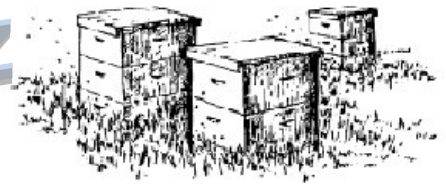




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



June, 2019

The June 11, 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.

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:** What do I do about the roaches that have invaded my hives?

An **A:** Putting together this part of our newsletter usually involves some research (online and among all manner of bee books) plus personal experiences with the bees. Roaches running around on a Langstroth inner cover are pretty common in our area and, if we are quick, we manage to squash them. Other than that, roaches haven't seemed to cause much trouble, but with that in mind, it is probably a good idea to make sure that a problem is not being overlooked.

The name "cockroach" comes from their Spanish name: *cucaracha*. There are thousands of species of roaches and southeast Texas seems to be the epicenter of roach heaven. Scientists have given the roach genus the name "Blattaria", derived from Latin meaning "an insect that shuns the light". They are omnivorous scavengers, feeding on almost any imaginable food source. Almost everyone finds roaches to be disgusting and hundreds of pest control companies exist mostly to deal with these pests in our homes.

Roaches are not often found inside active bee hives. Once again it

seems that whatever the beekeeping question, the answer always turns into managing for strong hives. Hive numbers can be boosted by giving weak ones a frame of capped brood (no bees) from a strong colony. There is little work for the receiving hive and in a few days thousands of new workers will emerge. (A full deep frame of brood on both sides has five or six thousand pupae.) Another option is to just combine a queenless weak hive with another strong queenright colony.

Most often roaches are seen on the inner cover of active hives or in deadouts or stored boxes. They are in there to "shun the light" and nothing seems to indicate that they are harmful to the colony. The problem is worse in shady areas. Hives are best located in full sun (the bees don't care and most hive pests "shun the light"). There usually seem to be fewer pests under the translucent plastic telescoping covers. The shade of a plastic sign with a brick on top helps keep down summer heat.

Sugary foods are most attractive to roaches and for that reason most roach baits are sweet and may be attractive to bees. Since roaches will eat dead roaches, the active ingredient is a gift that keeps on giving. The active ingredient in roach tablets is usually boric acid, effective and not terribly toxic. If you want to use roach bait, the best

idea is to use a "roach motel" where it is not accessible to the bees. They can be safely used above ventilated inner covers or on top of solid inner covers if the center hole is screened with six or eight gauge hardware cloth to exclude the bees.

The Reader's Digest answer to your question is strong hives, full sun, squash 'em if you can and use roach baits only if really necessary.

## Gaveled Closed

The 86th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature has been gaveled to a close. None of the legislation we've been watching seems to have made it to the governor's desk. Once again beekeepers have shown themselves to be an unruly lot. Two "statewide beekeeper organizations" offered conflicting views of proposed legislation, so legislators justifiably see beekeepers as narrow-minded and looking out for only their own individual benefit. This is not good since beekeeping law in Texas (Section 135 of the Agriculture Code) is awful: hopelessly outdated, unenforced and unenforceable. The challenges facing honey bees and beekeepers are huge and no one seems capable of even describing what the Texas Apiary Inspection Service should be doing. It would be great if the objectives for TAIS could be clearly defined and the next two years spent gaining consensus on what our bee law should be.

## May Meeting Notes

Our head count at the meeting came to 46, but we had 50 names on the sign-in sheets. It looks like a few left before we counted heads.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and then led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. The five first-time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Several club members participated in the Fort Bend Honey Tasting at Elkins High School on June 13. The event was organized by the school's FFA organization.

Last month's Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration was postponed due to weather. It has been rescheduled for June 13 at Sugar Land Town Square.

Bee Weaver Buzz Fest is on May 25th and the TBA Summer Clinic is on June 22nd in Conroe.

We are having a Logo design contest! Submit your design by 10:00 pm on Monday July 1. The winning design will be chosen by members in attendance at our July 9 meeting. The winner will receive a free FBBA t-shirt with their logo design. See the flyer for more details. Additionally, don't forget we'll have our Hive Decorating and Photo Contest in September, so start getting those creative juices flowing!

If you hung around after the April meeting, you probably saw Ian Kjos demonstrate the Frame Assembly Jig he makes and sells. Ian generously donated the Jig to our club and Nancy Hentschel has volunteered to 'house' it. If you want to sign out the Jig, contact Nancy at 832 228-7642.

Michael McLean, one of our group Mentors, suffered a terrible accident and has broken his leg and will be out of commission for several months. (He's probably going stir-crazy by now, so consider sending him an email or text.)

Steve Brackmann, a member of our

club and also president of the Brazoria club, gave us a report on the recent vandalism at one of the club's beeyards. The perpetrator tipped over four hives, threw some into the retention pond, and piled the rest together and set them on fire. This crime has received a lot of attention and the DA has indicated the person responsible will be charged with several serious crimes. There are rewards totaling \$7,500 for information leading to an arrest and conviction (Crime Stoppers \$5,000, BCBA \$1,000, and two individuals \$1,000 and \$500). On a positive note, the incident received a lot of publicity and over \$27,000 in donations was received from all over the world.

Gene DeBons gave a history on the tradition of "Telling the Bees". In Europe centuries ago, bee colonies were treated as members of the family. The bees were informed of major family news such as births, marriages, and, in particular, deaths. It was believed that if you didn't announce a death to the bees, they would not know to go into mourning and the colony would become unproductive or even die off. To "Tell the Bees", the hive would be draped with black crepe while humming softly or gently knock three times on the hive and give the news. Some traditions also included requiring the hive to be turned away from the house, inviting the bees to the funeral, or leaving food and drink for them. These traditions were brought to America and were common in the 1800s and still in limited practice in the 1950s.

We then proceeded with our "Ask a Bunch of Beekeepers" program. Our panel of beekeepers consisted of Jack Richardson, Jeff McMullan, Steve Brackmann, and Gene DeBons. Some of the questions asked and answers received were:

Q: How big should the hive opening be during nectar flow?

A: Avoid congestion: fully open or the larger notch. Also you can provide an opening directly into the Supers. Q: What method do you use to control Varroa Mites?

A: Several options are available. Follow labels, especially temperature and whether or not you have honey supers on. Q: What effect does rain have during nectar flow?

A: Bees don't forage during rain, but rain also washes away pollen and nectar. It takes 3-5 days before nectar is available again for bees.

Q: When is honey harvest?

A: Starts in May and ends early July. Tallow has been sporadic this year. Do not extract uncapped honey because the water content is too high and the honey will ferment.

Q: My bees are starting to backfill the brood frames with nectar.

A: Add a Super and move empty frames down for the queen to have a place to lay.

Although there were more questions, the time available had run out. After drawing for door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$3,934.93. Since then we collected \$115 in dues and \$15 in donations. Website expenses were \$8.56. The resulting balance is \$4,056.37 (\$4006.37 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change). Additionally, a \$25 check for mentoring registration was received. The check will be deposited when a Mentor is assigned or returned if a Mentor is not available.

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