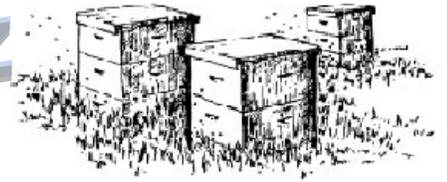




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



June, 2018

The June 12, 2018 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 if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Tim Oppermann who volunteered to bring salty treats and Linda Casey (something sweet) for our June meeting. The meeting 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, if you have stuff that needs a new home, it may be time to *letgo* of a few of your beekeeping treasures.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I need guidance before starting hive inspections!!

An **A:** Hive inspections are when we put our skill and knowledge as beekeepers to the test. Day to day we should observe entrance activity and be on the lookout for changes, but that doesn't go very far toward a complete understanding of what is going on, so we will need to look inside.

Inspecting a beehive should be done routinely, but remember that you are disturbing the hive and it may take a day or so for them to get back to their normal routine. For beginners (or new hives), an inspection every week or two during spring and summer is ok. Inspecting more often is unnecessary and disruptive to the hive. It is likely that you will squish a few bees and there is always the possibility of injuring the queen.

After the hive is first set up or re-queened, it is important to check on things within a week or so. Have the bees settled in ok? Is the queen out of her cage? Is new comb under construction? Are there unusual smells? Future inspections should focus on the queen and brood (along with stored resources and evidence of pest and disease). Is there a healthy vibrant brood pattern of eggs and open and capped

brood? Evidence of her activity is good, but can you find the queen? A queenless colony is incapable of maintaining its work force. As unreplaced workers die, the hive is poorly protected and can soon fall victim to robbing, sliming by small hive beetles or waxworms.

The most common cause of queenlessness and colony failure is failure of a new queen to survive mating flights after a colony has swarmed. This is a fragile time for your bees. Evidence of swarming is a sharp drop in colony numbers, sometimes with the presence of "swarm cells", a number of queen cells along the bottom of frames near the entrance. The new queen will emerge in a day or two after the colony has swarmed. Don't destroy swarm cells since the old queen may have already departed.

What about stored resources of pollen (bee bread), nectar and capped honey? Pollen is usually stored around the perimeter of the brood nest. It provides the protein source for brood rearing, so it is good to see a copious supply. This is especially true going in to winter since it is critical to an early start to brood rearing in a few months. The overwintering supply of honey is very important especially in very cold weather. Besides basic sustenance, honey provides the energy to keep the nest warm when it is cold outside. In times of plenty, be on the lookout for nectar in the brood

nest leaving the queen few cells for egg laying. Add a honey super!

It is important to prepare for the job at hand. Have your smoker going and your bee brush and hive tool ready, along with a frame rest and frame grip if you use them.

Don your protective gear, it is time to get started. It is very important that you use smooth steady gentle motions as you inspect the hive. Start with a few puffs of smoke at the entrance to calm the guard bees. Next blow smoke under the outer cover. At this point, it's best to wait a minute or two as the smoke takes effect. Next, if you have a telescoping cover, remove it and set it on the ground upside-down. Puff a little more smoke and give it a minute or two. Use your hive tool to gently pry up the inner cover (if you use one) and remove it. Scrape off any wax or propolis on the inner cover (or migratory cover) and set it aside, leaning it on the hive near the entrance so stragglers can easily go back inside. Likewise, you should remove any cross comb and burr comb you encounter during your inspection. Have a bucket handy to remove it from the beeyard to avoid encouraging robbers. You can set the bucket out later, away from the hive(s) for the bees to recover any honey you've removed.

Pry loose any honey supers with your hive tool. As you remove boxes, set them on top of the inner cover at 90° to avoid crushing bees.

(Avoid prying at the corners and damaging your boxes since it leads to rotten wood.) Heavy supers contain lots of honey! You can check to see if it is capped and ready for harvest as they are returned to the hive stack.

The principle objective is to examine the brood nest, so before removing a box, check a frame in the middle for signs of brood. If you have reached the brood nest, you can begin your frame by frame inspection. As you proceed, let the bee's behavior guide your smoker use (too much smoke causes the bees to run around, making it difficult to spot the queen). Carefully pry a frame free using your hive tool and hold it up in the sunlight for inspection. A magnifying glass can help old eyes.

The order that you remove frames for inspection is not all that important, so long as they (and the hive stack) are returned in the order and orientation they were in. One good approach is to remove an outside frame and set it aside, leaning on the hive or in a frame rest. That way you can return frames to the hive without squishing too many bees. When you are finished, pushing the frames over to one side makes the next inspection easier, but you can even up the spacing between frames if you want to.

As you reassemble the hive stack, put the boxes back in the order and oriented the way that you found them. Once the box is in place on the hive stack, you can start to examine individual frames. Use smoke or your bee brush to get bees out of the way as you put the boxes on the stack. You can also clear bees by sliding or turning the box into place.

Your memory is not as good as you might think it is, so the most important part of your inspection is to record your observations in your bee notebook or journal. Jim and Chari Elam have a great inspection record sheet on their web site: www.bluebonnetbeekeeping.com/educational.

May Meeting Notes

We had 53 members and guests sign in at our May meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized "first timers", including nine who joined the Association in May.

VP Chelsea Murray made several announcements, including beeyard visits and a picnic on Saturday; Buzz Fest 2018 at Bee Weaver in Navasota on May 26th; TBA Summer Clinic in Conroe on June 30; Brazoria County Beekeepers Honey Expo in Angleton on July 21, and a Painted Hive Contest and Bee Photography Contest planned for our September meeting

Jack had more detail on the picnic. The group will meet at Buc-ees in Greatwood at 10:00 am Saturday. After the first bee yard visit, we'll proceed to Michael McLean's bee yard to tour his apiary and enjoy a fajita picnic. The Association will provide bottled water. A sign-up sheet was passed around for other items.

Sharon Moore gave us a review of The Bees: A Novel by Laline Paull. It is the anthropomorphic story of Flora 717, a honey bee worker.

The Mentoring groups were given an opportunity to report on their activities, followed by a brief discussion on the topic bottom boards.

Ian Kjos announced that he is taking orders for various wood-ware. Dan Jones announced he is re-homing cut-out colonies. For \$150, members can provide him with their empty hive, he will establish the colony, and contact when it's ready to be picked up. Jack Richardson announced that he also has bees for sale.

Chelsea gave a presentation on rendering beeswax. Don't use an open flame: use a double-boiler to melt the comb (any cookware you use will be a mess so use old pots from the thrift store). Pour the melted wax and gunk through a paint filter or cheesecloth. Then put the melt-

ed wax in a pot with water. When it cools, the wax will float to the top and form a cake. Break the wax into chunks and re-melt and filter again. A small crockpot and paintbrush or roller can be used to apply wax to the foundation. A solar wax melter can be made from a styrofoam cooler, cheese cloth, and glass top. You can also buy a solar wax melter. Or you can borrow the club's solar wax melter.

Our meeting concluded with a customary drawing for various donated door prizes. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Silent Auction

You might want to hit the ATM machine before our meeting. Gene deBons has offered to sell some beekeeping gear that belonged to Elton Reynolds, who recently passed away. He'll do it with a silent action at our meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$3,608.54. Since our last report we collected \$115 in donations, \$70 in dues, and \$125 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$77.59 for refreshment items and paid our \$50.00 Association dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association. The resulting balance is \$3,790.95, consisting of \$3,735.95 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

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