sugar Syrup + Essential Oils

In a blender, emulsify 30 drops each of lemongrass oil and spearmint oil with 1/8 tsp of lecithin granules in one cup of cold tap water.

Make sugar syrup with 6 cups of sugar and 4 cups boiling water (microwaved 8 minutes in a 2 qt. measuring cup). Combine the two liquids when the sugar syrup has cooled.

Yields 8 cups (1/2 gallon). Add about 1/4 cup of essential oils mixture to each gallon of syrup as a feeding stimulant.

Treasurer's Report

Our May, 2014 balance was \$3,810.84. Since that time we collected \$10 in dues (2 members at \$5.00 each) and got a \$5.00 donation. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,825.84 consisting of \$30 in cash (to make change) and \$3,795.84 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

May Meeting Notes

A quick head count yielded 50 members and guests at our May meeting (but only 39 names were registered on the roster at our May meeting). Please be sure to sign the attendance roster at our meetings.

Our program topic was queen rearing by member John McConnon. John first learned about bees in college courses at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, under Dr. Roger Morse. Since his college days, he has been an apiary inspector, a honey packer and a commercial beekeeper in Florida. In his Florida job, six beekeepers managed 7,000 hives.

John's very detailed talk covered the gamut of queen bee information: physiology, mating habits, behavior, colony control, and life cycle. From this base he described several approaches to raising queens, from the usual commercial operations to artificial insemination to procedures for the small beekeeper.

The Dr. C. C. Miller method is useful for raising a few queens on a non-commercial scale. It uses the natural tendency of bees to raise queens and swarm. Besides the description given in John's talk, the Miller method is described under Queen Rearing in A. I. Root's, "ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture." In the Miller method, a strong queen is selected and placed in a two-frame nucleus with plenty of workers. When it is time to raise queens, one frame of brood is removed and the bees are shaken back into the nucleus. A new frame containing two strips of foundation, 1 x 5", spaced about a third of the way in from each end, is placed in the nucleus. The bees draw out comb from the two strips until the two sides meet. When the combined comb nearly fills the frame there will be a scalloped bottom edge. In a week there will be eggs and brood in all stages. At the end of this time remove the frame, brush the bees off carefully, and with a sharp knife trim the bottom

edge of the comb to the irregular line of very young larvae that have just hatched from the eggs. It is right along this scalloped edge that we desire the bees to start queen cells. Place this frame in a strong colony that has been made queenless and broodless for three days. They will build many queen cells over the day-old larvae at the bottom edge. After about nine days, the capped queen cells can be carefully cut out and moved individually to queenless nucs that have already been prepared. (Note that the cells and the unhatched queens are very fragile at this stage, and must be handled with care.) The new cells can be attached to the nucleus comb with staples, and the cells must be placed in the same downward orientation as when they were cut out.

John described the commercial grafting methods, and the detailed procedures involved in making either a wet graft or a dry graft, followed by the 2-day stop in a starter colony and a final step in a finishing colony. At the proper time, single cells are finally placed into small mating nucs. If any queen hatches before the beekeeper has transferred cells, the work will be lost, because a newly hatched queen will find and kill nearby unhatched queens.

Miscellaneous Facts from John's Talk:

Dragonflies prey on bees and eat lots of bees. Therefore, do not keep bees in swampy areas.

Queens stop laying at 98 °F because the bees cannot keep the brood cooled to 92 °F at the higher temperatures.

In artificial insemination work, the hardest job is getting semen from the drones.

A toothpick makes a good grafting tool if it is shaved into a "shovel" shape.

Grafting requires a steady hand and a good eye.

Following John's presentation, Roy

Nash reported on a successful bee removal job in Pecan Grove. He gathered 23 gallons of honey and comb from a hive near the peak of the roof. Roy also reported on a Brazoria County beekeeper meeting that he attended in Angleton. It was reported there that the county housed 33,000 bee hives, with many being migratory.

Door Prizes:

Bee Pin donated by Michael Pawelek won by Bob Hentschel. Biggle Bee Book (Michael Pawelek) won by Gene DeBons. Honey Pot (Erika Almodover) won by Roy Nash. Bee Balm Plant (Elaine Jameson) won by Verosa Philipp. Golden Rain Tree (Carolyn Boyd) won by Norman Harris. US Flag (Jack Richardson) won by Nancy Hentschel. 1 Lb Dark Honey (Gene DeBons) won by Mark Clarke. Swarm Trap (Bob and Nancy Hentschel) won by Preston Pitts. Bee Trailer Hitch Cover (Kelly Morris) won by Greg Howard.

Dues Due

If you haven't paid your dues for 2014, you've been dropped from our mailing list. If you'd like to get back on the roster, you can mail your \$5.00 dues to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association, c/o Jeff McMullan, 74 Hessenford St., Sugar Land, TX 77479.

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Fort Bend Buzz

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Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



July, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, July 8. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Roxanne Agee (something salty) and Elaine Jameson (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our July meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: What kind of protective gear should I buy? I want good sting protection (it really hurts!) and the summer heat makes me want a cooler ventilated suit like many of the members have.

An A: This is a great question for a dozen beekeepers since you are guaranteed a whole bunch of answers.

Lets start with gloves: many beekeepers don't use them because they think they are too clumsy with them on. Even if you don't normally use gloves, it is a good idea to have some in your pocket when going to the bee yard since the alarm pheromonea from a single sting could result in many more painful encounters. Some beekeepers use disposable rubber gloves to keep their hands clean and afford a little sting protection. They fit tightly and bees can sting through them but the venom dose is usually small. There are many other glove choices both in the bee supply catalogues and at local retailers. Dishwashing or rubber cleaning gloves work really well so long as they fit loosely. Many of them come in several sizes: bigger is better. Most beekeeper gloves have long cuffs and many have ventilation at the wrist that sometimes results in stings. Heavy leather or chemical gloves deprive you of "feel". Wash your gloves and other gear to remove the alarm scent or expect agitated bees every

time you go to the bee yard.

Many beekeepers get by in the bee yard with light colored clothes and a veil. There are several choices in the catalogues; folding veils store easily. The long strings on the veil go down around your waist then are secured in front with a bow. Make sure that the veil covers your collar or you'll get stung on the back of your neck. The helmets in the catalogues or a similar hat usually work better than a ball cap to support the veil. Some have hooks on the brim to prevent the veil from riding up and letting bees get inside. A headband to soak up sweat is a good idea on hot days. Most veils use screen wire. Cloth screen can end up full of burn holes from embers from your smoker; some will be big enough for an irate guard bee to get inside with you.

A basic beekeeper jacket with zippered veil costs only a few dollars more than a helmet and veil. There are choices to be made in selecting the zippered veil. Wearing a ball cap will keep the popular fencing style veil from touching your face and inviting a sting. On a hot day it is really nice to be able to step away from the hives, easily throw back the veil and drink some water.

Another hot weather solution is the ventilated jackets and suits now carried by most bee supply houses. They are all a bit different and it is a good idea to check out one owned by another beekeeper. Metal zippers don't seem to work as easily as plastic ones and the number of

pockets may be a factor for you.

A full suit costs much more than a jacket, but it affords head to toe protection. It's hotter, but an unnamed beekeeper says she just wears her bikini underneath on a hot day.

New PA System

The Association has been borrowing a public address system for our meetings and it wasn't available to us in June. We had a hard time without it, so it was decided that we should purchase one of our own using donations we recently received. The new system will work great for our meetings as well as for outreach events. It is very portable (the size of a briefcase) and battery powered with a corded and two cordless microphones that can all be used simultaneously. The 50-watt system has a six year warranty and is made in the USA by AmpliVox. Their customer care manager also works with a beekeeper and gave us a special "beekeeper discount".

Treasurer's Report

Our June 2014 balance was \$3,825.84. Since that time we purchased the PA system described above, collected \$30 in dues (6 members at \$5.00 each) and received donations totaling \$331.93. The total cost for our new PA system was \$620.22. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,567.55 consisting of \$30 in cash (to make change) and \$3,537.55 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

June Meeting Notes

The head count at our June meeting was 60 members and guests (but only 40 names were on the roster for our May meeting). It is important that you sign the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

New members joining in June included Robert Wells from Richmond, Michael Kelley from Needville, Mike Matejek from Houston and Nola Donald from Fulshear. Welcome.

Two guests at our June meeting, Ramona Ridge and Susan Hilvers, live in the Fulshear area and offered up potential bee yard sites. Jeff McMullan has their contact information if you are interested.

Members were asked to suggest books and/or DVDs that the Association should donate to the Fort Bend County Library. We get lots of inquiries from folks looking into beekeeping and it would be helpful to refer them to a specific book for study. Likewise, there are many DVDs that our members would be interesting in watching. A quick survey of the library catalogue revealed that many titles were not current. Books that are twenty years old have little information about the pests and diseases we must cope with today. Few of the books in the catalogue would be helpful to someone wanting to get started as a beekeeper in today's environment. The library asked that we submit a list of the materials we intend to donate before we buy them.

Michael Booth reported on an interesting bee rescue. On Saturday, June 2 we received an email through our website looking for a home for a colony of bees. That is usually not out of the ordinary, but this time it was. A homeowner discovered that bees had moved into a utility box in his back yard. He re-

searched how to do removals on the internet then suited up in a mosquito net, long sleeves, gloves and an ample amount of duct tape. Opening the power company's enclosure, he removed all the comb and stood it up in an old foot locker (he had drilled an entrance hole plus another hole for a feeder he made from a water bottle). He attached the photo below to his email under the subject line "Wild hive-boxed and ready to move":



At our meeting we often caution about hive beetle infestations when trying to salvage comb from cut-outs and when removing bees from traps. This "wild hive" had the potential to get nasty, so an urgent email call went out for someone to pick up the footlocker and get the bees into a hive before hive beetles forced them to abscond. Any delay and someone could bring home a footlocker full of maggots!

Michael quickly made arrangements to pick up the hive (many others also called to offer their help). As expected, when Michael got home with the footlocker, he found the old comb totally infested with small hive beetle larvae. He successfully moved the colony into a hive and destroyed the maggot infested comb. He brought his sto-

ry and the footlocker to our June meeting, offering the "hive" as a souvenir to whoever wanted it. It ended up in the Extension Service dumpster out back.

New member Nolan Donald got started with his first hive in the spring. He moved them from his back yard in Fulshear to a friend's place in Sealy when they became a little too "hot" for his comfort. His plan was to requeen them and return them to the back yard, but they caused problems in Sealy too. The sound of a lawn mower was a call to attack! Nolan asked if anyone could help him. Before sunrise on the following Saturday, Dave Grimme helped him move the hive to Jeff McMullan's bee yard. Plans are underway to requeen them and there will certainly be a story to tell since requeening hot hives can be quite a challenge.

Butch Billings had an urgent need for a bee vacuum when a swarm moved into the soffit of his house. He discovered a "Bucket Head Wet/Dry Vacuum" at Home Depot that fits into a five gallon bucket. For less than \$25 he fashioned a bee vacuum and successfully removed his unwanted guests. He used duct tape to close the vacuum vent to manage the suction, leaving few dead bees.

In the hubbub after the meeting, the door prize winners list got lost. If you donated a prize, thank you. If you won one, congratulations.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent- Horticulture
Fort Bend County
Jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
(281) 342-3034 X 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

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Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



August, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, August 12. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to B. Bohus (something salty) and Carol Gubbells and Herman Hoot (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our August meeting. We still need a few volunteers for a few vacant spots (including September!) on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: My bees were doing great then I discovered a whole bunch of dead ones on the ground in front of my hive. When I checked inside I found only a few bees left. What has happened?

An A: Sometimes we find dead bees outside the hive as evidence of a robbing episode, victims of a battle over stores of honey. Most often this occurs when there is little forage available and the robbed out comb is obvious. It doesn't sound like your situation fits this description, leaving us with two possibilities: disease or pesticide poisoning. Sick honey bees usually leave the hive and fly off to die so as not to attract predators to the colony. Workers remove any bees that die inside the hive and try to carry them away. It appears that your dead bees were insecticide victims.

Honey bees are very susceptible to all broad spectrum insecticides. Crop protection chemicals are necessary for modern agriculture to feed the world's population. The good news (despite what you read and hear) is that pesticides in use today are far less dangerous to people and the environment. Many of them are narrowly targeted to a specific family of pests. Nonetheless, non-target species like honey bees can be pesticide victims when broad spectrum products are used by the farmer, homeowner or government agency. In addition, bee-

keepers use miticides inside the hive to "*kill a bug* (a Varroa mite) *on a bug* (a honey bee)".

Hardly a day goes by that we don't read or hear of a coming honey bee apocalypse. Like most things, truth lies between the poles, but the loudest noise seems to be coming from those dedicated to banning neonicotinoid pesticides ("neonics"). It is a fact that these products are the safest alternative for vertebrate species (like me and you). Neonics are broad spectrum insecticides and honey bees can be victims, but "scientific studies" tend to cite honey bee poisoning at concentrations far beyond any real use in the field or some obscure chronic low level effects. Crop protection is necessary for farming to be a viable business and outlawing modern products often means going back to older pesticides that are far more damaging to humans and our environment. Proper and appropriate use of crop protection chemicals protects our environment and keeps us all fed.

There is quite a variety of pesticides in the home improvement stores. Many of the labels clearly state their honey bee toxicity. Unfortunately, those products that aren't harmful to bees don't carry that notification on the label. This is especially meaningful when dealing with caterpillars. While many products are labeled for caterpillars, there are several choices that do not kill bees. Read the label and encourage your neighbors to read them too.

In the summer months, mosquito control efforts can be damaging to our hives. Some homeowners install permanent misting systems to spray for mosquitos without understanding the effect on honey bees and other desirable insects. Pesticide mist during foraging hours is fatal to honey bees.

Mosquitoes are much more than just a nuisance. They transmit diseases like West Nile Virus and encephalitis, even malaria and Dengue fever. West Nile infects humans, but it also kills songbirds. The heart worms that can kill a family pet are transmitted by mosquitoes.

It is important that the beekeeper considers potential pesticide losses when picking a beeyard location. Avoid proximity to row crop agriculture and roadside mosquito sprays. Contemplate prevailing winds that can carry a killing mist to your hives. Make your beeyard location known to pesticide applicators. Contact neighbors and remind them of your bees and their susceptibility to insecticides.

Treasurer's Report

Our July, 2014 balance was \$3,567.55. Since that time we spent \$155.00 to restock supplies of cups, plates, napkins, etc. We collected \$15 in dues (3 new members at \$5.00 each) and received donations that totalled \$60.00. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,487.55 consisting of \$25 in cash (to make change) and \$3,457.55 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

July Meeting Notes

We had 47 members and guests sign the roster for our July meeting. It is important that you sign the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

This was the first meeting for Travis Feiner, Michael Franks, Jennifer Anderson, Suzanne Jackson and Janey Gosda. Michael, Suzanne and Janey already have bees, but the consensus was that “there is only so much you can learn off the internet”. Welcome. It was also welcome back to B. Bohus who is back from a trip to Hungary.

Ray Smaistrila brought in his solar wax melter for “show and tell”. We learned that beeswax melts at around 147° F and volatilizes completely from a small puddle near the wick when a beeswax candle is burned. That is quite different from paraffin wax which starts melting at about 100° F and drips down the side of a birthday candle.

Ray bought his solar melter for about \$100 from Brushy Mountain Bee Farm (the other bee supply houses carry them too). It is essentially a cypress box with a window in the top. Inside there is a tray that collects the molten wax so that it drains into a metal pan. The window is made of insulated greenhouse material that allows the sun’s radiation inside where it traps the heat to melt the wax. When placed in full sun on a hot day, the melter can reach 200° F in an hour or two. That is too hot and results in darkened wax as volatile components are lost. It is best to limit the temperature in the solar wax melter to 150° F to 170° F. Ray positions his melter so that it gets less than an hour of full sun before it is overtaken by shade to finish melting.

Beeswax cappings cleaned up by the bees is ready for the melter. Ray rolls them into a softball-sized wad and wraps it in a couple of lay-

ers of cheesecloth. The melted wax leaves debris and dead bees behind in the cheese cloth. (The used cheesecloth makes a good fireplace or barbecue starter.)

Ray usually puts about 1/2” of water in the wax collection pan. The molten wax floats on the water and heavier material (like any honey that remains on the cappings) sinks down into the water. The bottom of the wax cake usually has a coating of junk that sank in the wax, but floated on the water. He just whittles it off with a butcher knife.

Next, Jeff McMullan demonstrated how the club’s frame assembly gear is used. The club owns the equipment and it is available for members to use.

The setup includes a “Workmate” folding bench to work on. There is a jig to put together frames, five at a time. Working on the folding bench, the frame end bars go in the jig first and glue is applied. Then you set the bottom bars in place and nail them down (a pneumatic brad nailer and 1 1/4” 18 ga. brads make this job easy). Next you flip the jig over and glue and nail the top bar into place. Top quality water-cleanup wood glue is recommended so a rag in a bucket of water helps keep the mess under control. It is helpful to use a plastic sign as a work surface so that glue drips are easy to clean up. When all five frames are assembled, you pull the wooden holders out of the jig and remove the frames. Always give them a quick check and square up any that are crooked before letting the glue set. If you use plastic foundation, the frames are now ready to go.

If you are using wired wax foundation, the next step is to install the frame cross wires. Set up the wiring spool and the form board in the Workmate and prepare the frames with brads in the end bars to tie off the wire. Leave the brad head up about 1/8” to wrap the wire ends around. Drive the brads down after the wire is tightly in place. If you

cut the wire with diagonal cutters, be sure to tap the brad one more time with your hammer to embed the needle-sharp end of the wire. A good trick is to wiggle the wire back and forth until it breaks.

Next you set the wax foundation in the frame and hold it in place with the wedge top you removed from the top bar. Secure the wedge with four or five 5/8” brads (the brad nailer is great help here). Now lay the frame down in the form board and use the spur embedder to embed the cross wire into the wax foundation. You should only load as much foundation as you need since it is fragile and prone to damage. Another option is to store the super of frames with moth crystals.

Door prize winners in July included Dave Grimme (Matagorda honey donated by Sean White), Boyd Dawson (Pinot Noir wine made by Bob Hentschel), Marie Robertson (fresh tomatoes grown by Nancy Hentschel), Nancy Hentschel (grapefruit seedling grown by Stephanie Kinghorn), Elaine Jameson (queen cage donated by Daryl Scott), Daryl Scott (bird feeder donated by Bill and Elaine Jameson), Stephanie Kinghorn (candle made by Ray Smaistrila), Doug Rowell and Norman Harris (rain gauges donated by Albert Smaistrila), Eileen Lopez (hive beetle trap donated by Daryl Scott), Mike Jurek (egg plant) and Greg Pendley (figs) from Sharon Moore’s garden.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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1402 Band Road, Suite 100
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Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



September, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, September 9. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Cynda deBons for volunteering to bring "something sweet" for our September meeting. No one volunteered for a salty treat in September; in fact, no one has volunteered at all for our October and November meetings. The volunteer signup sheet will be on our registration table.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's **Q** (from one of our members) and an **A**:

Q: I have two hives. I hope to expand by two next year but I had a slow start. One of my queens was not successful so I had to supplement brood to keep population up until I received a new queen. All is doing well now and they are finished one deep and 1/4 through the next one (lots of wildflowers are blooming now). They look healthy but I have not done any detailed tests looking for mites at this point. What type of inspection should I do to determine if there are enough mites to require treatment? Do you do the sugar shake test, another method, or do you try to look at your bees closely?

An A: You are a great example of why new beekeepers are advised to start with two hives. You were able to discern that one of your colonies was having problems and then give them brood to boost their numbers. If you had only one hive, you may not have even realized what was happening before the colony failed. Having detected the problem, brood from your second strong hive was able to help the weak colony along until your new queen arrived. Well done!

Now, to your **Q**. No one can logically disagree with the concept of integrated pest management (IPM): *Using the least toxic means to control an identified pest that is causing or likely to cause signifi-*

cant damage.

Your question goes to the heart of beekeeping IPM: how do you determine if varroa infestation is *causing or likely to cause significant damage*? I treatment is needed, there will be more decisions to be made; a whole new topic for discussion. For anyone with lots of hives, IPM is just a dream when dealing with varroa. They must treat every hive the same way since it is not practical to inspect and prescribe treatment for individual boxes of bees. But losses due to varroa can be intolerably significant. Unfortunately, the result is bees that are dependent on pesticides for their survival, a very difficult cycle to break.

It is safe to say that most hobby beekeepers prefer not to use pesticides inside their hives, i.e. "least toxic" is doing little or nothing to deal with varroa mites. A common outcome of this approach is the beekeeper that cites small hive beetles or wax worms as the cause of a lost hive. The fact is that every hive is under beetle and wax moth pressure. The bees in strong healthy hives are able to cope with these pests; a hive weakened by varroa is unable to defend itself. Waxworms and beetle larvae don't kill hives: think of them as delivering the coup de grâce (a French phrase meaning "blow of mercy" to end the suffering).

Doing nothing about varroa mites is not a good plan. The "least toxic" way to deal with varroa is to main-

tain strong healthy colonies that are genetically predisposed to coping with the mites. "Russian bees" were developed by the USDA since they came from an area of east Asia where varroa is native. On their own, "Russians" had 150+ years to develop a survival strategy to deal with the pest: varroa susceptible colonies long ago reached a Darwinian dead end.

The USDA also developed mite resistant bees selected from colonies in the U. S. The program got started by selecting bees with low mite numbers that seemed to be "varroa mite resistant", first referred to as VMR bees. It was soon learned that they somehow limited mite reproduction, so they became known as SMR bees (suppressed mite reproduction). Later they were referred to as having "varroa sensitive hygieness" (VSH bees). Varroa reproduce on honey bee larvae and it was learned that these bees could detect infected larvae and "hygienically" remove it from the hive. In fact, these bees aggressively manage all types of brood disease. Most importantly, this trait is inheritable and has actually been identified in the honey bee genome.

Feral colonies of bees also carry mite resistant traits since only "survivors" are still around. These bees have long adapted to our climate, forage, pests and disease and have survived the arrival of varroa mites as well. That is the good news. Unfortunately in Texas sometimes these survivors are mean as s**t.

August Meeting Notes

We had 57 members and guests sign the roster at our August meeting. A rough head count came up with about that same number (a good thing). It is important that you sign the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

We welcome new member Tom Williams from Katy and welcome back renewing members Paul Hund and Bill Skidmore. These additions to our roster bring our membership to an even 100 beekeepers (or wanna be beekeepers). This milestone for our growing roster is indicative of the growing interest in honey bees and beekeeping.

Jack Richardson gave a short presentation on producing comb honey. He brought along samples of his one pound squares as well as cut comb honey. Beekeeping supply houses sell supplies to produce and package solid blocks of capped honey comb. Another option is to cut sections of honey comb and bottle it with extracted honey. For cut comb honey you use a regular frame with special very thin wax foundation. Jack reports that he got back in to producing comb honey because of customer requests.

At previous meetings we had several requests for a presentation on medical bee venom therapy (apitherapy). Long time member Gene deBons got Brandy Rader at the Extension office to help him track down an old video that the club bought in 1999. The VHS tape is titled "The Bee Lady of Waldorf". Finding the tape turned out to be the easy part; finding a working VHS player and projector was more of a challenge. Gene and County Agent Boone Holladay got it all together for our August Program.

The program was a documentary of the work of Pat Wagner of Waldorf, Maryland. Wagner was diagnosed

with multiple sclerosis in 1980. MS is a disease of the nervous system of unknown cause. Electrical signals in the nerves are disrupted and result in a wide array of symptoms. Wagner had managed to cope with the disease for many years, but in 1990 her health took a downward turn. Wagner was unable to see, hear or walk and her doctor said he couldn't help her. When she learned of bee venom therapy used for autoimmune diseases in the 1930's, Wagner decided that she had to give it a try. Her condition as she narrates her story is remarkable.

Medical science has been unable to confirm the benefits of apitherapy for MS, in large part because of the nature of the disease. Patients often go from severe symptoms to nearly complete remission and back again. Private large scale studies have not been undertaken because the treatment is available at essentially no cost. Smaller studies have been inconclusive at best.

Sharon Moore couldn't resist telling all about her great new roller uncapper that she ordered from Brushy Mountain. It is a quality tool that is something like a paint roller with pins on a drum. The pins perforate the wax caps when you roll it across a frame of honey. You can use it like a cappings scratcher behind an uncapping knife or use it by itself when you have only a few frames to extract.

Rosie McCusker is selling her honey on Saturday mornings at the Fulshear Farmer's Market. The market wants local producers and Rosie could use some help. Contact her or Tom to coordinate the effort. Sales have been brisk and it offers a great opportunity for those with only a few hives to move a lot of product in a short period of time to finance their next Dadant order. The market is on FM 1093 at Bois d'Arc Lane in Fulshear.

Door prize winners in August included Mike Matejek and guest L. D. Lewis who took home shallow supers donated by Bob and Nancy Hentschel (they are standardizing

on mediums). John and daughter Sarah McConnon each took home a papaya seedling grown by Roy Nash. Jaqueline King won an orchid tree seedling (and a page describing this fascinating plant) donated by Preston Pitts. Jack Richardson won a Bee Cool wrap donated by Sharon Moore and Gerard Howard won a rain gauge donated by Elaine Jameson. Someone left a nice livestock show rod on the head table so we gave it away too (Paul Hund was the winner).

Treasurer's Report

Our August, 2014 treasury balance was \$3,487.55. Since that time we collected \$15 in dues (3 new members at \$5.00 each), received a donation of \$100.00 and collected \$60.00 for the use of the club's extractor. We spent \$27.30 on spare batteries for our cordless microphone. The resulting balance is \$3,630.25: \$45 in cash and \$3,590.25 in our checking account.

Order's In

We had 10 takers for another order of honey containers from Sailor Plastics. A single order shipped to one address results in significant savings in shipping costs. The order that we placed in June saved our members more than \$1,000! Another order has been placed and we expect delivery soon.

**TEXAS A&M
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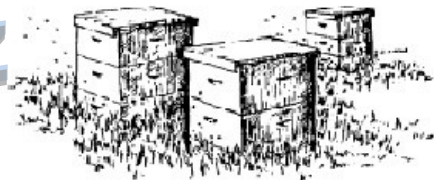
Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent- Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
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Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



October, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, October 14. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members usually volunteer to bring snacks. No one volunteered for our October and November meetings. The volunteer signup sheet will be on our registration table if you can bring snacks in November.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's **Q** (from one of our members) and an **A**:

Q: I bought a five frame nuc (nucleus hive) this summer. They don't seem to be doing well at all. They seem to be healthy, but they are still on the five original frames and have done little to build any additional comb. What should I do?

An A: Bees sometimes do funny things. It is not uncommon for this to happen when the nuc was on milled wax foundation and the added frames for the move into a ten frame box had plastic foundation. It seems that the bees don't recognize the plastic foundation that we provide as a place to build comb. They may build small burr comb curtains between frames but refuse to draw comb as we intended. In fact, they may even swarm or abscond because of the perceived lack of space. As you have learned, mixing plastic and wax foundation is usually not a good idea. The bees have a strong preference for beeswax foundation and providing it quickly solved this problem for you.

The various types of plastic foundation afford many benefits to the beekeeper. It is easily installed or replaced in wooden frames and can even be quickly scraped clean with a hive tool to remove wax worm damage. Frames and foundation made completely of plastic are quick and easy for the beekeeper to

use. A heavy coating of beeswax on the plastic may be all that is necessary to fool the bees into cooperating with our plan, but sometimes the bees just remove the wax and use it to build burr comb. If you have many hives, the ease of use for plastic foundation far outweighs the bees natural reluctance to use it. With no other choice, bees will draw comb on plastic foundation. Packaged bees are successfully installed on plastic foundation all the time.

Wax foundation is fragile and, unless comb honey is the goal, it is usually reinforced with wire. When installed in the frame, a "hook" in the reinforcing wire at the top is secured behind a "wedge" or strip of wood. The sheet of wax should be cross-wired as well, especially if the frame will ever go in an extractor. Cross wiring for brood frames is a good idea too in our area where the comb can get soft with the heat and fall apart with a heavy store of honey. All this work makes many opt for plastic foundation despite the shortcomings. The important thing to remember is that it should be all or nothing with plastic foundation.

If you are building new frames for wax foundation, you need "wedge top grooved bottom" frames and foundation with the wire hook. Plastic foundation goes in "grooved top and bottom" frames. If you want to convert from plastic foundation, you can buy wax foundation without the hook that can be in-

stalled in the "grooved top and bottom frames". Or you can just cut off the hooks with heavy scissors so it will fit in the frame. In either case, cross-wiring is necessary.

As you've learned, bees have a strong preference for wax foundation. An extra heavy coating of beeswax helps fool them into drawing out the plastic and it has many advantages (for the beekeeper).

TBA Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Texas Beekeepers Association will be held November 6-9 in Houston. The meeting itself includes exhibits, presentations and breakout sessions for beekeepers at any experience level. In addition, two events will run in conjunction with the meeting. On Thursday, Nov. 5, Dr. Larry Connor will present an all day "Practical Back-Yard Beekeeping" class. On Friday, Nov. 6 from 10:00 until 2:00 pm there will be a free "Kids Learning About Bees" event for school children accompanied by an adult.

Registration by November 1 is \$85.00 for TBA members and \$110.00 for nonmembers. For registration information and details, including the honey and photography contests, go to:

<http://texasbeekeepers.org/>.

For new beekeepers that have joined our association in 2014, TBA has offered a free one-year membership (see Jeff McMullan for details).

Help with Projects!

The Association has two projects underway that can use some help. See Jeff McMullan if you are willing. The first is for the TBA annual meeting in November. We took the lead with four other beekeeping clubs to each buy four smokers for banquet table decorations and auction items. We need four members attending the TBA meeting to use the smoker in preparing an appropriate table decoration for the banquet on Saturday. All 21 smokers will become useful keepsakes since Jeff McMullan enlisted the help of Michael Kelling of the Central Texas Beekeepers Association to brand each of them with **TBA 2014**.

Our second project is a little longer term. In late winter we plan to issue a "swarm press relief" to inform our community about honey bees looking for a new home. For areas with consistent bee problems, we will work with AgriLife Extension to provide traps to capture wayward swarms before they move into someone's house. We have 18 16" square plywood panels ready to go and a gallon of paint. The trap backs and paint are in the bed of Jeff McMullan's pickup. Can you guess what is needed?

September Meeting Notes

We had 43 members and guests sign the roster at our August meeting. A rough head count came up with 47 so it seems a few failed to sign the roster. Please make a point of signing the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

We offer an especially warm welcome to new area residents Emael Jabber (from Baghdad, Iraq) and Sam Nahar (from Jerusalem, Israel). They are being assisted in resettlement by Yani Rose Keo and the Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, a Houston area United

Way agency that helps refugees get settled and become part of our community. The organization has been keeping bees near Guy and is working on getting a new beeyard set up in Fulshear. Members that could assist in this effort are welcome (contact Jeff McMullan for details).

County Extension Agent Boone Holladay apologized for the late mailing of our September newsletter. If it had not arrived yet, it should be in the mail box shortly. Cameron Crane of the Liberty County Beekeepers reminded everyone about the upcoming Texas Beekeepers Association meeting (details are elsewhere in this newsletter). Nancy Hentschel showed up with a huge stack of plastic campaign signs for all to share (she has more in her garage).

Gene deBons reviewed The Honey Trail - In Pursuit of Liquid Gold and Vanishing Bees, a 2008 book by Grace Pundyk. He scored a pretty good read on the used book sale at the San Antonio library. It is the story of a fascinating adventure across Yemeni deserts and Borneo jungles, through the Mississippi Delta and Tasmania's rainforests, over frozen Siberian snowscapes and ancient Turkish villages all in search of honey.

Gene also clarified the meaning of ultrafiltration of honey. Most understood that it is a process that removes all traces of pollen and the ability to determine the floral source of honey. The process involves diluting 3:1 honey with water, filtering out all solids from the resulting fluid, then evaporating the water to return to "a sweetener derived from honey".

Jeff McMullan gave a short presentation on the life cycle of the varroa mite. The life cycle of this pest holds a key to its adaptive resistance to pesticides. Jeff commented on the futility of pesticide use to control varroa since the pest is such a fast moving target. Mating in varroa mites is between siblings so there is a pretty quick response to pesticide toxicity, espe-

cially suboptimal use. Surviving mites quickly create adapted offspring and pesticides become ineffective. Beekeeping practices and selection of honey bee stock are critical to dealing with varroa.

Albert Smaistrila reminded everyone that the goldenrod and ragweed bloom is almost here. Goldenrod honey tastes fine but smells awful while it is being made in the hive. It is obvious when the girls start bringing in goldenrod nectar!

We had our usual potpourri of door prizes in September but we ran out of space to thank the donors and acknowledge the winners individually.

Treasurer's Report

Our September, 2014 treasury balance was \$3,630.25. Since that time we collected \$40.00 in dues (8 new members at \$5.00 each) and received donations totaling \$86.27. We bought four smokers for \$186.60 from Dadant for use as table decorations and auction items for the upcoming Texas Beekeepers Association annual meeting in Houston. We also collected and subsequently spent \$2,156.70 for member honey container orders from Sailor Plastics. The resulting balance is \$3,569.92: \$40 in cash and \$3,529.92 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

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Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent— Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
281 342-3034 ext. 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
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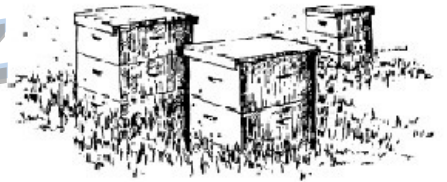
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Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



November, 2014

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our last meeting for 2014 will be Tuesday, November 11. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members usually volunteer to bring snacks. No one volunteered snacks for our November meeting.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's **Q** (from one of our members) and an **A**:

Q: I get lots of advice about making sure that I leave enough honey for my hives to make it through the winter and get a good start in the spring. Obviously, more is better, but how much is enough?

An A: An oilfield rule goes something like this: *If some is good, more is better.* Often that is not very good guidance (even in the oilfield). With honey stores for overwintering bee hives, it applies well. *More* is obviously better, but how much is enough?

We are fortunate that our winters are usually mild and a nectar source may be available almost year around, especially for backyard bees scouting landscape plantings. We've all seen that beautiful mid-winter day with clear skies, temperature in the 60's and feverish activity at the hive's entrance. We know that spring is still far off, but our bees are able to replenish some of their honey supply while those in more northern areas may remain confined inside the hive for many more weeks.

In our area, 25 or 30 pounds of honey stores is usually ample to survive the winter and later nourish new brood ahead of the spring nectar flow. A hive's ability to have a full force of foragers all ready to go when the wildflowers bloom is one of the honey bee's most fascinating traits. The timing is critical: too

early and there will be too many mouths to feed, too late and a significant portion of the nectar flow will be missed.

Here are some numbers you can use to help with your decision making:

each full shallow frame holds about 2.4 lb. of honey

each full medium frame holds about 3.0 lb. of honey

each full deep frame holds about 4.5 lb. of honey

So, for example, a full 10 frame medium holds 30 pounds of honey which should be more than adequate for our typical winter. A full shallow may prove inadequate, but usually there are a couple of deep frames of honey in the brood box giving a total store of about 33 lb.

These are simply rules of thumb since there are many variables that impact the colony's need for food. Is the winter cluster the size of a grapefruit or does it nearly fill a deep brood chamber with many more mouths to feed? Is the winter abnormally harsh or mild? Are there long stretches of rainy, wet cold weather that shut down supplemental winter foraging? It is a good idea to lift the back of your hives every week or so to confirm a heavy supply of honey to make it through the remaining winter. The beekeeper needs to be observant and prepared to feed the colony if winter stores run short.

The small hive beetle adds another dimension to this question. *More is*

better may not be such a good idea after all. A colony "boiling over with bees" will harass these pests and prevent the female beetles from laying eggs. Too many frames of honey may leave some of it unguarded and subject to being "slimed" by small hive beetle larvae. Some beekeepers opt for minimum honey stores and lots of bees in the overwintering colony.

A limited honey supply means that winter feeding is necessary. Checking a division board feeder requires opening the hive and allowing heat to escape. The added space for baggies or bucket feeders in an empty super make it more difficult for the bees to stay warm. A conventional inner cover with the feeder over the oblong hole helps with this problem, but you still need to look inside to see if a refill is in order. An entrance feeder doesn't require opening the hive and you may even be able to check it by just looking out the kitchen window. Most entrance feeders use a quart or even smaller pint jar so frequent refills may be necessary. Check out the 5 lb. glass honey jar at dadant.com (and other sites). It has a standard mason jar lid that is compatible with your entrance feeder lid and holds almost a half gallon of syrup. A 3" diameter hole in the top of a migratory cover will accept the feeder jar's perforated mason jar lid. With these feeders you can easily see how the feeding is going and compare hives. If one is consuming much less than another, you should investigate the situation and understand the cause.

October Meeting Notes

We had 43 members and guests sign the roster at our October meeting. SUCCESS: a head count came up with the same number! Thanks for signing in on our attendance list.

After 30 minutes of social time and our customary opening, President Albert Smaistrle had a few announcements. He reminded everyone about the Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Meeting to be held November 7 - 9 at the Crowne Plaza Reliant Hotel in Houston. He also noted that the goldenrod and ragweed nectar flow will end soon and that empty supers shouldn't be left on our hives. The bees won't be needing room for more honey and a compact hive stack makes it easier for the bees to stay warm over winter. With our mild weather, most beekeepers leave their screened bottom boards in place while restricting top ventilation a bit to help preserve heat. It is also a good idea to combine weak hives to help them make it through the winter (they can be split back in early spring). Be sure to locate and remove the queen from the weaker hive before the combine. Albert also announced a program committee consisting of Gene deBons, Jack Richardson and Jeff McMullan to look into improving our meeting programs to better meet our members' needs. Kelly Morris noted that the open questions, answers and comments were an important part of our meetings that we don't want to overlook.

Jeff McMullan reported that he was working with the Texas Beekeepers Association and the Texas Apiary Inspection Service to review and update Texas beekeeping law. New Chief Apiary Inspector Mark Dykes put this project at the top of his TO DO list since accepting this job a few months back. Jeff also asked for a volunteer to paint backs for our swarm traps. Daryl Scott quickly accepted and headed home after the meeting with panels and a gallon of paint. Thanks Daryl.

Jack Richardson reviewed our Super Decorating Contest held last year and asked if there was interest in doing it again. "Absolutely!" was the unanimous response; it will be held at our March meeting. Jack also brought in a bunch of rain tree seedlings for those that wanted one or two (he has plenty more).

Rosie McCusker has been selling honey at the Saturday morning farmer's market in Fulshear. If anyone else wants to participate contact Rosie.

George Rodriguez announced major changes in the honey bee exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. All of the old exhibit has been given away and a first-class replacement is in the works. The plan will be for each area beekeeping group to be assigned a week of the rodeo and be responsible for staffing the exhibit.

Door prize winners in October were :

Alan L'Roy (cut comb honey donated by Kelly Morris), Bill Windrow and Sharon Moore (Fort Bend Beekeepers ball caps donated by Bill Busch), Vina Burns (mayhaw jelly donated by Jerry and Dona Tomplait), Katy Garcia (a Mann Lake carry bag and a rain gauge donated by Albert Smaistrle), Joey Tuttle and Paul Kinghorn (rain gauges donated by Albert Smaistrle), and Greg Pendley (Larry Connor's book "Swarm Essentials" donated by Albert Smaistrle).

Treasurer's Report

Our October, 2014 treasury balance was \$3,569.62. Since that time we collected \$5.00 in dues (one new member) and received a donation of \$5.00. We bought materials for 18 swarm traps for a total of \$140.46 that we will make available to the public through the Fort Bend County AgriLife Extension office in the spring. The resulting balance is \$3,439.46: \$50 in cash for change and \$3,389.86 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

2015 Swarm Season Project

Our 2015 swarm season project is moving forward. Nancy Hentschel reluctantly parted with 18 pulp pots for \$3 each (less than she paid for them after claiming that Bob was the one responsible for buying way too many of them last spring). The lumber guy at Home Depot cut up a sheet of plywood into 16" x 16" squares for us and Daryl Scott volunteered to paint them with some miscolored paint from Lowe's. (Jeff McMullan was able to talk the guy in the paint department to adding more tint to bring the color from "raspberry sherbet" to kinda "pulp pot brown".)

The plan is for County Extension Agent Boone Holladay to issue a press release in February to alert the public about honey bee swarms. The Extension office will offer the use of these traps to folks that have had consistent bee problems every spring. When bees move into the trap, the homeowner will notify the Extension Office and we'll find a member to pick up the trap and give the bees inside a suitable home.

We're expecting something of a WIN-WIN-WIN. The bees aren't poisoned, the Association avoids a frantic call about bees in the wall and a member gets bees for the hive that didn't make it through the winter.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay
County Extension Agent- Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
281 342-3034 ext. 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.