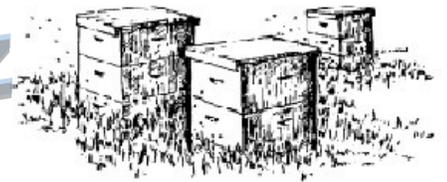




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



July, 2015

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, July 14. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. Thanks to Diane McConnon for volunteering to get the coffee and lemonade set up for us. Thanks too to Nancy Hentschel for volunteering to bring salty treats and Dona Tomplait (something sweet) for our July meeting. We still need volunteers for a couple of vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet. After 30 minutes of social time, the meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Dave Grimme.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I do not have a big problem but would like to know what I should use to treat for SHB?

An A: Small hive beetles (SHB) seem to be particularly numerous this summer and we are entering prime time for these obnoxious pests. Sooner or later you are more likely than not to have the unfortunate experience of being "slimed" by small hive beetle larvae. In fact, whole bee yards can be overwhelmed by small hive beetles!

Newly emerged adult hive beetles are chocolate colored, becoming black as they age. They are about the size and shape of a lady bug with the females being a bit larger than the males. SHB locate honey bee colonies by scent, usually flying in at dusk. Bees seem to recognize this pest and aggressively pursue them inside the hive. They can't sting through the beetle's hard skeleton, but they attack and bite them aggressively, so the adult SHB's seek narrow spaces, cracks and crevices to hide from their attackers. Honey bees often station guards where beetles hide or imprison them in their hiding place with propolis.

Any unguarded SHB female will lay clusters of 10 - 30 eggs (she can lay as many as 2,000 eggs in her lifetime). The eggs hatch in 2 - 4 days and the maggots immediately

begin feeding on pollen, honey and brood. Honey contaminated by SHB larvae ferments (due to a specific yeast carried by the pest). The fouled honey has a distinctively unpleasant odor akin to rotten oranges. Disgusting runny fermented honey crawling with maggots often drains from the hive. Heavily infested colonies usually abscond to escape the slimy mess. SHB can also make an awful mess of stored honey supers or cappings.

SHB larvae develop over five instars (molts) and are mature in 10 to 14 days if food is plentiful. Mature larvae are about 7/16" long and at this point they leave the hive to pupate in the soil. Most larvae pupate within 3 feet of the hive, usually less than 4 inches below the surface. They emerge as adults in three to four weeks and the cycle starts anew, as many as six times a year.

The most frequent advice offered to beekeepers is to maintain strong healthy hives. Weak colonies should be requeened or combined with others. Beware though that big strong hives are the ones most likely to swarm unless swarm management was at the top of your list in the spring. The departing swarm leaves a big stack of boxes without enough bees to deal with hive beetles. It happens like clockwork: three or four days after the swarm the hive is slimed. Sadly this happens just as a new queen is emerging and taking mating flights so the colony, even in their escape, is usually doomed. If thousands of SHB larvae are allowed

to become adult beetles, the whole beeyard can be at risk.

There are lots of options for trapping adult beetles in the hive. Most simply provide a hiding place where the beetles drown in oil, are killed by a pesticide or are imprisoned by the bees. GardStar is a 40% permethrin pesticide product labeled for use as a soil drench to kill SHB larvae or emerging adults. It is very toxic to bees and it must be used carefully according to the label instructions. Never use permethrin inside a bee hive!

It is probably best to discard heavily infested frames but it is important to kill the maggots first. 72 hours in the freezer will kill larvae and unhatched eggs. Another option is to thoroughly wash the comb with a strong blast from a water hose. It is best to capture the wash water in a tub or garbage can to drown the maggots. Submerge the frames after washing to kill any remaining larvae. Uncontaminated capped honey can be left out for the bees to salvage, but check it frequently for more beetle larvae.

SHB prefer dark places so, hives do better in full sun. Translucent plastic telescoping covers seem to discourage hive beetles and ventilated inner covers can keep beetles out if the screen is aluminum window screen instead of hardware cloth. And many beekeepers in our area believe that foraging fire ants are beneficial, feeding on beetle larvae when they leave the hive to pupate.

June Meeting Notes

We had 49 members and guests sign in at our June meeting. Three new members joined the organization, bringing our membership up to 131! Thanks to all who signed in.

Traffic congestion due to the construction on US 59 coming in from the northeast didn't seem as bad as it has been. Even still, if you can figure out a way to avoid the freeway by coming down Hwy 36 from U. S. 90A, you'll probably be in a better mood for the meeting.

After President Daryl Scott called the meeting to order, Steve Mims gave an inspiring invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl then welcomed visitors, first-timers and new members.

Our fun bee facts for June: Honey bees fly at 9 - 15 mph. Dragonflies reach 25 mph (that explains a lot). A bee's sting injects about 150 microliters of venom, so it takes 190,000 stings to total one ounce of venom. A lethal dose of bee venom is 10 stings per pound of body weight (so there is an advantage to having a few extra pounds).

The beekeeper's calendar for June includes keeping up with supers and preparing for the upcoming harvest. Many beekeepers are reporting heavy supers full of uncapped honey, most likely due to the wet weather making it difficult for the bees to get the moisture down as the honey cures. It is important to only extract capped honey since wet honey can ferment.

Gene deBons reported on a recent swarm call that was 25 ft. up in a pecan tree. He wondered if the club could buy a "cherry picker". Actually Jeff McMullan has used his bottomless water jug on a pole to catch swarms as high as 35 ft. (determined by measuring the length of pole sections he put together).

Arthur Reuter asked how many small hive beetles others have been seeing. Most agreed that they were

very numerous this year, but no one could top Arthur's 300 +/- on his inner cover!

Nancy Hentschel discussed a recent article in a beekeeping magazine entitled "The Back of a Beekeeper". Heavy lifting is a big part of keeping bees and it is important that it is done properly. Always keep the feet at a shoulder width and bend the knees with a normal arch in your back. Keep your center of gravity close: stand close to your load and keep your body balanced vertically. Never lift a load and turn at your waist: lift the super then use your feet to move your whole body to set it aside. It is a good idea to do a few stretches and warmup moves like jumping jacks or running in place before starting to move boxes around. The article included photos of stretching exercises that are a great way to start or end your day. Check out the June issue of The American Bee Journal.

Sharon Moore announced that the legislature has passed and the governor signed into law the "exemption" bill for small honey producers. There are now no State facility or inspection requirements for producers to sell or distribute up to 2,500 lb. of honey. Local governments cannot impose additional requirements. There are several very specific requirements pertaining to where the honey can be sold and how it must be labeled. The law goes into effect September 1 and it is best that individuals read and understand what it says.

Our meeting ended with the customary drawing for donated door prizes. Wendy Chopin won a pint of cut comb honey donated by Gene deBons. Bill Windrow donated Building Beehives for Dummies (won by Chelsea Murray). Bill Skidmore took home a basket of veggies from Sharon Moore's garden and Chris Murphy won a couple of cold beers brewed by Greg Pendley. Maureen McKnight selected a vitex plant donated by Gene deBons and Bob Hentschel won a sipping cup donated by Doug Rowell.

Mentoring Program

Our Beekeeper Mentoring Program goal is pretty simple: more knowledgeable, safe, responsible, successful beekeepers. We are close to finalizing a document that describes the structure of our program. We have received copies of The Beekeeper's Handbook as a reference and have discount subscription forms for the "American Bee Journal" in hand. Our "Beekeeper's Journal" has been designed and ordered. We will soon schedule our "Weekend Workshops" and expect a formal kickoff at our August meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Our June treasury balance was \$4,090.51. Since then we collected dues from three new members (\$15.00) and received \$290.00 in donations. We also collected the \$484.91 remaining balances for our honey container order. That amount plus the \$500.00 in deposits reported earlier equals the total cost of \$984.91 paid this month. Other expenses included our club's \$100.00 donation in support of the USA Apimondia Bid Team and \$733.20 for 40 copies of The Beekeeper's Handbook for our Mentoring Program. We also had a \$3.00 bank service charge that we are still trying to figure out. The resulting treasury balance is \$3,059.31.

TEXAS A&M
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