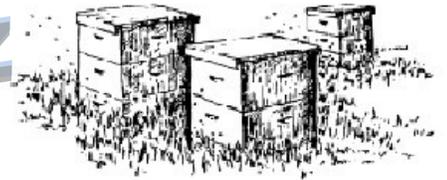




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



June, 2017

The June 13, 2017 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). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. The program for June will be "Dealing with Bad Bees".

Dues due?

Our current dues-paid membership is at 155! If you did not receive this newsletter in the mail, it is because you have not yet paid your \$5.00 dues for 2017 and your name is no longer on the mailing list.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I've tried my hand at catching a swarm, but they didn't stay. What should I do to improve my success?

An A: This is a very significant question since if the bees from a swarm (or cutout) didn't stay in your hive, they didn't just disappear. They went somewhere and it is not good if they ended up in the wall of your house, or, worse yet, a neighbor's house.

Researchers have shown that honey bees will investigate essentially all possible nearby nest sites and choose the best one, often where bees have lived before. If we bring home feral (wild) bees, it is important that we do everything we can to have them stay in our hive.

Feral honey bees can be a real problem. Often people do nothing about feral colonies of honey bees in neighborhoods. They may not even know that they are there, but sometimes they choose to do nothing because it costs a lot of money to have bees removed. They'll often contact beekeeper clubs for help

with their problem. In fact, virtually all of the help requests coming in to fortbendbeekeepers.org are for "cutouts" of established colonies. Our web site clearly says that we do not vet our members for bee removals or recommend those services, but people are often desperate. Sometimes it is not until the bees start causing trouble that the problem is addressed. Question number one before volunteering to do a cutout: "Are they causing problems?". It is usually best for this work to be left to folks that offer bee removal services, especially if the bees are causing problems. A backup plan to destroy aggressive bees is critical.

It is nature's way for bees to swarm and produce new colonies and our association wants to help deal with nuisance bees. We have swarm traps available through the Extension office that people can borrow so swarms can find a desirable place to call home. When bees show up in the trap, the homeowner contacts the Extension office and we recruit a member to remove them. (Just because they are in our traps doesn't mean that they are sweet bees!)

It is not too difficult to get a swarm or cutout into a hive, but, as you've learned, getting them to stay can present a problem. Here are a few tips that may improve your odds:

Spray the bees and the frames with sugar syrup first. Essential oils in the syrup help create an attractive

scent. A drop or two of lemongrass oil in the hive helps too.

Unless it is necessary to maintain decorum, a smoker isn't helpful since we want the bees to communicate their new location with scents, not blocked by the smell of smoke. DEET insect repellent (like Off!) is very effective in preventing bees from returning to their original site (but be very careful not to spray it on bees).

Locate the hive in its permanent site and don't open them up right away: open the hive after dark to keep them inside overnight. Let them wake up in their new home! Feeding may help too if there isn't sufficient nectar available.

Brood to care for helps the bees get established quickly in their new home. Unfortunately, trying to salvage brood from a cutout or trap usually leads to a small hive beetle invasion. A cutout is incredibly disruptive to the colony and beetle adults take advantage of the situation. Once the salvaged brood and/or honey is "slimed" by beetle larvae, the colony will leave for parts unknown leaving the mess behind!

Frames of new foundation or empty top bars should be the last resort for the new colony. Drawn comb and/or brood is best. A frame of capped brood from another hive works great (no bees). Langstroth frames are interchangeable, but there are no standard dimensions for top bar hives. Honey and pollen in the frame corners is a plus. The only

chore for the new bees is to keep the developing pupae warm and look forward to the coming boost in colony numbers.

A new swarm or cutout presents an opportunity to attack our worst enemy, varroa mites. Mites reproduce in brood (they prefer drone brood) where they are hidden from our varroa treatments. When we give a swarm or cutout brood (hopefully from a hive with low mite numbers), avoid or destroy any drone brood cells and seize the opportunity to treat for the vulnerable varroa that are feeding on the adult bees.

Harvest Time!

Harvest time is here. Our association has invested over \$650 for the equipment that you will be needing. Members can borrow the setup at a cost of \$20 for a week or so of use. We also require a \$500 deposit check made out to the Association as a hostage to assure its return in a condition ready for the next user.

Jim Lynch is our harvest equipment custodian. He stores it at his office near Hwy 90 and US 59 in Sugar Land. Jim can be contacted at JWLTX@AOL.com or 713 254-3922. The equipment package includes a manual two-frame extractor and stand, a stainless steel double sieve, a serrated uncapping knife, a pin roller uncapper, an uncapping fork, an uncapping tub, and a honey refractometer.

Borrowers need to provide a container for their honey. Lowe's sells five gallon food grade buckets and lids. You can buy plastic "honey gates", valves to make them into a bottling bucket. You'll need a hole saw of the right size that is carefully spaced near the bottom of the bucket with room to tighten the honey gate into place. An important trick is to heat around the hole with a hair dryer or heat gun (or very very carefully using a propane torch). It softens the plastic so that the bucket can conform to the gate without cracking. (Cracks often appear later if you don't do this!)

May Meeting Notes

We had an all time record of 74 members and guests signed in at our May 9 meeting! After 30 minutes social time, President Nancy Hentschel called the meeting to order and welcomed first-timers and new members.

Our program for May was "Top Bar Hive Beekeeping" by Tom and Connie Elliott who have been helping member Jerzy Trybek get started with a top bar hive. Jerzy has been keeping bees in several Langstroth hives and wanted to give a TBH a try.

Instead of the Langstroth hive's standard rectangular frames with beeswax or plastic foundation, the TBH has a series of foundationless top bars arranged in a characteristically shaped horizontal hive. Each top bar has a spline or rib down its center to encourage the bees to build parallel sheets of comb suspended from the removable bars. The Elliott's use the 45" long Carr-Bradford hive design they found on the internet. It requires 29 top bars with 3/8" wide wooden beeswax coated splines glued into a dado in each top bar. Other top bar designs use strips of plastic foundation or make the cross-section shape of the bar to include the spline.

The TBH itself has angled sides intended to encourage the bees to attach their comb only to the top bars. The beekeeper manipulates the bars to meet the bees needs for brood rearing or storing nectar and honey. As a hive is being established it is very important to keep a close eye out for "cross-combing" or it will be impossible to remove the bars of comb. Unsupported comb, especially new white wax or comb heavily laden with honey is very very fragile. Probably the most significant TBH challenge in our area is comb weakened by our incredibly hot summer days.

Honey produced by TBH bees is crushed and strained to harvest, so you get a lot more wax to deal with. But the real advantage according to

local TBH guru Dean Cook is that with a TBH "you can harvest honey with the biscuits in the oven!"

Following the Elliott's presentation, Texas Beekeeper Association District Director Harrison Rogers reminded everyone of the June 10 Summer Clinic to be held in Arlington. The keynote program includes presentations by Randy Oliver (scientificbeekeeping.com), a frequent contributor to the American Bee Journal.

Before closing, member Gina Walker recommended an internet resource that she found: girlnextdoorhoney.com. She ordered a set of educational posters that she offered to share if someone is giving a presentation.

Congratulations to our May door prize winners and thanks to the donors.

Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was 3,018.82. Since then we received \$210.00 in donations, collected \$55.00 in dues (11 memberships at \$5.00 each) and received \$20.00 for the use of the club's harvest equipment. We spent \$150.00 for our May meeting speaker expenses. The resulting balance is \$3,153.82 consisting of \$3,253.82 in our Wells Fargo checking account less a \$150.00 outstanding check plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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