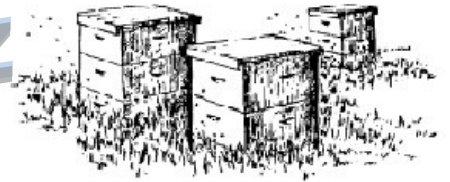




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



April, 2019

The April 9, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 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).

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up 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. We 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 seize the opportunity to 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:** I've read on the internet that scientists have discovered that lithium chloride is very effective in controlling varroa. True? Is it available for beekeepers?

**An A:** There seem to be some exciting developments in honey bee research that will help us deal with varroa mites. Maybe 2018 will go down as the year of discovery that led to control of this obnoxious pest and the diseases it spreads.

It is easy to be skeptical of honey bee research after all the debunked "scientific evidence" on neonicotinoid pesticides. There has been a nearly constant uproar over neonicotinoid pesticides over findings by "researchers" published in 2012: "*In situ replicaton of honey bee colony collapse disorder*", [Bulletin of Insectology 65](#). A Harvard School of Public Health researcher and a couple of Massachusetts beekeepers "discovered" that if you feed bees pesticide-laced sugar water they will die. Actually, it took concentrations far above the accepted lethal dose (hundreds of times any likely exposure) to achieve that end. Nonetheless, the conclusion was that the dead bees replicated chronic collapse disorder (CCD) and if neonics continued to be used, all the bees would be dead and hu-

mankind was right behind them. (How many times have you heard that line?) Many consider neonics to be the least toxic pesticides ever developed and are safe when used properly. Without neonics, agriculture will have to go back to far more toxic chemicals applied at higher and higher rates (not exactly a desirable outcome).

The lithium chloride research was published in January, 2018. Unlike the neonic story, it is a great example of scientists coming to a completely different conclusion than their premise going in. It reflects on how responsible research works.

The lithium chloride research is preliminary. Nonetheless, it reflects greatly on the future path of responsible research. These German researchers wanted to see if molecular biology (RNA interference or RNAi, whatever that is) could be used to control varroa. They saw significant initial success in their genetic studies, but when they set out to confirm their results, they discovered that it was lithium chloride (used to prepare the genetic material) that yielded the promising results. It is fascinating to read the scientific descriptions of the laboratory detective work done to identify lithium as the active agent.

There always seems to be a common thread when it comes to dealing with varroa. Once again a treatment has been discovered, but it is

not known how/why it worked.

Another paper published in December, 2018, reports on a very significant discovery: haemolymph is not the principle food source for varroa. That study found that we've had it all wrong for many years. Varroa feed on nutrient rich "fat bodies" in the bee's abdomen, not the haemolymph (or hemolymph), analogous to bee blood.

The lithium researchers referred to varroa as "haemolymph-sucking" parasites. Haemolymph isn't exactly bee blood. It does not carry oxygen but does transport nutrients and waste. While our blood circulates in a closed system, haemolymph bathes tissues after being pumped from the abdomen and dumped on the bee's brain, bathing other tissues as it returns back to the abdomen to be pumped again.

The lithium paper is all about haemolymph and you wonder if the fat body feeding conclusion is the link to figuring out how LiCl as well as essential oils, oxalic acid, coumaphos, etc. actually work! It is great that real scientists seem to be hot on the trail of this obnoxious pest!!

When the next online petition to outlaw neonicotinoid pesticides shows up in your email, don't let it taint your view of honey bee research. There is some ongoing real research with great promise for beekeepers, farmers, and honey bees.

## March Meeting Notes

We had 50 members and guests sign in at our March 12 meeting. The head count was 52. Did you forget to sign in? Always register at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack welcomed all present and gave the seven attending for the first time an opportunity to introduce themselves. Jack then presented an award to Monica Siwiak recognizing her first place creamed honey at the TBA conference in November.

Those who volunteered at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's AGVENTURE honey bee exhibit were asked to stand and given a round of applause.

Lynne asked that anyone who would like to serve as a Mentor to please get with her. Also, she announced that there would be a special door prize - a free registration to the Central Texas Beekeepers Association bee school on March 23rd in Brenham. This door prize can only be awarded to a FBBA member.

Ian Kjos demonstrated his newly designed Frame Jig. He also let us know this Jig has been donated to the club, and like the club's extracting equipment, it can be checked out for use by members. Patty Griffin demonstrated the double-layer mesh Nuc bag she designed and sells. A Nuc box fits easily into the zippered bag and ensures the bees do not escape during transport.

Gene DeBons shared with us some facts he found in the book, Curative Properties of Honey and Bee Venom by N. Yoirish, published in Russia in 1959, and in the USA in 1977. Petro Prokopovich (1775-1850) is remembered with gratitude for inventing in 1814 the movable-frame hive. (Langstroth's patent wasn't until 1852.) He set up a bee-

keeping school in 1828, the first in Europe and Russia. After the Revolution, Lenin signed a declaration in April, 1919, "On the Protection of Beekeeping." By 1940, the USSR had more than 100,000 collective and state farms that included 10,000,000 beehives. "The Nazi barbarians looted thousands of api-aries at collective and state farms and destroyed over 2,000,000 bee colonies."

After Gene's fascinating report, Danessa Yaschuk shared the "In the Bee-yard" tasks for March: If you have bees ordered, have your equipment ready. Inspect hives. Feed if stores are low. Turn entrance reducer to the larger opening. Watch for signs of swarming and take action if needed. Make splits if planning to do so. Consider your IPM schedule and if treating, do so before nectar flow starts.


Plan to have Supers on in early April. Have enough boxes and frames available for both brood and honey to stay ahead of your bees. Spring flowers are here and bees are actively foraging. Increased population and abundant resources lead to the natural process of swarming.

Jack and several members shared tips for catching swarms and Jack showed us a swarm trap that is simply a large garden "pulp pot" mounted to plywood. Similar ones are available in bee supply catalogues. Traps should go up in mid-March, baited with a few drops of lemon grass oil. Be careful when you take the trap down because the comb is very fragile. Don't leave swarm traps up year-round because other animals will take up residence in them. The trap should be mounted high above the ground, but not so high that you can't retrieve it - remember it will be full of bees! It should be someplace where you can check it frequently. Jack also demonstrated some of the contraptions he's come up with for funneling swarms into boxes and catching water meter bees. Once you transfer the bees into your hive box, a

frame with open brood will almost always keep the colony from abandoning your box.

The door prize drawings were held for some very nice items including the free registration to CTBA's bee school. Thank you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to those who were lucky winners.

## Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If you see a sad  bee, it means you haven't paid your \$5.00 dues for 2019 and you will be dropped from the Buzz mailing list. You can pay your dues at our April meeting or mail them to Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., c/o Lynne Jones, 19747 Coppervine, Houston, TX 77084.

## Mentors Needed!

We need mentors! A mentor only needs a year or two of beekeeping under their belt plus the desire to lead a small group as they learn more about keeping bees.

## Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,762.92. Since then we collected \$60.00 in dues payments and \$50.00 in mentoring registrations. The resulting balance is \$3,872.92, \$3,822.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash for change.

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