

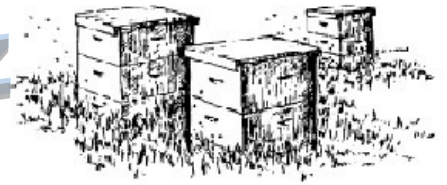


# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

**Fort Bend Beekeepers Association**

*promoting safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



**January, 2019**

The January 8, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held 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, so don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Members are welcome to bring sweet or salty snacks to enjoy. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** There seems to be more hive design choices than I expected. Help!

**An A:** All of the "choices" are probably because of all of the glowing recommendations you can read on the internet. If you are just beginning as a beekeeper, most of the hive designs will demand beekeeping skills that you will need to learn first.

The basic decision is whether to keep bees in Langstroth hives or to start out with another less common hive design. First, state laws requires that bees be housed in removable frame hives. Removable frames allow careful inspection of the comb for signs of pests or disease. Winnie the Pooh's straw skeps are not legal for keeping bees. Nor are hollow logs.

Successful removable frame hives are credited to Rev. Lorenzo L. Langstroth (1810 - 1895). He is considered the father of modern beekeeping and his hive design still carries his name. Langstroth's success is attributable to his discovery and implementation of "bee space", (1/4" to 3/8" or the approximate size of worker bees) into the hive design. He observed that spaces smaller than 1/4" were filled with propolis and openings larger than 3/8" were filled with comb. By maintaining "bee space" between

the combs and frames, they could be removed for inspection or honey harvest without angering the bees.

Keeping bees was revolutionized by Langstroth's hive design, patented in 1852, and management practices he developed. His book, originally published in 1878 as "A practical treatise on the hive and the honey-bee" is still in print as "The Hive and the Honey Bee", updated many times, most recently in 2015. His original work is also available in print as well as in digital form. It makes fascinating reading with its inimitable 19th century style and incredibly logical insights!

Langstroth hives are by far the most common hive design and are the best way to get started. The basis is the frame design itself and its respect for "bee space". The frames can be used with or without comb foundation. Foundation can be made of plastic with or without beeswax coating. Some present the bees with fully constructed cells. The well publicized "Flow Hive" uses fully constructed comb made of plastic. A new beekeeper is most likely to succeed when using foundation constructed of 100% beeswax. Foundation isn't necessary though since the bees can construct comb without our help. A "starter strip" of foundation or a strip of wood is needed if your Langstroth frame will be foundationless.

There are several hive designs that were developed as "improvements" to the Langstroth hive and look

very similar. The "WBC Hive" is named for its British inventor William Broughton Carr (1837 - 1909). It is uncommonly used today but was the first to use what became the British Standard Brood Frame, a frame somewhat larger than Langstroth's design. The "British National Hive" uses a smaller frame and square footprint. It is the most widely used hive design in the UK. The Warré hive was developed in France to cope with condensation inside overwintering hives in extremely cold weather (hardly a problem in southeast Texas).

The top bar hive design originated as the "Kenyan Top Bar Hive", developed for subsistence farmers in Africa to improve crop pollination and supplement farming income. It can be constructed at very low cost using almost any materials and has no standard dimensions. The bees build natural comb (no foundation) suspended from top bars, so the comb must be destroyed to harvest the honey. Small hive beetles present a huge problem in top bar hives in our area since they can find refuge between the top bars and below the hive cover. The large hive volume is difficult for the bees to defend from beetles or invading robber bees. A "follower board" is intended to help, but beetles may easily move past it. Always remember that the top bar comb must be handled very carefully, especially when filled with honey. In hot weather, it is prone to just fall apart since the wax is softened by the heat.

## November Meeting Notes

We had 34 members and guests sign in at our November meeting. Please be sure to sign in since these sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

# COPIOUS

939 3rd Street  
Rosenberg, Texas 77471

## 832-847-4808

Sandwiches – Salads – Smoothies

For our last meeting of 2018, the club provided deli food trays from Copius Deli in Rosenberg. We enjoyed an hour of generous, delicious food and fellowship from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. If you are in the Rosenberg area, you should stop by and support this small business.

For show & tell, Ian Kjos demonstrated his robbing screens. Contact him if you would like to purchase any.

Dan Jones announced that he plans to offer woodenware assembly and wax dipping services. Let him know if you'd like him to contact you when he's ready to take orders.

For our program, Gene deBons spoke of Sue Hubbell, a renowned nature writer and memoirist, who passed away October 13 at the age of 83. Hubbell authored eight books, two of which, A Country Year and A Book of Bees that were selected by The New York Times as Notable Books of the Year. She also wrote many freelance articles for several newspaper and magazines. Gene read several passages from A Book of Bees, commenting that he always finds at least a few new bits of knowledge from every bee book he reads.

Jack Richardson suggested every beekeeper have a beekeeping library, because every book has something to teach you. He also recommended subscribing to beekeeping magazines such as The American Bee Journal or Bee Culture. After a brief recap of our club's activities in 2018, he encouraged even more member involvement. With that, Jack opened the floor for officer nominations for 2019 (see the details below).

We closed with our customary door prize drawing for donated items including one of Ian's robbing screens.

## Election of Officers

Officers for 2019 were elected at our November meeting. Gene deBons announced our declared candidates: Jack Richardson for President, Danessa Yaschuk for Vice President and Lynne Jones for Secretary-Treasurer. There were no other nominations. These candidates were seconded and all three were elected by unanimous vote. Jeff McMullan consented to continue as our newsletter editor and was also confirmed by acclamation. Jack thanked outgoing Vice President Chelsea Murray for her work in 2018 and congratulated our 2019 leadership team.

## Treasurer's Report

Our October treasury balance was \$3,657.35. We've since collected \$5.00 in dues while expenses for the November buffet were \$234.43. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,427.92, consisting of \$3,377.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change. A financial summary and year-end property inventory for 2018 is presented below.

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2018 Financial Summary	
<b>Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2018)</b>	<b>\$3,197.99</b>
<b>Income</b>	
member dues paid (156 at \$5.00)	\$780.00
donations	\$315.00
extractor use income	\$120.00
mentee fees	\$480.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,695.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Reynolds flowers	(\$149.33)
The Beekeeper Handbook, qty 27	(\$578.47)
meeting expenses	(\$89.11)
November buffet	(\$234.43)
Texas Beekeepers Association dues	(\$50.00)
Photo/Hive Painting award ribbons	(\$65.35)
website expenses	(\$298.38)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(\$1,465.07)</b>
<b>Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2018)</b>	<b>\$3,427.92</b>

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2018 Property Inventory			
Description	Date Acquired	Initial Cost	Member Contact
three framed beekeeping posters	various	unknown	Boone Holladay
Learning Hive	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
additional frame photos	2/25/2016	\$98.37	Jeff McMullan
additional hive body/btm bd	11/20/2016	\$70.95	Jeff McMullan
		\$313.81	
red wagon	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
extracting equipment			Jim Lynch
extractor, stand, etc.	8/19/2011	\$583.33	
pin uncapper	11/8/2014	\$15.15	
honey refractometer	11/30/2016	\$71.64	
		\$654.97	
solar wax melter	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
frame assembly gear	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
outreach exhibits			
banners	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan
posters and easels	2/8/2016	\$193.30	Jeff McMullan
		\$274.26	
public address system	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Lynne Jones
8/18 remaining swarm traps	11/3/2014	\$62.43	Boone Holladay
Mentoring Program supplies:			Lynne Jones
7 Beekeeper's Journals		\$50.47	
2 extra Journal fillers		\$2.18	
7 "The Beekeepers Handbook"		\$150.01	
		\$202.66	
gray cart for meetings	7/7/2016	\$121.25	Boone Holladay

**TEXAS A&M**  
**AGRI LIFE**  
**EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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# Fort Bend Buzz

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February, 2019

The February 12, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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 (dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year). Stash a five dollar bill in your pocket and get your dues paid early to stay on our newsletter distribution list!

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I heard that the club has swarm traps for us to use. How do I get one?

**An A:** That isn't exactly the "system" that we have set up. Several years ago we noticed that some neighborhoods had real problems with swarms, many of them infesting people's homes. At that point, removal is no longer a beekeeping issue: it is a pest control problem. And when people ignore the problem, it snowballs into more swarms and more homes with bee problems.

In our area we sometimes see really really mean bees, and most beekeepers are ill equipped to remove bees that are aggressively intent on defending their home. You really can't appreciate it until you run into one of these "Africanized" colonies. If members elect to do removals, it is not with the sanction of our club since it is easy to get in over your head. At that point we get really really angry calls!!

It is not good for honey bees to become pests! After much discussion, it was decided that our role as beekeepers was to prevent such problems, to focus on swarm management and to quickly respond to swarms. A critical part of responsible beekeeping is to manage swarms, especially in neighbor-

hoods. Our members are strongly encouraged to read up and diligently manage swarming as well as to provide homes for any swarms that come around (not necessarily from our managed hives).

We focused our web site on getting honey bee help for our community, but a key change was for our Association to provide homeowners with traps to keep bees from moving in somewhere if no one was around to spot the swarms (members can easily leave a nuc box or hive out with old drawn comb that is almost irresistible to swarms).

Here is how the swarm trap program works: Brandy Rader at the Fort Bend County AgriLife Extension office issues our traps to homeowners with bee problem history. Her phone number is 281 633-7029 during business hours. Brandy's phone number is on the traps and when it is occupied by bees the homeowner calls her to arrange pickup by one of our members.

If you are interested in retrieving traps (or catching swarms), let Gene deBons know at [help@FortBendBeekeepers.org](mailto:help@FortBendBeekeepers.org). He'll put you on the "bees in a trap" distribution list. You'll also need to get yourself ready. The traps are actually pulp flower pots attached to a 16" square of plywood with a wire to hang them from. Despite careful instructions from Brandy, there is no telling where these may

be hung. When you contact the homeowner, you will need those details. It is best to remove the trap when all the bees are inside after dark. If they aren't all inside, your smoker can quickly chase them in. The drain holes in the pot are our intended entrances, but be very mindful that there will likely be "leaks" between the pot and the plywood. They can be easily sealed with a roll of steel wool poked into the crack with your hive tool. You can use steel wool to close the drain holes too, but a better method is to use a square plastic pail like they sell chain out of at Home Depot or Lowe's (free for the asking). Some of them are red, but the black ones are better because it keeps the entrances in the dark with all the bees inside.



It is best to hive the trapped bees right away. You remove a few screws to separate the pot from the plywood and dump the bees into a hive. Drawn comb, or better yet brood (no bees) is great.



## January Meeting Notes

We had 54 members and guests sign in at our January meeting. Always sign in at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Club President, Jack Richardson opened with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed all present and asked three first time visitors to introduce themselves. Jack gave a brief description of the club and shared his story of becoming a beekeeper.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, asked for help with a brief survey. She then announced there are several upcoming one-day beekeeping seminars: 1/26 Longview, 2/2 Austin, 3/23 Brenham. Harrison Rogers will also be leading a 10-week beekeeping course through Friendswood ISD. The club's mentoring program for 2019 will be getting underway soon.

Gene DeBons presented facts about Chinese and adulterated honey. The United States originally placed a tariff on Chinese honey in 2001 over its dumping of honey at below market prices. This tariff was increased in 2008 and again in 2013 and now stands at about \$1.20/lb. Chinese exporters get around the tariff by transshipping honey and then fraudulently labelling it as being from other Asian countries.

Chinese honey has been found to contain the banned antibiotic chloramphenicol. When the USA began analyzing for it, they discontinued its use. Since then the antibiotic tetracycline has been found.

Chinese honey producers extract nectar not honey. It is done almost daily. Its moisture content is high so Chinese "honey" is dried out in a factory not a bee hive.

The use of resin technology can remove antibiotics, coloring agents, and other obnoxious impurities. It also makes the honey untraceable and improves its color grade giving it a higher value.

Adulteration of honey with a bio-

engineered sugar mixture from rice and corn can mimic the natural sugar profile in honey. This makes it harder to detect adulteration.

Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, urged those with Netflix to watch the first episode of the series *Roten*, which is all about the topic of Chinese honey and the difficulties of American honey producers.



Our Texas Beekeepers Association Area Director, Harrison Rogers, introduced us to TBA's Real Texas Honey™ program. Real Texas Honey™ promotes 100% Texas honey. Participants must meet strict program requirements and are subject to inspection and honey sampling to ensure the honey they sell displaying the Real Texas Honey™ seal is pure, unadulterated honey made by honey bees in Texas. The TBA website has a Honey Locator Map and both TBA members and Real Texas Honey™ participants can be included on the map.

A club member asked Harrison about a Lone Star Beekeepers group. Harrison explained they are a completely separate club formed a year ago by a few beekeepers with a vastly different agenda than TBA's. The Texas Beekeepers Association was established more than 100 years ago (1880). More than 50 clubs from all over the state are members. This year's Summer Clinic in June will be in Conroe. The Annual Convention is held in November. The TBA Winter Delegates meeting is on February 9th in Conroe.

Lynne mentioned that all first-year FBBA members receive a free one-year individual membership to the TBA.

Jack commented that he's never produced as much honey as he could have sold. People are becoming

more aware of the benefits of raw and local honey and the demand is continuing to grow. Honey collected at different times and different locations will taste different. It is up to us to educate the public though.

Thanks for the door prize donations and congratulations to the winners.

## Dues Are Due

Most of our club expenses are funded by donations. It is tax time and members are reminded that we are not an IRS nonprofit so these donations are not tax deductible.

Our dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year which makes them a real bargain. Thanks to Albert Smaistrle for helping collect dues at our January meeting.

If you have a suggestion for a bee-related activity we can fund with our treasury balance (see below), be sure to mention it to one of our officers to help make it happen.

## Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,427.92. Since then we collected \$240.00 in dues (48 new and renewing members). There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,667.92, consisting of \$3,617.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

*Boone Holladay*

Boone Holladay

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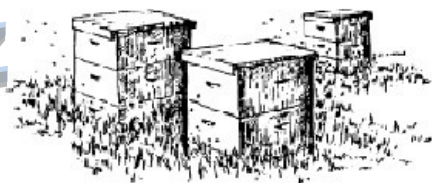


# Fort Bend Buzz

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March, 2019

The March 12, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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 (dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year).

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** The Texas legislature is in session so it must be time for the biennial bee law brouhaha in Austin. What's up?

**An A:** The Texas legislature meets every other year. In 2019, the 86th regular session runs from January 8 to May 27. Be reminded that in Austin they say that if you don't have a seat the table, you may end up on the menu.

Bills are introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. If they are passed in both, they go to the governor for his signature. Once signed by the governor a bill becomes law on the effective date stated in the bill.

Legislation is proposed by one (or more) of the 31 state Senators or 150 state Representatives. Sometimes bills are introduced concurrently with identical wording in both the House and Senate versions. The halls in Austin are crawling with special interests looking for someone to introduce their bright ideas for new Texas law. Once again this year, there are several bills that should be of interest to beekeepers (more may be on the way).

The first bill(s) to show up in the hopper were offered concurrently

(HB 1723 and SB 677). Current law says that you must have a permit to cross Texas county lines transporting bees. This provision of the Texas Agriculture Code is an outdated remnant from a decades-ago effort to control American Foulbrood, the highly contagious bacterial disease that really and truly threatened honey bee survival. This provision, in effect, provided for county quarantines. SECTION 131 BEEKEEPING in the Texas Agriculture Code contains this and lots of other incredible detail related to AFB control, as well as draconian enforcement measures. The fact is that for all the problems associated with honey bees and other pollinators today, American Foulbrood is hardly on the list.

All of Section 131 should be rewritten and the Texas Beekeepers Association is making their third attempt at it in 2019 (HB 2670).

"Beekeeper" will be changed to include all beekeepers who "may" register annually with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service (and pay a registration fee). It is unclear what this is all about. I guess you can see this as a donation to TAIS or perhaps the "beekeeper" fees could replace the intrastrate movement permit fees (which remains in the Code under this bill).

Here is a weird one for you. HB 2484 seeks to establish a "Bee Pol-

linator Goals Task Force". Its members are to be appointed by the governor from a list of 12 State agencies (there are no members outside of government). This new bureaucracy is supposed to develop measures and metrics and submit an annual report "on the factors contributing to the decline of the bee population". Two things seem strange: There is considerable evidence that bees aren't actually in decline, but I guess if you get to define the metrics.... Also, the bill is all about "bee pollinators" while the code defines "bee" as the honey bee (*A. mellifera*) and "pollinator" is not defined (?). It is hard to see what this feel-good bill will actually accomplish. Maybe they will rewrite Section 131 of the AGRICULTURE CODE?

If you have or seek to have beekeeping valuation for property taxes, you may be interested in HB 97. State law allows 5 to 20 acres of land to be deemed in agricultural use if used to "raise or keep bees". HB 97 is about establishing GUIDELINES FOR UNCOMMON AGRICULTURAL USES. It isn't clear if beekeeping use is "uncommon".

The web site [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov) lets you search for terms in bills before the legislature. "Apiary" or "bee" or "beekeeping" led the way to these three bills that are already in the hopper.

## **February Meeting Notes**

We had 47 members and guests sign in at our February meeting. The head count was 48. Was it you that forgot to sign in? Always register at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Club Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting by leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by an invocation by Michael McLean. Danessa then welcomed all present and gave those attending for the first time an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Danessa and several other members attended the Austin Area Beekeepers Association Seminar in January. She reported that it was a good event. Danessa also represented our club at the TBA Winter Delegates Meeting on Saturday in Conroe.

Our Mentoring Program will be getting underway next month. Anyone who is interested in being in the program and having a mentor is asked to put their name and info on the List at the sign-in table. The cost is \$25 and the mentee will receive The Beekeepers Handbook and a beekeepers journal. Another good learning opportunity for both new and not so new beekeepers is the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's one day Beekeeping School on March 23rd in Brenham. You can learn more and register at [centraltexasbeekeepers.org](http://centraltexasbeekeepers.org).

Harrison Rogers updated us on the Bee Exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The dates for this year are February 25th through March 17th and there are two shifts each day. Four volunteers are needed for each shift. Though this event is headed up by the Harris County Beekeepers Association, the volunteers are from all the area associations. Harrison's poster-size calendar had quite a few FBBA names on it before the meeting ended. You can also sign up online at [harriscountybeekeep-](http://harriscountybeekeep-)

[ers.org](http://ers.org) and click on the blue box that says "HLS&R Bee Exhibit." Harrison also spoke of TBA's Real Texas Honey™ program which promotes 100% Texas honey. ([realtexashoney.com](http://realtexashoney.com))

Gene DeBons urged anyone who is interested in collecting swarms and retrieving swarm traps to sign up on the list for 2019. If you are going to participate you need to have the woodware ready to house the colony. Because swarms can fly away at any moment, time is of the essence; if you don't answer Gene's call, he'll move on to the next name. It's also important to decline the swarm if you are unable to collect it within a few hours.

Gene said he's frequently asked what types of flowers a beekeeper should plant for their bees. The fact is, it probably doesn't matter that much when you consider the bees' forage area. Honey bees easily cover a 2 mile radius of their hive. A 2 mile circle contains 8,042 acres or more than 350 million square feet. Though it is always good to plant trees and flowers the bees love, the beekeeper's yard is insignificant when you consider how much area bees forage.

Ian Kjos demonstrated the types of hive bottom boards and telescopic covers he makes and has available for sale. His telescopic covers can be purchased with or without insulating foam board inserts.

Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the hive design choices that beekeepers face. Most important is that removable frames are required by law across the U. S. since it allows the hive to be inspected for pests and disease. The concept of "bee space" described by Rev. L. L. Langstroth makes removable frames possible.

Jeff then went over five different hive design choices that he has seen beekeepers in our area use. The most often used are top bar hives and Langstroth hives.

Top bar hives were originally developed for subsistence farmers in

Africa. There are no standard dimensions and natural comb is built without foundation.

The Langstroth hive is by far the most common hive design in the U. S. Dimensions are relatively consistent between sources so frames of brood and honey can be moved between hives.

The door prize drawings were held for a few very nice items. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the lucky winners. To donate a door prize, simply bring it to the meeting and place it on the table at the head of the room.

## **Mentors Needed!**

Guess what it takes to have a club mentoring program: mentors. We've seen the most success from mentoring teams. The mentor only needs a year or two of beekeeping under their belt plus the desire to lead a small group as they learn more about keeping bees as a team.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our February treasury balance was \$3,667.92. Since then we collected \$95.00 in dues (19 new and renewing members). There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,762.92, consisting of \$3,712.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

Boone Holladay

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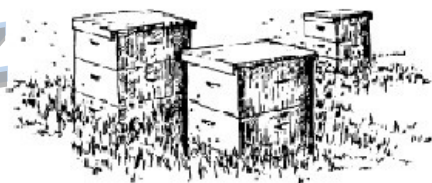


# Fort Bend Buzz

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April, 2019

The April 9, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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 (dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year).

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## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I've read on the internet that scientists have discovered that lithium chloride is very effective in controlling varroa. True? Is it available for beekeepers?

**An A:** There seem to be some exciting developments in honey bee research that will help us deal with varroa mites. Maybe 2018 will go down as the year of discovery that led to control of this obnoxious pest and the diseases it spreads.

It is easy to be skeptical of honey bee research after all the debunked "scientific evidence" on neonicotinoid pesticides. There has been a nearly constant uproar over neonicotinoid pesticides over findings by "researchers" published in 2012: "***In situ replicaton of honey bee colony collapse disorder***", [Bulletin of Insectology 65](#). A Harvard School of Public Health researcher and a couple of Massachusetts beekeepers "discovered" that if you feed bees pesticide-laced sugar water they will die. Actually, it took concentrations far above the accepted lethal dose (hundreds of times any likely exposure) to achieve that end. Nonetheless, the conclusion was that the dead bees replicated chronic collapse disorder (CCD) and if neonics continued to be used, all the bees would be dead and hu-

mankind was right behind them. (How many times have you heard that line?) Many consider neonics to be the least toxic pesticides ever developed and are safe when used properly. Without neonics, agriculture will have to go back to far more toxic chemicals applied at higher and higher rates (not exactly a desirable outcome).

The lithium chloride research was published in January, 2018. Unlike the neonic story, it is a great example of scientists coming to a completely different conclusion than their premise going in. It reflects on how responsible research works.

The lithium chloride research is preliminary. Nonetheless, it reflects greatly on the future path of responsible research. These German researchers wanted to see if molecular biology (RNA interference or RNAi, whatever that is) could be used to control varroa. They saw significant initial success in their genetic studies, but when they set out to confirm their results, they discovered that it was lithium chloride (used to prepare the genetic material) that yielded the promising results. It is fascinating to read the scientific descriptions of the laboratory detective work done to identify lithium as the active agent.

There always seems to be a common thread when it comes to dealing with varroa. Once again a treatment has been discovered, but it is

not known how/why it worked.

Another paper published in December, 2018, reports on a very significant discovery: haemolymph is not the principle food source for varroa. That study found that we've had it all wrong for many years. Varroa feed on nutrient rich "fat bodies" in the bee's abdomen, not the haemolymph (or hemolymph), analogous to bee blood.

The lithium researchers referred to varroa as "haemolymph-sucking" parasites. Haemolymph isn't exactly bee blood. It does not carry oxygen but does transport nutrients and waste. While our blood circulates in a closed system, haemolymph bathes tissues after being pumped from the abdomen and dumped on the bee's brain, bathing other tissues as it returns back to the abdomen to be pumped again.

The lithium paper is all about haemolymph and you wonder if the fat body feeding conclusion is the link to figuring out how LiCl as well as essential oils, oxalic acid, coumaphos, etc. actually work! It is great that real scientists seem to be hot on the trail of this obnoxious pest!!

When the next online petition to outlaw neonicotinoid pesticides shows up in your email, don't let it taint your view of honey bee research. There is some ongoing real research with great promise for beekeepers, farmers, and honey bees.

## **March Meeting Notes**

We had 50 members and guests sign in at our March 12 meeting. The head count was 52. Did you forget to sign in? Always register at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack welcomed all present and gave the seven attending for the first time an opportunity to introduce themselves. Jack then presented an award to Monica Siwiak recognizing her first place creamed honey at the TBA conference in November.

Those who volunteered at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's AGVENTURE honey bee exhibit were asked to stand and given a round of applause.

Lynne asked that anyone who would like to serve as a Mentor to please get with her. Also, she announced that there would be a special door prize - a free registration to the Central Texas Beekeepers Association bee school on March 23rd in Brenham. This door prize can only be awarded to a FBBA member.

Ian Kjos demonstrated his newly designed Frame Jig. He also let us know this Jig has been donated to the club, and like the club's extracting equipment, it can be checked out for use by members. Patty Griffin demonstrated the double-layer mesh Nuc bag she designed and sells. A Nuc box fits easily into the zippered bag and ensures the bees do not escape during transport.

Gene DeBons shared with us some facts he found in the book, Curative Properties of Honey and Bee Venom by N. Yoirish, published in Russia in 1959, and in the USA in 1977. Petro Prokopovich (1775-1850) is remembered with gratitude for inventing in 1814 the movable-frame hive. (Langstroth's patent wasn't until 1852.) He set up a bee-

keeping school in 1828, the first in Europe and Russia. After the Revolution, Lenin signed a declaration in April, 1919, "On the Protection of Beekeeping." By 1940, the USSR had more than 100,000 collective and state farms that included 10,000,000 beehives. "The Nazi barbarians looted thousands of apiaries at collective and state farms and destroyed over 2,000,000 bee colonies."

After Gene's fascinating report, Danessa Yaschuk shared the "In the Bee-yard" tasks for March: If you have bees ordered, have your equipment ready. Inspect hives. Feed if stores are low. Turn entrance reducer to the larger opening. Watch for signs of swarming and take action if needed. Make splits if planning to do so. Consider your IPM schedule and if treating, do so before nectar flow starts.

Plan to have Supers on in early April. Have enough boxes and frames available for both brood and honey to stay ahead of your bees. Spring flowers are here and bees are actively foraging. Increased population and abundant resources lead to the natural process of swarming.

Jack and several members shared tips for catching swarms and Jack showed us a swarm trap that is simply a large garden "pulp pot" mounted to plywood. Similar ones are available in bee supply catalogues. Traps should go up in mid-March, baited with a few drops of lemon grass oil. Be careful when you take the trap down because the comb is very fragile. Don't leave swarm traps up year-round because other animals will take up residence in them. The trap should be mounted high above the ground, but not so high that you can't retrieve it - remember it will be full of bees! It should be someplace where you can check it frequently. Jack also demonstrated some of the contraptions he's come up with for funneling swarms into boxes and catching water meter bees. Once you transfer the bees into your hive box, a

frame with open brood will almost always keep the colony from abandoning your box.

The door prize drawings were held for some very nice items including the free registration to CTBA's bee school. Thank you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to those who were lucky winners.

## **Dues Are Due**

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If you see a sad bee, it means you haven't paid your \$5.00 dues for 2019 and you will be dropped from the Buzz mailing list. You can pay your dues at our April meeting or mail them to Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., c/o Lynne Jones, 19747 Coppervine, Houston, TX 77084.

## **Mentors Needed!**

We need mentors! A mentor only needs a year or two of beekeeping under their belt plus the desire to lead a small group as they learn more about keeping bees.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our March treasury balance was \$3,762.92. Since then we collected \$60.00 in dues payments and \$50.00 in mentoring registrations. The resulting balance is \$3,872.92, \$3,822.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash for change.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

Boone Holladay

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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



May, 2019

The May 14, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I have a couple of questions. Is it better to have one or two deep brood boxes? Why? Another one: how long do you keep frames in the freezer to kill invading eggs and larvae?

**An A:** Your first question is certainly a good one since it is one of the basic decisions that new beekeepers need to make. In fact, you'll have to decide if you want any deeps at all!

At our February meeting Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the hive design decisions that beekeepers must make. Removable frames are required by law across the U. S. since it allows the hive to be inspected for pests and disease. In a nutshell, keeping bees in a "bee gum" or Winnie the Pooh straw skep is not permitted.

Despite all the glowing success stories and YouTube videos of other hive designs on the internet, the "Langstroth Hive" has proven itself best, especially for new beekeepers.

Jeff described five different hive design choices that he has seen beekeepers in our area use. The Langstroth hive is by far the most common because it is most easily used successfully.

A "deep" is the tallest Langstroth box choice and is given names like a "brood box", "hive body", "deep super", etc. It is best suited for the brood nest because it is of adequate size, but if it were filled with honey as a "super" above the brood nest it could weigh as much as 100 lbs. (With smaller radial extractors, deep frames must be extracted "tangentially" and reversed as honey spins out.)

Boxes placed above the brood nest are intended to hold honey stores and the "one deep or two" question really applies to the bee's brood nest. A single deep is usually not large enough for a successful colony's brood rearing. Therefore, a honey super on top of a single deep will usually end up with brood in it unless a queen excluder keeps the queen downstairs. But an excluder on a single deep is not a good plan. It is far better for the colony to have ample room for brood rearing. Restricting the bees to a single deep can lead to overcrowding and encourage swarming. Without a super, the bees may fill the brood nest with honey, leaving the queen with no place for her eggs. A "honey bound" colony is under high stress.

As your colony grows, it will require another box for their brood nest. Some beekeepers give them a honey super (usually a "medium") for that purpose, but a second deep is usually a better idea. Over the winter the bee cluster moves up-

ward into the second box, vacating the frames in the bottom. Beekeepers swap the two boxes in late winter/early spring so the brood nest has room to grow upward. This tends to discourage swarming and is consistent with the bee's way of doing things. But if the brood nest is in a deep-medium stack, there is usually not enough room for the entire brood nest in the medium box above. Reversing the boxes to put the medium on the bottom may divide the brood nest, which is a really bad idea.

When it is time to give your growing colony another box for their brood nest, a second deep is better. Giving them a medium super instead may backfire on you.

Then again, using all medium boxes ain't a bad plan. (It will take at least three boxes for the brood nest.)

Frames with drawn comb are a precious commodity. Freezing them does kill pests but they must be stored properly afterwards to prevent reinfestation. The oilfield rule that "if some is good, more is better" applies, but overnight is usually adequate if you are cycling through limited freezer space.

A Ziploc 44 Qt Weather Shield Storage Box works great for storing frames with drawn comb. This box has a gasketed lid, but you should still store the frames with moth crystals with p-Dichlorobenzene (NOT MOTH BALLS). Walmart.com has both.

## April Meeting Notes

The Community Center was pretty warm for our April meeting since the air conditioning was out of commission. Someone remarked "it feels like a bee hive in here!". Cute.

Our head count at the meeting came to 73. We had 72 members and guests on the sign-in sheets, short one before Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones realized that she had not yet signed in.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. There were five first-time attendees and each introduced themselves and let us know what their experience or interest in beekeeping is.

Several members attended the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's 11th Annual Beekeepers school in March. They reported it was well organized as usual and having the event at Brenham High School was much better than previous years at the Washington County Fairgrounds.

Upcoming events are the Sugar Land Earth Day this Saturday and the Bee Weaver Buzz Fest on Saturday, May 25th. [Note: due to severe weather, Sugar Land Earth Day was rescheduled to May 18th].

Laura Parnell announced that her son and other FFA members are organizing a Community Honey Tasting and Presentation to be held on May 13th at Elkins High School. They are asking for donations of honey in containers of at least 8 ounces for the official honey tasting. For anyone who would like to have a table at the event to sell honey or honey/bee items, the cost for a table is \$20. Proceeds will go towards FFA Senior scholarships. Contact Laura at 281 467-6865 if you need more info.

Steve Hutchinson, 15+ year club member, gave us a brief history of his experience and what he considers to be the keys to successful beekeeping. Steve has nucs available

for \$130. He also announced that he is planning to sell his hives. If you are interested, please call him at 979 533-0094 to discuss.

Danessa Yaschuk, club Vice-President, shared the "In the Beeyard Now" tasks for April.

Now: Plan to have supers on established hives in early April. Have enough boxes and frames available for both brood and honey to stay ahead of your bees. Add another super when bees are working on 6-8 frames. Split strong colonies if desired. Watch for signs of swarming. Catch swarms. If establishing packages or Nucs, feed sugar water until all comb is drawn, then add another box and feed until all comb in it is drawn too. Do not feed sugar water when honey supers are on.

Get Ready: Plan to continue with the same tasks next month.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Chris Barnes, owner of Cornerstone Honey and director of the youth program at Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association. Chris' topic was Making Splits. There are several reasons a beekeeper might want to make a split, but the two most common are to increase hives or to prevent swarming. Regardless of the reason for the split, a second queen is needed. The beekeeper can either provide a queen (or queen cell), or can provide the resources for the bees to make a queen. For the bees to make a queen, they must have eggs or very young larvae and timing is extremely important. If it is too early in the year there may not be enough drones available. Too late in the year and the colony won't be able to build up for the winter. Plan on feeding both the old and the new colony. Chris demonstrated several methods for making the split.

After Chris' presentation, a How to Make a Split handout was distributed. The club donated \$100 to the BVBA youth program and \$50 to cover Chris' travel costs.

The door prize drawings were held for some very nice items. Thank

you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to those who were lucky winners. If you would like to contribute a door prize, simply bring it to the meeting and place it on the table at the head of the room.

For those that could stay a few more minutes after the meeting, Ian Kjos demonstrated his 25-frame assembly jig that he sells for \$25.00. If you are interested in purchasing a jig or any of his other items, contact him by email at [BitWestBees@Gmail.com](mailto:BitWestBees@Gmail.com). Ian generously donated this jig to the club for loan to club members. We will need a volunteer to keep up with the jig, storing it and scheduling its use. Please contact Lynne if you can help.

## Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,872.92. Since our last report we collected \$125.00 in dues, \$25.00 in Mentoring Program fees, and \$100.00 in donations. Expenses were a \$100.00 donation to the youth group at Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association, \$50.00 speaker fee (aka gas money) to Chris Barnes, and \$37.99 for internet domain annual renewal. The resulting balance is \$3,934.93 (\$3,884.93 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change).

### TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



Boone Holladay

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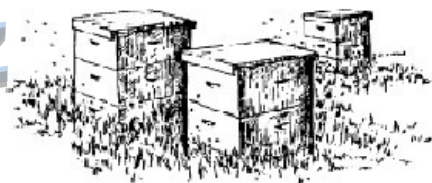


# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



June, 2019

The June 11, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** What do I do about the roaches that have invaded my hives?

An **A:** Putting together this part of our newsletter usually involves some research (online and among all manner of bee books) plus personal experiences with the bees. Roaches running around on a Langstroth inner cover are pretty common in our area and, if we are quick, we manage to squash them. Other than that, roaches haven't seemed to cause much trouble, but with that in mind, it is probably a good idea to make sure that a problem is not being overlooked.

The name "cockroach" comes from their Spanish name: *cucaracha*. There are thousands of species of roaches and southeast Texas seems to be the epicenter of roach heaven. Scientists have given the roach genus the name "Blattaria", derived from Latin meaning "an insect that shuns the light". They are omnivorous scavengers, feeding on almost any imaginable food source. Almost everyone finds roaches to be disgusting and hundreds of pest control companies exist mostly to deal with these pests in our homes.

Roaches are not often found inside active bee hives. Once again it

seems that whatever the beekeeping question, the answer always turns into managing for strong hives. Hive numbers can be boosted by giving weak ones a frame of capped brood (no bees) from a strong colony. There is little work for the receiving hive and in a few days thousands of new workers will emerge. (A full deep frame of brood on both sides has five or six thousand pupae.) Another option is to just combine a queenless weak hive with another strong queenright colony.

Most often roaches are seen on the inner cover of active hives or in deadouts or stored boxes. They are in there to "shun the light" and nothing seems to indicate that they are harmful to the colony. The problem is worse in shady areas. Hives are best located in full sun (the bees don't care and most hive pests "shun the light"). There usually seem to be fewer pests under the translucent plastic telescoping covers. The shade of a plastic sign with a brick on top helps keep down summer heat.

Sugary foods are most attractive to roaches and for that reason most roach baits are sweet and may be attractive to bees. Since roaches will eat dead roaches, the active ingredient is a gift that keeps on giving. The active ingredient in roach tablets is usually boric acid, effective and not terribly toxic. If you want to use roach bait, the best

idea is to use a "roach motel" where it is not accessible to the bees.

They can be safely used above ventilated inner covers or on top of solid inner covers if the center hole is screened with six or eight gauge hardware cloth to exclude the bees.

The Reader's Digest answer to your question is strong hives, full sun, squash 'em if you can and use roach baits only if really necessary.

## Gaveled Closed

The 86th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature has been gaveled to a close. None of the legislation we've been watching seems to have made it to the governor's desk. Once again beekeepers have shown themselves to be an unruly lot. Two "statewide beekeeper organizations" offered conflicting views of proposed legislation, so legislators justifiably see beekeepers as narrow-minded and looking out for only their own individual benefit. This is not good since beekeeping law in Texas (Section 135 of the Agriculture Code) is awful: hopelessly outdated, unenforced and unenforceable. The challenges facing honey bees and beekeepers are huge and no one seems capable of even describing what the Texas Apiary Inspection Service should be doing. It would be great if the objectives for TAIS could be clearly defined and the next two years spent gaining consensus on what our bee law should be.



## May Meeting Notes

Our head count at the meeting came to 46, but we had 50 names on the sign-in sheets. It looks like a few left before we counted heads.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. The five first-time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Several club members participated in the Fort Bend Honey Tasting at Elkins High School on June 13. The event was organized by the school's FFA organization.

Last month's Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration was postponed due to weather. It has been rescheduled for June 13 at Sugar Land Town Square.

Bee Weaver Buzz Fest is on May 25th and the TBA Summer Clinic is on June 22nd in Conroe.

We are having a Logo design contest! Submit your design by 10:00 pm on Monday July 1. The winning design will be chosen by members in attendance at our July 9 meeting. The winner will receive a free FBBA t-shirt with their logo design. See the flyer for more details. Additionally, don't forget we'll have our Hive Decorating and Photo Contest in September, so start getting those creative juices flowing!

If you hung around after the April meeting, you probably saw Ian Kjos demonstrate the Frame Assembly Jig he makes and sells. Ian generously donated the Jig to our club and Nancy Hentschel has volunteered to 'house' it. If you want to sign out the Jig, contact Nancy at 832 228-7642.

Michael McLean, one of our group Mentors, suffered a terrible accident and has broken his leg and will be out of commission for several months. (He's probably going stir-crazy by now, so consider sending him an email or text.)

Steve Brackmann, a member of our

club and also president of the Brazoria club, gave us a report on the recent vandalism at one of the club's beeyards. The perpetrator tipped over four hives, threw some into the retention pond, and piled the rest together and set them on fire. This crime has received a lot of attention and the DA has indicated the person responsible will be charged with several serious crimes. There are rewards totaling \$7,500 for information leading to an arrest and conviction (Crime Stoppers \$5,000, BCBA \$1,000, and two individuals \$1,000 and \$500). On a positive note, the incident received a lot of publicity and over \$27,000 in donations was received from all over the world.

Gene DeBons gave a history on the tradition of "Telling the Bees". In Europe centuries ago, bee colonies were treated as members of the family. The bees were informed of major family news such as births, marriages, and, in particular, deaths. It was believed that if you didn't announce a death to the bees, they would not know to go into mourning and the colony would become unproductive or even die off. To "Tell the Bees", the hive would be draped with black crepe while humming softly or gently knock three times on the hive and give the news. Some traditions also included requiring the hive to be turned away from the house, inviting the bees to the funeral, or leaving food and drink for them. These traditions were brought to America and were common in the 1800s and still in limited practice in the 1950s.

We then proceeded with our "Ask a Bunch of Beekeepers" program. Our panel of beekeepers consisted of Jack Richardson, Jeff McMullan, Steve Brackmann, and Gene DeBons. Some of the questions asked and answers received were:  
Q: How big should the hive opening be during nectar flow?  
A: Avoid congestion: fully open or the larger notch. Also you can provide an opening directly into the Supers.  
Q: What method do you use to control Varroa Mites?

A: Several options are available. Follow labels, especially temperature and whether or not you have honey supers on.  
Q: What effect does rain have during nectar flow?  
A: Bees don't forage during rain, but rain also washes away pollen and nectar. It takes 3-5 days before nectar is available again for bees.  
Q: When is honey harvest?  
A: Starts in May and ends early July. Tallow has been sporadic this year. Do not extract uncapped honey because the water content is too high and the honey will ferment.  
Q: My bees are starting to backfill the brood frames with nectar.  
A: Add a Super and move empty frames down for the queen to have a place to lay.

Although there were more questions, the time available had run out. After drawing for door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$3,934.93. Since then we collected \$115 in dues and \$15 in donations. Website expenses were \$8.56. The resulting balance is \$4,056.37 (\$4006.37 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change). Additionally, a \$25 check for mentoring registration was received. The check will be deposited when a Mentor is assigned or returned if a Mentor is not available.

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

*Boone Holladay*

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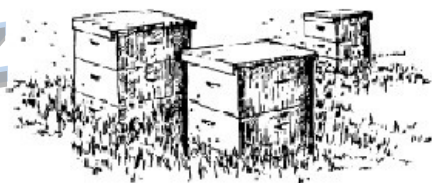
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# Fort Bend Buzz

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July, 2019

The July 9, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

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## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I've been interested in beekeeping for a long time. What do I need to know about requirements for backyard beekeepers?

An **A:** Neighborhood beekeeping is becoming quite popular: it has been said that backyard honey bees are the "new chickens", but neighborhood honey bees are far different than noisy roosters or smelly chicken coops.

We recently got a call from a rural homeowner who was upset about a neighbor's hives along his fence. The bees would attack whenever he tried to mow or even just go outside. The fact is, he had little recourse other than hiring a lawyer. Fortunately, an awkward situation didn't develop. The wayward beekeeper didn't belong to our Association that is "fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping". We are confident that one of our members would have quickly resolved this issue before we got a call.

The first place to look for beekeeping requirements would be county or local government. Many neighborhoods are outside of city limits and we aren't aware of any specific county requirements for beekeepers. Of course, a zealous bureaucrat may interpret existing rules govern-

ing free roaming pets or responsible pet ownership to honey bees.

The most likely problem to occur is conflict with deed covenants and homeowner associations. We are unaware of any deed restrictions that are specific to honey bees or beekeeping, but almost all of them have a Catch 22: you cannot be a nuisance to your neighbors.

It is not likely that conflicts with neighbors in rural areas could not be resolved if both parties are "neighborly". In suburban neighborhoods, things can easily escalate to demands for regulations. If that happens, beekeepers may find themselves sorely outnumbered. That is exactly that is going on in West U right now with beekeeping regulations under consideration.

Whatever the situation, **be a safe, responsible, successful beekeeper**. It is probably better if your neighbors don't even know that you have bees. Don't be walking around in the front yard in a bee suit with a smoker burning. Be discrete in locating your hives, especially if the bees could interfere with a neighbor's outdoor enjoyment or lawn chores. Barriers like a fence or shrubs near the hive entrance deter flight path conflicts. Aggressively manage swarming and immediately requeen hot hives. Always have a source of water available for your bees and consider other neighborhood activities when you plan to go into your hives.

## Not Quite Gaveled Closed

Last month we reported that none of the legislation we've been watching seemed to have made it to the governor's desk. Actually something made it through under the radar without us knowing about it (not terribly surprising since that is the way the whole system seems to work). The "cottage food" folks like to produce and sell foods with little or no food safety rules (while more and more requirements get piled on commercial foods in order to keep us safe....go figure).

Texas food safety law includes a list of quaintly named "cottage foods" declared to be of low food safety risk. They can be produced in a home kitchen and sold with little food safety requirements. Governor Abbott recently signed a bill of cottage food amendments that added such as "pickled fruit or vegetables" to the cottage food list. But before the ink was dry, honey (and not just "pure honey" from a beekeeper) was acclaimed as now being a cottage food because it made the list, kinda. Buried among the cottage foods was "(xx) any other food that is not a time and temperature control food".

With this done in such a deliberate and sneaky way, beekeepers cannot help but feel xx'd. Honey from almost anywhere infused with almost anything will no doubt show up at a farmer's market near you. Jalapeno-lemon Chinese "honey" anyone?

## **May Meeting Notes**

Our head count at the meeting came to 74, but we had 70 names on the sign-in sheets. Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Our meeting time is 7:00 pm and includes 30 minutes of social time before being called to order. During social time at our June meeting Gene deBons demonstrated honey extraction ahead of our "Harvest Time!" program. Everyone had a chance to ask questions and check out the club's honey refractometer used to measure the moisture content of honey.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Eleven first-time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed. One of the visitors, Tom Keith, was a special guest of Jack.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk gave us a brief re-cap of our participation at Sugar Land's Earth Day Celebration. She also reminded us of the upcoming TBA Summer Clinic on June 22 in Conroe, the July 1st due date for entries to our club's Logo Contest, and of our Hive Decorating and Photo Contests in September.

Michael Parnell thanked club members who participated or attended the Elkins High School FFA Honey Tasting Event on May 13.

Our June meeting program was "Harvest Time!" presented by Jeff McMullan. He opened his presentation by remembering his long-time mentor and former club president Elton Reynolds (1920–2018). Several of the photos in his program were from Elton's guiding Jeff through a honey harvest several years ago.

Of course step one is to clear the bees off the comb of capped honey. Nectar that is not yet capped has too much moisture in it. Honey should have less than 19% water content or

it may ferment from yeast that is always present. Elton found it easiest to just remove the super frames one at a time and brush the bees away before placing it in an empty super. Other options include using bee escapes that prevent the bees from returning to the super once they leave. That technique is not usually recommended because it takes a couple days and the honey is left unguarded and subject to small hive beetle attack. A better option is a "fume board" using "Bee-Quick", a pleasant smelling product that drives the bees out of the super. Bee supply houses sell fume boards or Jeff showed how to easily construct one. Sometimes a final step is needed: using an electric lawn blower to clear the last few bees before going inside to extract the honey. It should be obvious, but everyone was reminded that you should never extract honey outdoors since it will attract zillions of bees.

The honey bee role in our food supply as a pollinator is well known. Another less obvious role is as the only insect that produces human food. A safe food supply is very important and in years past the only legal way to produce and sell honey was to have a food manufacturer's license and an inspected extraction/bottling facility. There are no specific food safety rules about honey, so common-sense basic sanitation applied. Most significantly, honey could not be extracted or bottled in a home kitchen. In 2015, Texas law was amended to allow "small honey production" by beekeepers. In 2019, honey became a "cottage food" in Texas so anyone can now buy in bulk and bottle honey (no beekeeping is necessary). Neither "small honey production" (up to 2,500 lbs.!!) or cottage food rules allow honey to be sold for resale or as an ingredient in processed food. There are very specific requirements for labeling and the sales transaction. It is a good idea to get in step with these rules since the rules apply to "sell or distribute" honey, which seems to mean that

even giving it away is regulated.

The TBA web site and "Real Texas Honey" program is a great link between beekeepers and consumers wanting to be confident in their source of honey.

Various methods of uncapping the cells and extracting the honey were discussed as followup to Gene's demonstration during our social time. Manual and electric "tangential" and "radial" extractors were explained as well as the importance of low honey moisture content. Bottling alternatives and labeling was also covered.

The final topic was handling the wax from cappings and the cleanup and storage of drawn comb in supers.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our June treasury balance was \$4,056.37. Since our last report we collected \$35.00 in dues, \$40.00 in extractor use fees, and \$50.00 in donations. There was \$229.50 in website expense. The resulting balance is \$3,951.87 (\$3901.87 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change). Additionally, a \$50 check for two Mentoring registration fees was received by mail. The check will be deposited when a Mentor is assigned or returned if a Mentor is not available.

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**



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# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



August, 2019

The August 13, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or you can seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I'm a new beekeeper and thought I was doing pretty good. I even caught a swarm and was able to get them to stay! Then I noticed a real slowdown in my first hive. I checked it a few days later and found slime and maggots along with the unforgettable putrid smell of a small hive beetle infestation. There were hardly any bees left. What went wrong? Do I need to destroy my boxes and frames?

**An A:** It's SLIME TIME in southeast Texas. Small hive beetle numbers are at their peak and pressure on hives is intense. There are lots of techniques and products that are intended to control beetles and we would love to see our hives free of these pests. Unfortunately, that is unlikely to happen since nothing is 100% effective against small hive beetles. It is best to do all that we can do to have strong healthy hives and take whatever measures we can to control these awful pests. (Don't pass up on the opportunity to squish them as you inspect your hives.)

As awful as it seems, slimed out hives can be salvaged. A strong water spray or careful pressure washing can get the boxes ready for reuse. The frames and foundation can be washed too and much of it salvaged. Be very thorough and

leave none of the slime behind. It is a good idea to carefully do a permethrin ground drench around the slimed-out hive location. Hive beetles pupate in the soil and the permethrin will kill any emerging beetle adults.

Honey bees recognize small hive beetles as an enemy and aggressively chase them into crevices where they hide. If there are too many beetles or too few bees, a beetle female will lay clusters of 10 to 30 eggs. (In her lifetime, she can lay as many as 2,000 eggs.) The eggs hatch in 2 - 4 days and at that point there is little that the bees can do to stop the onslaught.

One scenario seems to play out often. If a colony swarms, there are suddenly far fewer bees to defend against hive beetles. While they may be able to hold their own at first, colony numbers drop as the new queen emerges, mates and begins to lay. It is not uncommon for the new queen to not return from her mating flight, leaving the colony queenless and dwindling, an easy target for small hive beetles.

It is very important that you determine where a swarm in your backyard came from and then carefully follow its transition back to a fully functioning hive. Be prepared to requeen if necessary or "unswarm" the hive by combining the queen-right swarm with the queenless colony.

## Introducing...



During social time at our July meeting, members voted on a winner for our logo design contest. Danessa Yaschuk submitted the winning entry shown above. She will receive a free FBBA t-shirt with her logo design.

A key feature of our new logo is "Est. 1978", more than 40 years ago! The actual beginnings of our association are hard to determine, but we do have rosters that date back to 1978. The June 26, 1978 list has 49 members including 21 "charter members". Our early lists include the fathers of two of our current members, Clarence Theilemann and Tony Moleno.

The Texas Beekeepers Association dates back to 1901 and now has 39 affiliated local associations. Our club is certainly one of those with the longest continuing existence.

## July Meeting Notes

Our head count at the meeting was 47 and we got 47 names on the sign-in sheets. Bingo! Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

During social time this month, five entries for our FBBA Logo Contest were on display. Members viewed and voted for their choice from five entries. The votes were tallied by Patty Griffin. The winning entry was submitted by Danessa Yaschuk.

At 7:30, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. There were four first time attendees who introduced themselves. Jack encouraged them to get involved and take opportunities to learn more about honey bees and beekeeping.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk attended the TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe. She reported that there were 605 in attendance and that the event was well organized (with a good lunch). She encouraged everyone to attend at least once.

Danessa provided information about the upcoming Honey Expo on July 20th at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds. There were over 1,000 in attendance at last year's event. Danessa also reminded members of the FBBA hive decorating and photo contest to be held at the September meeting. Last year, there were seven hives and 22 photos entered.

Last month, Michael McLean suffered a horrible accident when his truck ran over his leg and foot. Jack reports that Michael is recovering and hopes to be mobile soon. In the meantime, Michael needs help with his bees as he recovers; get with Jack if you can help out.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones would like to index the Ask a Dozen Beekeeper topics and meeting notes for the newsletters posted on the FBBA website. Contact her if you would like to help.

An interesting presentation on

straining honey was given by Gene DeBons. The technique recommended in 1940 edition of The ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture is to filter the honey through cheesecloth, but to allow the cheesecloth to hang all the way down to the surface of the honey in the bucket it is transferred to. This allows the honey to go through the cloth and into the bucket without adding additional air. Honey dripping from a strainer to the surface introduces small air bubbles that cloud the honey.

Next, Danessa went over the beekeeping tasks for July and August:

Honey extraction should be in full swing. After extracting, put wet supers back on the hives or far away from the hives for the bees to clean any remaining honey. Store empty frames properly!

Ensure bees have a consistent supply of water that they need to keep the hives cool. Consider shading hives from direct full sun. Provide hive ventilation with screened inner covers or prop the cover open a bit.

Melt wax cappings from your extracting. You should freeze cappings for melting at a later date since that will destroy any wax moth eggs or larvae present. The bees will clean wet cappings before processing the wax, but don't attract wax moths by leaving them out for more than three days.

In August, forage is sparse and colonies can be ill tempered during the nectar dearth. Always use smoke when opening hives and be careful to not induce robbing. Check hives to be sure bees have at least two full frames of honey in the brood box. Bees can starve in August. If needed, start feeding sugar syrup.

August is the time to treat for varroa since you need strong hives to go through the winter. Varroa mite indication can be from using sticky boards, a powdered sugar roll, or checking drone larvae. For an accurate count, use an alcohol wash - if the varroa count is 5 per 100 bees, treat immediately.

Harrison Rogers gave a presentation on Honey Bees and Varroa Development. Varroa reproduce while feeding on pupae in capped brood cells. The female mite's first egg produces a male and subsequent eggs develop into females that mate with the male.

The life span of summer worker bees can be divided into three periods that are each about 21 days long: egg to emergence, house bee, and forager bee. Drones emerge after 24 days - three days longer than workers. They are preferred by varroa mites since more mites can mature in the extra time. There are various options to control varroa; if you use chemical treatments, always follow the label and alternate the type of chemical used to avoid building resistance.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,951.87. Since our last report we collected \$35 in dues and \$40 for extractor use. The expenses were \$50 annual TBA membership and the \$6.35 monthly Squarespace (website) fee. The resulting balance is \$3,970.52 (\$3,920.52 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change).

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

Boone Holladay

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September, 2019

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The September 10, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or you can seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I was setting up a new beeyard and moved two hives to their new location. Admittedly, they weren't real strong (single deeps were easier to move). When I checked them a week or two later, the bees were gone and the hives were overrun with "crazy ants". What do I do now?

**An A:** As you know, you aren't the first victim of tawny (Rasberry) crazy ants (*Nylanderia fulva*). When discovered near Houston in 2002, crazy ants became the subject of widespread media attention because of their fascinating natural history and incredible scientific difficulty in identifying the pest's origin. This invading ant was depicted as a very significant agricultural pest after commercial colonies absconded following hive invasion by large numbers of the ants.

More than fifteen years after their discovery, it appears that crazy ants aren't the apocalyptic hive pest portrayed in the media. Nonetheless, as you have learned, they do present another hive management challenge for the beekeeper. An understanding of crazy ant ecology and foraging preferences have led to apiary management recommendations to help minimize the potential impact of this pest. Crazy ants are prone to

boom-bust cycles and expand their range slowly. Unlike fire ants, crazy ant reproductives don't fly so they spread only a few hundred yards each year (unless aided by us!).

Beekeeping practices are important in managing crazy ants:

1. Monitor for crazy ants, especially when moving hives. A hot dog slice is powerfully attractive to both crazy ants and its fire ant cousin. Existing beeyards and potential new sites can be easily screened for these two species. They will not likely be present at the same time unless the crazy ants are new arrivals. In fact, fire ants are a good indicator that crazy ants are not likely to be around (foraging fire ants are likely helpful in controlling hive pests, especially beetles).

2. Avoidance and prevention. A new site with crazy ants present should be avoided since their colonies are often widespread and large areas would need to be treated. Movement from an infested site is ill advised unless effective control measures can be employed before hives are moved. This can prove difficult, but County Extension Agents and Extension IPM Specialists can assist with current control recommendations for baits and contact pesticides. Pesticide use in beeyards should be undertaken very carefully and only in accordance with the product label. GuardStar (permethrin) soil drenches labeled

for small hive beetles seem to give short term control of crazy ants as well.

3. Apiary practices. Like other hive pests, crazy ants don't like full sun. They prefer shady areas with debris they can get under to nest. Hives should be located where they receive full sun, at least in the morning. Keep the ground bare with glyphosate herbicides. Mulch or a cloth plant barrier is not a good idea since they create an excellent home for crazy ants. The ground should be kept clear. Hive stands are preferred to pallets since crazy ants find refuge and nest sites underneath them. Moats have apparently been used successfully to deter other ant species, but crazy ants are known for traversing across their dead kin when committed to reaching a destination.

4. Feed syrup carefully. Beekeepers know to feed syrup carefully since it may encourage robbing. Crazy ants have a strong foraging preference for sugar syrup, so we have another dimension added to feeding bees. Take care to avoid splashes or spills. Open feeding syrup when these pests are present will attract them in huge numbers.

5. Migratory Hive Inspection. Texas Apiary Inspection Service hive inspections focus exclusively on honey bee health. They do not inspect for pests like crazy ants, so temporary locations along the Gulf Coast should be chosen carefully.



## July Meeting Notes

Our head count at the meeting was the same as last month: 47 and we got 47 names on the sign-in sheets. Bingo two months in a row! Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, gave an invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Two first time attendees introduced themselves. Jack cautioned everyone about working out in the heat. Take breaks and stay hydrated to avoid heat exhaustion.

Gene DeBons gave a short presentation about beekeepers being such a cheap lot. Scraping all the honey clinging to the walls of the extractor can add 2 lbs. to the crop!

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk reported that the July 20 Brazoria County Beekeepers' Honey Expo at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds was a good event. There were raffles and silent auctions. Danessa also reminded everyone of the FBBA hive decorating and photo contest to be held at next month's meeting. The Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association's annual bee school will take place on Saturday, September 7th in College Station. The cost is \$70 individual / \$125 couple and \$15 for kids (with parent or guardian) Lunch (beef and chicken fajitas) is included. Registration is limited to 450 and a sellout is expected. The Texas Beekeepers Association Annual Conference will be November 8 and 9 in San Antonio at the Hilton San Antonio Airport. Registration will be starting soon.

Danessa also went over the beekeeping tasks for August and September:

Now: In August there is little for bees to forage on and colonies can be very cranky and bad tempered during the nectar dearth. Take care when opening hives that bees do not become overly excited. Be careful to not induce robbing. Check hives

to be sure bees have at least two full frames of honey in the brood box. Bees can starve in August! If needed, start feeding sugar syrup. This is the time to treat for varroa. You need strong brood to go through the winter. Varroa mite indication can be from using sticky boards, powdered sugar roll, or checking drone larvae. For an accurate count use an alcohol wash - if the varroa count is 5 per 100 bees, treat immediately. Consider re-queening in the fall for a healthy hive entering the winter. If you plan to purchase a queen, make arrangements with a seller in advance.

Get Ready: We will usually have a short fall honey flow from goldenrod, ragweed and asters. Strong hives will store a surplus. Nucs to be overwintered can be started. A good 5 frame nuc made during the first week of September will overwinter nicely and probably make a crop of honey in the spring. Examine hives carefully and replace failing queens. Weak hives can be combined with strong ones. Continue to supply water and feed colonies or nucs if needed.

Danessa introduced our guest speaker, Les Crowder. Les has devoted his entire adult life to the study and care of honeybees. Dedicated to finding organic and natural solutions for problems commonly treated with chemicals, he designed his own top-bar hives and set about discovering how to treat disease and genetic weaknesses through plant medicine and selective breeding. Les has always looked for ways to eliminate toxic inputs in the hive, starting with antibiotics and now miticides. He has been keeping bees in Langstroth and top bar hives for about 50 years, both as a hobby and as a business.

Earlier in his career, he worked for a business with 4,000 hives in New Mexico. He was the President of New Mexico Beekeepers Association multiple times. He was a honeybee inspector in New Mexico for 5 years. He has been teaching highly popular beekeeping classes do-

mestically and abroad for over 35 years (both in English and Spanish). Les moved to Austin, Texas in 2017. His passion for the bees continues and he regularly teaches beekeeping classes and helps people with their bees as a consultant.

Les Crowder's book, "Top-Bar Beekeeping: Organic Practices for Honeybee Health," is a very popular book which has sold and continues to be sold all over the world. It is available on Amazon.

Les' top bar hive design can be made for under \$30. The body of the hive is constructed from a single 14 foot long 1 x 10 plank with very little to discard. It can contain up to 30 top bars with a follower board to add bars as the hive increases. For proper bee space, his top bars width must be 1-3/8". He uses 1/2" quarter round molding on the bottom of the top bar to guide comb construction.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,970.52. Since our last report we collected \$15.00 in dues. Expenses were a \$200.00 speaker fee, \$86.85 for award ribbons, and \$6.38 monthly website fee. The resulting balance is \$3,692.29 (\$3,627.29 in our checking account plus \$65 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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October, 2019

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The Tuesday October 8, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or you can seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** We've always wanted to keep bees and have decided to do it! Where do we start?

**An A:** Congratulations on your decision and joining our association. Attending beekeeper meetings is a great first step.

Our meetings start at 7:00 pm and are called to order at 7:30. We call the 30 minutes from 7:00 to 7:30 "social time" to afford the opportunity to meet other beekeepers, talk about keeping bees and maybe get answers to your beekeeping questions. Upcoming events are announced and we always try to go over a list of things happening in the beeyard this month. Our program and "show-and-tell" are intended to be educational and of value to both beginners and experienced beekeepers. (Our association does not meet in December, so there is only one more meeting in 2019.)

You need to target getting bees in early spring. You can buy packages (just bees and a queen) or nucs (started colonies of bees). It is a good idea to make arrangements to buy bees well ahead of time. The club is often contacted about honey bee swarms, so a common sense option is to try to get "freebees".

In the meantime, you'll need to be studying your new craft. There is a lot of beekeeping info on the internet, but it may not all be accurate or correct. Published material is a far better source. "Beekeeping for Dummies" is a pretty good cover-to-cover read to learn about keeping bees. "The American Bee Journal" and "Bee Culture" are monthly magazines offering a wealth of information for beekeepers. Especially helpful are the Q and A articles by well respected contributors. Subscribing to one or both magazines is highly recommended since the articles cover a wide variety of subjects and are likely to be more timely than books that may have been published years ago.

It is not too early to begin preparations for your bees. It is always recommended that you should have more than one hive. Two hives let you compare and contrast colonies and be a better beekeeper. Frames of stores or brood (no bees) can be used to help out weaker hives.

A big decision is the type of hive to be buying. Langstroth hives are recommended for new beekeepers, leaving other hive designs for when you are more confident with your beekeeping skills. You can choose either 8-frame or 10-frame boxes (the smaller boxes are lighter but less stable). They come in "deep", "medium" or "shallow" heights. Mediums and shallows are usually for honey while deep boxes are for

the brood nest. Some beekeepers prefer using all mediums (with two for the brood nest).

It is never too early to set up your beeyard and don't forget to make a wish list for Santa, maybe a bee jacket, smoker or hive tool.

## Contest Winners

Below are the winners of our Photo Contest and Hive Decorating Contest held at our meeting last month:



Photo Contest Winners:  
1st Herman Hoot, 2nd Margie Freed, and 3rd Danessa Yaschuk.



Hive Decorating Contest Winners:  
1st Danessa Yaschuk and 2nd Lynne Jones



## September Meeting Notes

We had 40 names on the sign-in sheets for our September 10 meeting. Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, gave an invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Danessa next made the following announcements:

Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association's annual bee school took place on Saturday in College Station. Lynne Jones attended and reported that it was a well-run event with sessions for all levels of beekeepers.

TBA Annual Conference is set for November 8 - 9 in San Antonio at the Hilton San Antonio Airport. Registration has started.

Lynne Jones distributed a handout of varroa counts.

The city of Simonton is starting a Saturday Round Up Market on the first Saturday (10am to 2pm) of October and November and then will do a Holiday Round Up in December (date TBD). If you are interested in being a vendor contact Erica Molina, 281-533-9809 or emolina@simontontexas.gov.

Lynne spoke with Steve Brackmann earlier today and he asked that everyone be reminded to check hives to make sure the queen has room to lay. He pulled 300 frames of honey from brood boxes over the weekend and made 150 splits yesterday. He has queens available if anyone needs any.

Orders with payment are being taken for FBBA t-shirts. The deadline for placing an order is at the October meeting. It is expected that shirts will be available for pick up at the November meeting.

Boone Holladay, our County Extension Agent, announced that volunteer beekeepers are needed to make short presentations to the school children at the Fort Bend County Fair. The days and times are Sep-

tember 30th - October 4th from 9:00 am to 11:30 am. Please contact him if you want to volunteer one (or more) of the days. He can be contacted at 281 342-3034 or [jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu).

Danessa went over the beekeeping tasks for September and October:

Now: We will usually have a short fall honey flow from ragweed, goldenrod and asters. Strong hives will store a surplus. Examine hives carefully and replace failing queens. Continue to supply water and feed colonies or nucs if needed. Do varroa mite counts and decide on treatment if needed.

Get Ready: By the middle of October there is usually a good pollen and nectar flow in progress. This nectar and pollen will remain available until the first freeze. This will be the last chance for bees to put up winter stores without being fed. Any colony found to be short on stores will have to be fed sugar syrup at the ratio of 2 parts sugar to 1 part water. Complete any varroa treatments. Combine weak hives with strong ones.

A short break was taken to allow everyone to view the Photo Contest and Hive Decorating Contest entries and to submit their vote.

Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the background and purpose of the club's Mentoring Program. The program was developed by past presidents Nancy Hentschel and Darrell Scott, along with Wendy Chopin and Jeff McMullan. It was rolled out in July of 2015. The goal of the program, "fostering safe, responsible and successful beekeepers" was adopted as the mission statement of the club.

Most club mentoring programs are one-on-one, 12-month programs with defined mentor and mentee rolls. Our program is significantly different in that it is based on "mentoring teams" that learn about keeping bees together. The mentor serves as a coach while the mentees learn by doing. Like other programs, there is a list of the topics

the mentee should understand as they complete the program. The mentor and mentees are expected to have frequent contact by email, text, or phone.

The mentor and mentees receive a copy of "The Beekeepers Handbook", an excellent beekeeping resource. Mentees are required to subscribe to "The American Bee Journal". Additionally, the mentee receives a Beekeeper's Journal developed for the program. Learning to observe and then recording notes in a journal is extremely important. If you fail to take notes, you'll realize when you return to the bee yard that you've forgotten the details of your last inspections. Enrollment in the program costs \$25.00 actually less than the cost of the reference book alone.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was \$3,692.29. Since our last report we collected \$30.00 in dues, \$125.00 for mentoring registrations (\$75.00 was received and reported previously, but not deposited pending available mentors), and \$266.00 for t-shirt orders. The only expense was \$6.38 monthly website cost. The resulting balance is \$4,106.91 (\$4,056.91 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change).

### TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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November, 2019

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The Tuesday November 12, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held 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. We don't meet in December, so this is our last meeting for 2019.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures).

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I want to learn all that I can about honey bees and beekeeping? How do I get to be a Master Beekeeper?

**An A:** There is no "governing authority" over calling yourself a Master Beekeeper. If you want to, you can declare yourself to be one, but that is probably not what you had in mind.

Master beekeeper certificates are issued by individuals, bee equipment companies, college extension services and national, regional, state and local bee associations. The Honey Bee Health Coalition (a consortium of more than 50 groups concerned about honey bee health) has said that there are "many programs doing great work and producing highly trained beekeepers. There are also concerns that there are programs that are representing themselves as master beekeeper programs that are not rigorous and may be teaching inappropriate practices."

The oldest American Master Beekeeper Program is that of the Eastern Apicultural Society (EAS). It was started by Dr. Roger Morse at Cornell University. Applicants are provided with a subject outline and a list of references. Written, oral,

laboratory, and field exams are conducted at the EAS Annual Conference held in August in the eastern U.S. It is of note that the EAS program is modeled after programs in Europe, including the British Beekeeping Association's program.

The Texas Master Beekeeper Program is conducted by the Texas Apiary Inspection Service and the Texas Beekeepers Association. It is unlike other Texas "Master" programs such as the Texas Master Naturalists and the Texas Master Gardeners. These two programs are administered by Texas Agrilife Extension Service and are characterized by many hours of classroom instruction (followed by written exams). There is a detailed written course curriculum for each classroom topic, maybe "plant propagation", "soils", or "meteorology". There is no progression through various levels. Annual continuing education and volunteer service requirements are required to maintain certification. The Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programs are allied with Texas Agrilife Extension and Texas Parks & Wildlife, providing trained and vetted volunteers to leverage the work of these two agencies.

The Texas Master Beekeeper Program is a five year program with four levels of progression from Apprentice to Master Craftsman. It is fully self study with no set curriculum. The only instruction is a re-

view lecture on "important beekeeping topics" prior to the written and practical examinations. Each of the five exams are given twice a year. Specific requirements are at <https://masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu/program-requirements/>.

If you are interested in a specific curriculum and online instruction, the University of Montana's three year university level Online Beekeeping Certificate Program may interest you. It has three levels of progression and the Master Beekeeper level requires a written research report. The program is traditionally non-credit, but students can elect to take the courses for University of Montana academic credit.

## October Newsletter Delay

It appears that many of our members did not receive their October Buzz until a week or more after our October meeting. The newsletters are mailed so that they are a timely reminder of our monthly meeting. They should show up in Saturday's or Monday's mail delivery before our second Tuesday meeting. The October newsletter was mailed on time (despite all the activities of the Fort Bend County Fair). It is our understanding that mail was delayed by severe damage to one of the USPS sorting facilities that serves the Houston area. Mail normally processed in Houston had to be re-routed all over the place.

## **October Meeting Notes**

We had 43 names on the sign-in sheets for our October 8 meeting. A head count came up with 43 too! Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, gave an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Four first-time visitors introduced themselves and let us know of their beekeeping goals.

Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk reminded everyone that the Texas Beekeepers Association's Annual Conference is in San Antonio at the Hilton San Antonio Airport on November 8 - 9. To register, go to [www.texasbeekeepers.org](http://www.texasbeekeepers.org).

Jeff McMullan let everyone know about the Louisiana Beekeepers Association's Fall Open House on November 2 in Baton Rouge at the USDA Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics and Physiology Laboratory. Cost is \$35 for pre-Registration or \$40 at the door (includes a catered lunch).

Gene DeBons spoke about the arrival of africanized honey bees in Texas in 1990 and how our organization, Houston and other cities made advance preparations to respond to "killer bee" emergencies. These efforts were thwarted by the Texas Structural Pest Control Board. A regulation made it illegal for anyone to kill bees unless they are a licensed pest control operator. The rule also required individuals, such as firefighters, to post a notice 48 hours before rescuing someone in a commercial establishment. Someone thought bees would agree to postpone their attacks for 48 hours? Typical government bureaucracy. In the end, pest control operators, who thought they had captured a lucrative opportunity, decided that they didn't want anything to do with bad bees. Rules got changed.

Danessa then introduced our main speaker, Dennis Gray. Dennis runs Cactus Village Birds and Bees and is the president of the Coastal Bend Beekeepers Association which serves beekeepers from Wharton to Uvalde to Laredo to Brownsville. Dennis gave us a presentation on the current laws in Texas for selling honey from the most restrictive to the least restrictive.

To sell honey wholesale or for resale, such as at a restaurant or store, food safety rules require that you must have a Food Manufacturer License and bottle your honey in a facility licensed and inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Some of the requirements are: the room/building cannot open directly into a dwelling; smooth nonabsorbent (easily cleaned) walls and ceiling; cold water and 110-degree hot water; separate hand-washing facilities; tight fitting doors and windows; no eating, drinking, smoking, or pets allowed; everything must be off the floor on shelves (except the trash can); and if you aren't on city water, you must test well water every month the honey house is in operation. Liability insurance is recommended. If you sell outside Texas, you must register with the FDA, it's optional otherwise.

A Small Honey Producer can bottle honey in a home kitchen as long as it is less than 2,500 lbs (200+ gallons!) per year. In accordance with Texas Agriculture Code Chapter 131, subchapter E. The honey must be from hives in Texas and managed by you. Sales of pure honey may only be made by you or an immediate family member direct to the consumer. Labels must include the statement, "Bottled or packaged in a facility not inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services." This is in the statute, so do not abbreviate the statement.

On September 1, new laws went into effect in Texas' Cottage Food Rules. Now, any food that is "time and temperature safe" can be sold direct to consumers. You don't

need to bother with bees and it includes honey, infusions, and mixtures. Only one-half of the direct sale must be in person. You can sell online, but deliver in person. Or you can sell in person, but ship the food. The food must be prepared in your home kitchen (not a separate building) and using appliances meant for residential use. The limit is \$50,000 total food sales per year and you must have a current Food Handlers card. There are specific labeling requirements regarding allergens and preparation in an uninspected kitchen. Be aware that while honey is not taxable, honey candy is, and some other honey products may be. Cities cannot prohibit selling of cottage foods; however, HOAs/POAs may have rules that restrict operating a business in your home.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Our October treasury balance was \$4,106.91. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues, \$50.00 for mentoring registrations, and \$283.00 for t-shirt orders. Expenses were \$100.00 speaker donation, \$237.50 for ten copies of The Beekeeper's Handbook, and \$6.38 monthly website fee. The resulting balance is \$4,106.03 (\$4,056.03 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

### **TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION**



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