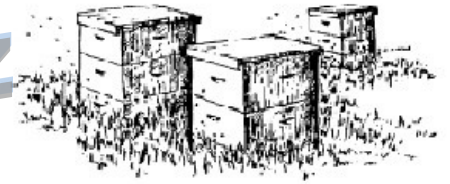




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



October, 2016

The October 11, 2016 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. Thanks to Alice Benson who volunteered to bring salty treats and Michael Pawelek (something sweet) in October. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. No one volunteered to give our opening invocation this month. If you can help with this, please see President Daryl Scott before the meeting.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I have a hive that appears to be queenless. There are no eggs in it and the hive seems weak and lethargic. With no eggs they can't re-queen. Would it be possible to introduce a queen cell to this hive and attempt to save it? If so, do you know where I could get a queen cell quick?

An A: In the fall, the honey bee colony is making preparations for winter. In our area, the goldenrod (all those yellow flowers) and ragweed (sneezing anyone?) are the last big sources for winter stores of honey and pollen. Colony numbers are at their peak and soon the queen will slow (or maybe even stop) her egg laying so there won't be so many mouths to feed over the winter. As you know, if she stops laying completely there will be no eggs or tiny larvae available should they need to rear an emergency replacement for their queen. Without your help, the colony will not survive.

Besides no eggs or brood, queenless colonies are often easily agitated and loud. "Weak and lethargic" doesn't fit this description very well, so the lack of brood may be poor winter preparations since an egg or one day brood are necessary should tragedy befall the queen.

Another careful search for the queen may well be in order. If you can't

find her, it doesn't necessarily mean that she is no longer around.

One option is to give the weak colony a frame of brood that includes eggs and tiny larvae (no bees). As the new workers emerge it boosts the colony population and if they need to raise a queen, they can and will.

From freshly laid egg to emerging queen takes 16 days. It would be late October before she would be making mating flights. In our area it is usually later in the year before drones are expelled so that should be ok, but mating flights are a dangerous time for new queens. Probably a third of them fall victim to predators, so if she has to make multiple mating flights, her survival chances drop dramatically.

Giving the colony a queen cell shortens the process by a couple of weeks and perhaps lowers the risk of late-season low drone numbers (and the need for multiple mating flights). If the colony is not in fact queenless, the old queen may or may not accept her replacement.

Introducing a mated, laying queen is probably a better option since there is no mating flight risk. If the colony is truly queenless, she should be readily accepted and things should work out just fine. Your hive's behavior is a bit questionable though. To make sure she has been accepted, you might want to manually release the new queen

after a few days in the hive (rather than allowing the bees to release her (by eating the queen candy plug).

Buying a new mated queen is also the opportunity to improve the stock in your bee yard. Members Steve Brackmann and Dennis Cox have been raising open mated daughters of a VSH mother queen that was instrumentally inseminated by Dr. John Harbo, renowned honey bee scientist who retired from the USDA honey bee lab. The VSH (varroa sensitive hygiene) trait can be very important if you aren't using routine varroa treatments. On top of that, these bees are most often very docile and a joy to keep.

As a last resort, you may need to combine this weak hive with another one, easily done by the "newspaper combine" method. After overwintering success, you can split the combined hive. You have all the same options for a queen (or queens) after making the split in a few months.

Election Time

We plan an election of officers for 2017 at our November meeting. Please contact Gene deBons (home 281 341-7135, office 979 793-2900 or email res-sol@consolidated.net) for details if you can serve. Rest assured that nominees will not be required to produce their emails, tax returns or foundation records, nor will they get to nominate a U. S. Supreme Court Justice. Sorry.

Thanks

Our organization gets many requests for programs about honey bees and beekeeping. At the top of the list is the honey bee exhibit at the Fort Bend County Fair AGtivity Barn, a much anticipated stop for school groups visiting the fair on weekdays. Beekeepers welcoming the kids at this year's five day run included Stephanie Kinghorn, Jeff McMullan, Volkmar Voigt, Yani Keo, Nancy Hentschel, Daryl Scott, Mike Jurek and Monica Siwiak. The Association adds its "thank you" to the hundreds received from school kids at the Fair.

September Meeting Notes

40 members and guests signed in at our September meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. We expect volunteers to help with this role, but again we had no one willing to step up for this important part of our meeting.

Thanks to Daryl for getting coffee set up for us and to Milton Woods and Bethany Madrid who brought treats for the meeting.

For his September "fun facts" Daryl reported that a honey bee queen can lay 1,500 or more eggs per day, more than one per minute or perhaps over 1,000,000 in her lifetime!

Our meeting program was a presentation by David Olinger of the Fort Bend County Health & Human Services Department. In his role as Public Health Preparedness Coordinator, David is making plans should the Zika virus be found in Fort Bend County.

There are many government and private organizations, as well as individual homeowners, that spray insecticides to control mosquitos in the county. The Fort Bend County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for mosquito spraying in rural areas of the county. They use ultra low volume truck mounted

equipment. Anyone at any time can go to the county web site to click a link that shows the real time location and spray history of all County mosquito control equipment. The county mosquito control effort is not for nuisance mosquito calls. It is solely focused on preventing the spread of mosquito transmitted disease and spray decisions are based on trapping data. Mosquito traps are set out on Mondays and collected on Tuesdays. Captured mosquitos are sent to the Texas Department of State Health Services to determine if infected mosquitos are present. If test results are positive, truck mounted spraying is prescribed for three consecutive evenings, then retesting to determine if the control effort was successful.

By transmitting disease to humans, mosquitos cause more suffering than any other organism. In Fort Bend County, the principle mosquito born disease focus has been the West Nile Virus. This disease is endemic in birds, so it is always present in our area. Besides song birds, it infects both humans and horses. The County's quick disease outbreak detection and focused mosquito control have been effective in managing West Nile.

There are some 176 mosquito species in the U. S. The West Nile Virus is transmitted by the Culex mosquitos, so they have been the focus of insecticide spraying. Now, there is huge public health concern about the Zika virus and it's most devastating effect: severe human birth defects. It has spread widely from its origins in central Africa and mosquito born Zika virus infection has been recorded in Florida. It is transmitted by the Aedes mosquitos, a different mosquito species with different behavior than Culex. Aedes are more adapted to feeding on humans. Zika is spread from human to human, so it is more likely that Zika will be found in neighborhoods than rural areas. They are more active than Culex during the day. Like the Culex, the larvae develop in water, but Aedes lay eggs all about and they remain viable for

a year or more.

There have been 181 Zika cases in Texas, all travel related. The County is planning how it will deal with infected humans or mosquitos to prevent the spread of Zika.

Mosquito control insecticides are very toxic to honey bees and preventing honey bee losses is a key concern. If roadside spraying is ineffective, daytime aerial spraying will be the last resort. Aerial spraying requires approximately two weeks of planning, including detailed mapping (David provided forms for submitting hive locations). The plan must be approved by the County Judge and at least a three day notice must be given.

Thanks to the door prize donors; congratulations to the winners.

Hive Registration Reminder

At our October meeting, David Olinger with the Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Department will give an update on their apiary registration program.

Treasurer's Report

Our September treasury balance was \$2,498.26. We've collected dues from five new and renewing members (\$25.00) and spent \$15.38 on meeting supplies. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,507.88, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,467.88 in our checking account.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



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