



Fort Bend Buzz

March 2024

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association
fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except December). The March 12, 2024 meeting will be held at 7:00 pm both at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are \$10.00 per person, per calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.



February Meeting Notes

Prior to the meeting, the Intro to Beekeeping Study Group met for session 1 (of 4). Group Leader, Javier Delgado of Apis Pro Farms, gave the presentation on Bee Biology. 17 people signed in for the Study Group.

President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting at 7:30 and welcomed all. She then presented Harrison Rogers with his award for the Black Jar Honey Contest we held at the November 2022 meeting.

Harrison and Jim Orr spoke about the 2024 AgVenture Honey Bee Exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show, 'aka Rodeo Bees'. This interactive exhibit, which includes Observation Hives, is popular with children and adults. Every year, area beekeepers volunteer to staff the exhibit. The volunteer sign-up sheet was available at the meeting.

Vice President Jody Taylor then gave the announcements which included:

- Central Texas Beekeepers Association's 14th Annual Beekeeping School is on March 2nd in Brenham. This is one of the best one-day schools and we are fortunate for it to be so close to home. Registration is already open. The website is CentralTexasBeekeepers.org

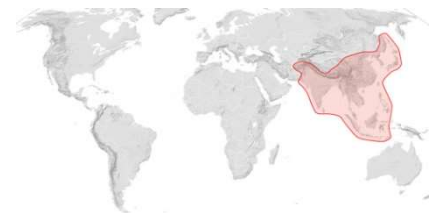
- For those of you just starting in beekeeping, our Intro to Beekeeping's first meeting was this evening from 6-7pm. It's not too late to join the group. If you haven't already done so, get a registration form from the sign-in table.

Gene DeBons, Swarms Calls Coordinator, then briefly spoke on what Swarms Call are and how our members provide swarm capture as a free service to our community. He explained how he contacts members on the list and the importance of being ready to go at a moment's notice.

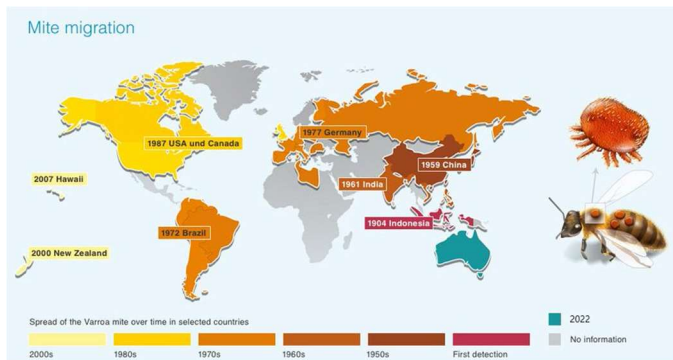
Jody then introduced our guest speaker, Randy Oakley of Oakley Family Apiaries. Oakley Family Apiaries manages 400 beehives along the I-35 corridor between Waco and Austin. Three generations of Oakleys are involved in the family bee business that was started in 1975. The Oakleys harvest and sell many beehive products from their bees and foster beekeeping by offering a beekeeper mentoring program. Additionally, they raise and sell pure-bred Russian bees. As a side note, Randy is one of the Presenters at CTBA Bee School.

Randy's presentation, *Managing Pure-Bred Russian Honey Bees in Texas* was very informative.

To understand how Russian bees became better equipped to survive against Varroa Mites, you need to know the true host of varroa mites is *Apis cerana Fabricius* (the eastern or Asian honey bee). *A. cerana* bees are very similar



to our western honey bees, but one of the differences, is they do not produce as much honey. And since beekeepers want bees to make a lot of honey, in the 1850s, Ukrainian settlers brought our western honey bees to Primorsky Krai, which is in the most southwestern tip of Russia – and also the native range of *A. cerana*. Varroa mites ‘jumped’ to the western honey bees. For the next 100 years, the western honey bees in Primorsky Krai were subject to natural selection and developed traits that allow them to survive varroa mites. During this time, the varroa mite was still contained to the natural range of *A. cerana*. But in 1950, western honey bees from Primorsky Krai were exported to eastern Russia, eventually allowing varroa mites to spread to every continent. Varroa arrived in the N. America in 1987.

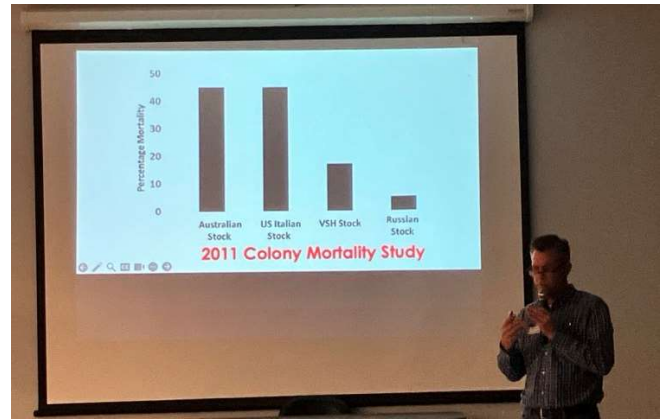


In 1994 the USDA-ARS Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics & Physiology lab in Baton Rouge, Louisiana began a research program, importing Russian queens annually from 1997 to 2001. Eventually, 18 queen lines were selected for varroa mite resistance, honey production, and work-ability. In 2007 the Russian Honey Bee Breeders Association was formed and Russian bees were assigned to their members to continue the breeding and selection program.

The traits of the Russian Honey Bee that give them resistance to varroa mites include:

- Suppression of varroa growth rate due to Varroa Sensitive Hygiene and Grooming.
- Reduced mite reproductions from combs and an extended phoretic period.

These traits result in lower proportions of brood infestation and fewer multiply-infested cells. Additionally, Russian bees seem to be less susceptible to some of the viruses transmitted by varroa mites.



After the presentation, Danessa and Lynne conducted the door prize drawings. Thank you to those who donated door prizes and congratulations to those who won.

Attendance was 51.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer's Report as of February 27, 2024

Our reported treasury balance on January 28, 2024 was \$1,129.57. Since that date we received \$190.00 in dues, a \$10.00 donation from Whip-A-Stitch Embroidery, and a \$1.03 donation from unknown. Expenses were \$9.72 for 50 FBBA Logo buttons, \$150 speaker honorarium, and \$15.59 for the monthly Squarespace fee. The resulting balance is \$1,145.57 (\$1095.57 in the checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.)

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

John L. Few IV
Fort Bend County Extension Agent
Agriculture & Natural Resources
John.Few@ag.tamu.edu
281-342-3034, ext. 37006
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

Texas A&M AgriLife provides equal opportunities in programs, activities, education, and employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type on the basis of race, color, sex, (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), Veteran status, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension activities, are encouraged to contact the Fort Bend County Extension Office at 281-342-3034 for assistance five working days prior to activity.