



Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



November, 2018

The November 13, 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. Dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year. There is no meeting in December, so joining in December is no bargain, but it does get you on the mailing list for our January newsletter.

As this will be our last meeting for 2018, the club will be providing deli food trays from Copious Deli, 939 3rd St. in historic Rosenberg (832 847-4808). We will enjoy an hour of delicious food and fellowship with one another from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The meeting and election of officers will take place immediately afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: Honey stores are obviously important for winter survival. How much is enough?

An **A:** With honey stores for overwintering bee hives, more is obviously better. It is food when none is available. In addition, honey bees keep their hive warm by flexing the flight muscles in their thorax. This requires a lot of energy that they get from consuming stored honey. Bees store honey to meet this need but it is also very important that they have adequate resources remaining as spring nears. In late winter, brood rearing goes into high gear to build the work force that will soon be needed to visit new spring blooms. This requires stores of honey as well as pollen ("bee bread") to nourish the growing larvae. A hive's ability to have a full force of foragers that is ready to go when the spring flowers bloom is one of the honey bee's most fascinating traits. The timing is critical: too early and there will be too many mouths to feed, too late and a significant portion of the nectar flow will be missed.

We are fortunate that our winters are usually mild and a nectar source may be available almost year around, especially for backyard

bees scouting landscape plantings. Mild winters also make it easier to keep the hive warm. We've all seen that beautiful mid-winter day with clear skies, temperature in the 60's and feverish activity at the hive's entrance. We know that spring is still far off, but our bees are able to replenish some of their honey supply while those in more northern areas will remain confined inside the hive for many more weeks.

In our area, 25 or 30 pounds of honey stores is usually ample to survive the winter and later nourish new brood ahead of the spring nectar flow. There should also be pollen stores in the brood nest.

Here are some numbers you can use to help with your decision making:

each full shallow frame holds about 2.4 lb. of honey

each full medium frame holds about 3.0 lb. of honey

each full deep frame holds about 4.5 lb. of honey

So, for example, a full 10 frame medium holds 30 pounds of honey which should be adequate for our typical winter. A full shallow may prove inadequate, but usually there are a couple of deep frames of honey in the brood box giving a total store of about 33 lb.

These are simply rules of thumb since there are many variables that

impact the colony's need for food. Is the winter cluster the size of a grapefruit or does it nearly fill a deep brood chamber with many more mouths to feed? Is the winter abnormally harsh or mild? Are there long stretches of rainy, wet cold weather that shut down supplemental winter foraging? It is a good idea to lift the back of your hives every week or so to confirm a heavy supply of honey to make it through the remaining winter. The beekeeper needs to be observant and prepared to feed the colony if winter stores run short.

Small hive beetles add another dimension to this question. More is better may not be such a good idea after all. A colony "boiling over with bees" will harass these pests and prevent the female beetles from laying eggs. Too many frames of honey may leave some of it unguarded and subject to being "slimed" by small hive beetle larvae. Some beekeepers opt for minimum honey stores and lots of bees in the overwintering colony.

It is important to keep an eye on your hives as winter progresses, especially if the weather increases needs or limits winter foraging. It is easy to lift the rear of the hive to heft for honey stores that remain. A limited honey supply means that winter feeding is necessary, a topic for the January *Buzz*.

October Meeting Notes

We had 39 members and guests sign in at our September meeting. The head count was 40 so someone must have forgotten to sign in. Thanks to those that did. Our sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed everyone and introduced our guests.

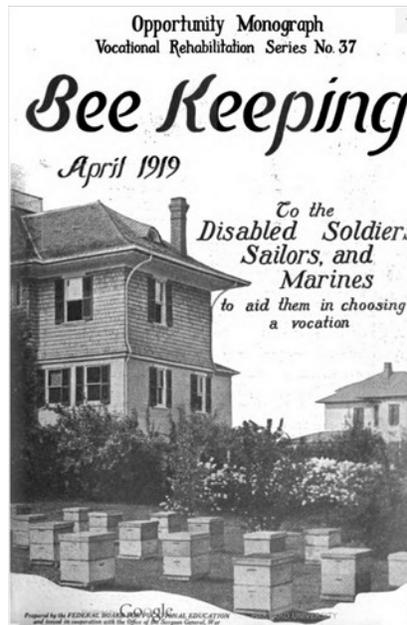
Ian Kjos demonstrated the ventilated inner covers and screened bottom boards he has made. He has them available for sale at the *letgo* table.

Late summer is goldenrod season, but frequent rains seem to have slowed the bloom. Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones asked if anyone has goldenrod honey for sale. If you do, please get with her for contact info of a gentleman who is looking for dark and strong-flavored honey.

Enchanted Nurseries & Landscapes has requested a speaker on beekeeping in May for their Enchanted Gardens and Enchanted Forest locations. See Lynne Jones if you are interested.

The Texas Beekeepers Association annual convention is in November in Temple. It is a fun and informative event with vendors, presentations, contests, and an auction.

Gene DeBons gave us a history lesson on a government program for disabled WWI veterans. Physical labor was prevalent at that time. A healthy, unskilled worker earned about \$1.50 for a workday of ten or more hours. The Federal Board for Vocational Education provided tuition, books, and tools of the trade for returning veterans. While in the program, the government paid the disabled vet at least \$65/month. Booklets, called Opportunity Monographs, presented information on occupations in various industries and were available to the veteran to “aid them in choosing a vocation”. There were



44 booklets in the series; Series No. 37 was Bee Keeping. Several prominent beekeepers of the time, including C.P. Dadant and A.I. Root, were involved in setting up the program. If you are interested in reading the Opportunity Monographs, the entire series is available at: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100331641>.

For today's veteran, HivesforHeroes.com is a local 501(c)3 nonprofit organization empowering veterans through beekeeping. Kenneth Coleman, a Houston resident and head of Uncommon Bees, founded Hives for Heroes in November, 2017. Volunteer help is always welcome.

Jack Richardson then led an open forum. One member expressed concern because his hive is full of bees and there are a lot of them clustered on the outside of the hive. When a colony begins to outgrow its available space, swarming may occur. Though swarming is usually a spring and summer preoccupation of bees, it can occur in the fall also. One way to try to prevent swarming is for the beekeeper to split the colony. One way to easily do this is to remove “extra” frames with capped queen cells along with some frames of bees and resources, and establish them in a new hive. Virgin queens don't always make it back from mating flights, so be prepared to

“unsplit” them. Drones are becoming scarce at this time of the year and multiple mating flights increase the risk.

Vice President Chelsea Murray reminded everyone that the election of officers for 2019 will be held at the November meeting. Jack and Chelsea will not be running for re-election as president and vice-president. Lynne indicated she is willing to run again for secretary. If you are interested in running for any of the positions, please contact Chelsea or Gene deBons or indicate your willingness to be nominated prior to the start of the November meeting.

As the October meeting closed, our customary door prize drawings were held for donated items, which included woodware, a smoker, an internal feeder, and a honeybee garden stepping stone. Thank you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to the lucky winners.

Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,642.35. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues and a \$5.00 donation. There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,657.35, consisting of \$3,607.35 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
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