



Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



October, 2017

The October 10, 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. Our meeting program topic will be honey crystallization by Gene deBons. 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 you arrive early, please volunteer to start the coffee.) Members can also volunteer to bring snacks. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: We just harvested our first honey crop and I have far more than we can eat or maybe even give away! Selling a few jars would help pay for my "habit". What is the easiest way to make that happen?

An A: Honey bees will forage two miles or more from their home to gather sweet liquids (usually the nectar from flowers) to be made into honey. Their efforts usually yield far more honey than the bees would need for food in winter or for times when nectar is scarce. We harvest this excess, extract it from the beeswax comb and bottle and label it for sale or gifts to neighbors, friends and family. This process also yields beeswax for use in making candles, cosmetics, etc.

Many see a health benefit in consuming "local honey" produced from local floral sources. These sources can be neighborhood landscape plantings or naturally growing wild flowers, flowering trees, shrubs and vines. In our area, the natural range of flowering plants is very large, so "local" can mean a wide area so long as the floral sources are consistent. This is significantly different in mountainous areas where elevation (and plant species) can change a lot in just a few miles.

As you know, the club owns an extractor setup that members can bor-

row. We require a security deposit and \$20 donation for its use. You have to provide a container for the extracted honey, but a clean food grade plastic pail and lid from Lowe's works well (be sure to buy a pail opener too or you will have a rough time getting it back open). A "honey gate" from a bee supply house is all that's needed to turn your pail into a bottling bucket.

It is a good idea to let the honey set for a few days in a warm place before bottling. Bubbles, bits of wax, etc. float to the top and your honey gets crystal clear. You can order honey containers or just use canning jars from the grocery store. Another option is to contact member Peg Turrentine who has a local source for glass containers.

Your honey is significantly different than "grocery store" kind. First of all, it is from local floral sources (most store bought honey is imported). All honey will eventually crystallize. Commercial packagers are concerned with a long shelf life since crystallized honey on the store shelf will not sell well. The best way to delay crystallization is to heat the honey and filter out all of the sugar crystals, pollen or wax. These tiny solid particles will become nuclei for sugar crystals.

Sale of food, including honey, for human consumption is regulated in the interest of public health and safety. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service document "Selling Honey in Texas" describes requirements for honey sales, including by

individual beekeepers. You should carefully read and understand this document. Under the law, beekeepers who are "small honey producers" can sell pure honey (with no added ingredients) so long as very specific requirements are met, including hive ownership and management, labeling, and the place and nature of the sale transaction. Small honey producers are exempted from local regulation and any other food safety requirements. If honey is to be used as an ingredient in other products to be sold, offered for later retail sale or sold across state lines (or on the internet) it must have been produced in a facility licensed and inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services and registered for traceability by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration. Local food safety rules may also apply.

We all agree that a beekeeper's honey crop is special and local honey is a better choice than imported stuff at the grocery store. Our web site (fortbendbeekeepers.org) lists members with honey for sale. You can sign up by emailing info@fortbendbeekeepers.org.

Election Time

We plan to elect officers for 2018 at our November meeting. Volunteering to help and taking a leadership role are important to our organization. Please contact Gene deBons for details if you can serve (home 281 341-7135, office 979 793-2900 or help@fortbendbeekeepers.org).

September Meeting Notes

Be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities. We had 50 members and guests that signed in at our September meeting.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Nancy Hentschel called the meeting to order. Vice President Tracey Grimme gave an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Tracey noted that the Brazos Valley Beekeepers Fall 2017 Bee School is scheduled for September 23 at the Agricultural and Life Sciences Building at Texas A&M. Also on the calendar is the Texas Beekeepers Association 2017 Annual Convention, November 9 - 11 at the Frank Mayborn Event & Convention Center in Temple, Texas. Registration is on the TBA website: texasbeekeepers.org.

Tracey also announced the ongoing 2017 North American Mite-A-Thon, September 9 - 16, 2017. This is a national effort to collect data on varroa infestation across North America in this one week window. All beekeepers are asked to participate by sampling hives for varroa using either the sugar roll or alcohol wash protocol. This is a program of the Pollinator Partnership, an organization concerned with conservation, education and research to promote the health of pollinators. The Mite-A-Thon intent is to raise awareness of varroa monitoring methods and to encourage all beekeepers to monitor for mites and know the management strategies that are available.

Courtney Gremmel from the Fort Bend County Health and Human Services Department gave us an update on Fort Bend County's mosquito control efforts. There has been high public interest in controlling mosquitoes because of remnant standing water in areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. Beekeepers are concerned about the impact of spraying to kill adult mosquitos.

Many government and private organizations, as well as individual homeowners, spray insecticides to control mosquitos. In the wake of Harvey, there has been much said about aerial spraying in the area for mosquitos. At the present time, Fort Bend County does not anticipate the need for such drastic mosquito control measures (the Road and Bridge Department uses ultra low volume truck mounted equipment to kill adult mosquitos).

By transmitting disease, mosquitos cause more human suffering than any other organism. Fort Bend County's mosquito control effort is solely focused on preventing the spread of mosquito transmitted disease (not for nuisance mosquito problems). 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.

Courtney reported that trap counts remain low and no reports of disease carrying mosquitoes from the State DSHS Lab have been received. Based on these factors, Fort Bend County does not perceive a widespread public health threat at this time and aerial spraying is not anticipated.

The Fort Bend County Health and Human Services maintains a voluntary Apiary Registration. Beekeepers can register their hives at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FBCHHSApiaries>

In the unlikely event that aerial spraying would be necessary, beekeepers will be notified ahead of time.

Member Jerry Griffin confessed to perhaps having more money than sense. Nonetheless, he reported on his recent purchase of a Bee Cool solar powered hive ventilator. It goes below the top cover and a

thermostat controls a ventilating fan. The fan draws air up through hive and out the top of ventilator through built in vents. The jury is still out, but Jerry reports a whole lot less bearding (and a lighter wallet).

Jack Richardson gave a presentation on old-time beekeeping. Sections of a hollow log, "bee gums", were used as hives. Later, boxes were built of sawmill reject lumber. Cross pieces in the center supported the brood nest while honey comb was suspended from the top cover. To populate the hive, it was placed on an old sheet. A swarm clinging to a branch was carefully cut then shaken out in front of the box. As many of us have seen for ourselves, the bees dutifully march inside. Many old-timers are still of the opinion that bees moving in on their own are most likely to stay.

Thanks to our door prize donors and congratulations to the winners.

Treasurer's Report

Our September treasury balance was \$3,161.98. Since then we received a \$25.00 donation and collected \$15.00 in dues (3 memberships at \$5.00 each). The resulting balance is \$3,201.98 consisting of \$3,151.98 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

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