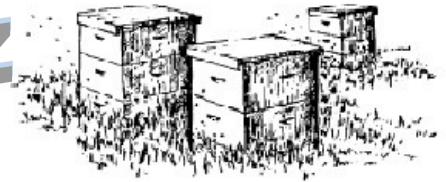


Fort Bend Buzz



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

4 I have a couple of questions. Is it better to have one or two deep brood boxes? Why? Another one: how long do you keep frames in the freezer to kill invading eggs and larvae?

An A: Your first question is certainly a good one since it is one of the basic decisions that new beekeepers need to make. In fact, you'll have to decide if you want any deeps at all!

At our February meeting Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the hive design decisions that beekeepers must make. Removable frames are required by law across the U. S. since it allows the hive to be inspected for pests and disease. In a nutshell, keeping bees in a "bee gum" or Winnie the Pooh straw skep is not permitted.

Despite all the glowing success stories and YouTube videos of other hive designs on the internet, the "Langstroth Hive" has proven itself best, especially for new beekeepers.

Jeff described five different hive design choices that he has seen beekeepers in our area use. The Langstroth hive is by far the most common because it is most easily used successfully.

A "deep" is the tallest Langstroth box choice and is given names like a "brood box", "hive body", "deep super", etc. It is best suited for the brood nest because it is of adequate size, but if it were filled with honey as a "super" above the brood nest it could weigh as much as 100 lbs. (With smaller radial extractors, deep frames must be extracted "tangentially" and reversed as honey spins out.)

Boxes placed above the brood nest are intended to hold honey stores and the "one deep or two" question really applies to the bee's brood nest. A single deep is usually not large enough for a successful colony's brood rearing. Therefore, a honey super on top of a single deep will usually end up with brood in it unless a queen excluder keeps the queen downstairs. But an excluder on a single deep is not a good plan. It is far better for the colony to have ample room for brood rearing. Restricting the bees to a single deep can lead to overcrowding and encourage swarming. Without a super, the bees may fill the brood nest with honey, leaving the queen with no place for her eggs. A "honey bound" colony is under high stress.

As your colony grows, it will require another box for their brood nest. Some beekeepers give them a honey super (usually a "medium") for that purpose, but a second deep is usually a better idea. Over the winter the bee cluster moves up-

ward into the second box, vacating the frames in the bottom. Beekeepers swap the two boxes in late winter/early spring so the brood nest has room to grow upward. This tends to discourage swarming and is consistent with the bee's way of doing things. But if the brood nest is in a deep-medium stack, there is usually not enough room for the entire brood nest in the medium box above. Reversing the boxes to put the medium on the bottom may divide the brood nest, which is a really bad idea.

When it is time to give your growing colony another box for their brood nest, a second deep is better. Giving them a medium super instead may backfire on you.

Then again, using all medium boxes ain't a bad plan. (It will take at least three boxes for the brood nest.)

Frames with drawn comb are a precious commodity. Freezing them does kill pests but they must be stored properly afterwards to prevent reinfestation. The oilfield rule that "if some is good, more is better" applies, but overnight is usually adequate if you are cycling through limited freezer space.

A Ziploc 44 Qt Weather Shield Storage Box works great for storing frames with drawn comb. This box has a gasketed lid, but you should still store the frames with moth crystals with p-Dichlorobenzene (NOT MOTH BALLS). Walmart.com has both.

April Meeting Notes

The Community Center was pretty warm for our April meeting since the air conditioning was out of commission. Someone remarked "it feels like a bee hive in here!". Cute.

Our head count at the meeting came to 73. We had 72 members and guests on the sign-in sheets, short one before Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones realized that she had not yet signed in.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. There were five first-time attendees and each introduced themselves and let us know what their experience or interest in beekeeping is.

Several members attended the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's 11th Annual Beekeepers school in March. They reported it was well organized as usual and having the event at Brenham High School was much better than previous years at the Washington County Fairgrounds.

Upcoming events are the Sugar Land Earth Day this Saturday and the Bee Weaver Buzz Fest on Saturday, May 25th. [Note: due to severe weather, Sugar Land Earth Day was rescheduled to May 18th].

Laura Parnell announced that her son and other FFA members are organizing a Community Honey Tasting and Presentation to be held on May 13th at Elkins High School. They are asking for donations of honey in containers of at least 8 ounces for the official honey tasting. For anyone who would like to have a table at the event to sell honey or honey/bee items, the cost for a table is \$20. Proceeds will go towards FFA Senior scholarships. Contact Laura at 281 467-6865 if you need more info.

Steve Hutchinson, 15+ year club member, gave us a brief history of his experience and what he considers to be the keys to successful beekeeping. Steve has nucs available

for \$130. He also announced that he is planning to sell his hives. If you are interested, please call him at 979 533-0094 to discuss.

Danessa Yaschuk, club Vice-President, shared the "In the Beeyard Now" tasks for April.

Now: Plan to have supers on established hives in early April. Have enough boxes and frames available for both brood and honey to stay ahead of your bees. Add another super when bees are working on 6-8 frames. Split strong colonies if desired. Watch for signs of swarming. Catch swarms. If establishing packages or Nucs, feed sugar water until all comb is drawn, then add another box and feed until all comb in it is drawn too. Do not feed sugar water when honey supers are on.

Get Ready: Plan to continue with the same tasks next month.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Chris Barnes, owner of Cornerstone Honey and director of the youth program at Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association. Chris' topic was Making Splits. There are several reasons a beekeeper might want to make a split, but the two most common are to increase hives or to prevent swarming. Regardless of the reason for the split, a second queen is needed. The beekeeper can either provide a queen (or queen cell), or can provide the resources for the bees to make a queen. For the bees to make a queen, they must have eggs or very young larvae and timing is extremely important. If it is too early in the year there may not be enough drones available. Too late in the year and the colony won't be able to build up for the winter. Plan on feeding both the old and the new colony. Chris demonstrated several methods for making the split.

After Chris' presentation, a How to Make a Split handout was distributed. The club donated \$100 to the BVBA youth program and \$50 to cover Chris' travel costs.

The door prize drawings were held for some very nice items. Thank

you to those who donated the prizes and congratulations to those who were lucky winners. If you would like to contribute a door prize, simply bring it to the meeting and place it on the table at the head of the room.

For those that could stay a few more minutes after the meeting, Ian Kjos demonstrated his 25-frame assembly jig that he sells for \$25.00. If you are interested in purchasing a jig or any of his other items, contact him by email at BitWestBees@Gmail.com. Ian generously donated this jig to the club for loan to club members. We will need a volunteer to keep up with the jig, storing it and scheduling its use. Please contact Lynne if you can help.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,872.92. Since our last report we collected \$125.00 in dues, \$25.00 in Mentoring Program fees, and \$100.00 in donations. Expenses were a \$100.00 donation to the youth group at Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association, \$50.00 speaker fee (aka gas money) to Chris Barnes, and \$37.99 for internet domain annual renewal. The resulting balance is \$3,934.93 (\$3,884.93 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change).

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