



# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The Tuesday November 12, 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. We don't meet in December, so this is our last meeting for 2019.

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 get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures).

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I want to learn all that I can about honey bees and beekeeping? How do I get to be a Master Beekeeper?

**An A:** There is no "governing authority" over calling yourself a Master Beekeeper. If you want to, you can declare yourself to be one, but that is probably not what you had in mind.

Master beekeeper certificates are issued by individuals, bee equipment companies, college extension services and national, regional, state and local bee associations. The Honey Bee Health Coalition (a consortium of more than 50 groups concerned about honey bee health) has said that there are "many programs doing great work and producing highly trained beekeepers. There are also concerns that there are programs that are representing themselves as master beekeeper programs that are not rigorous and may be teaching inappropriate practices."

The oldest American Master Beekeeper Program is that of the Eastern Apicultural Society (EAS). It was started by Dr. Roger Morse at Cornell University. Applicants are provided with a subject outline and a list of references. Written, oral,

laboratory, and field exams are conducted at the EAS Annual Conference held in August in the eastern U.S. It is of note that the EAS program is modeled after programs in Europe, including the British Beekeeping Association's program.

The Texas Master Beekeeper Program is conducted by the Texas Apiary Inspection Service and the Texas Beekeepers Association. It is unlike other Texas "Master" programs such as the Texas Master Naturalists and the Texas Master Gardeners. These two programs are administered by Texas Agrilife Extension Service and are characterized by many hours of classroom instruction (followed by written exams). There is a detailed written course curriculum for each classroom topic, maybe "plant propagation", "soils", or "meteorology". There is no progression through various levels. Annual continuing education and volunteer service requirements are required to maintain certification. The Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programs are allied with Texas Agrilife Extension and Texas Parks & Wildlife, providing trained and vetted volunteers to leverage the work of these two agencies.

The Texas Master Beekeeper Program is a five year program with four levels of progression from Apprentice to Master Craftsman. It is fully self study with no set curriculum. The only instruction is a re-

view lecture on "important beekeeping topics" prior to the written and practical examinations. Each of the five exams are given twice a year. Specific requirements are at <https://masterbeekeeper.tamu.edu/program-requirements/>.

If you are interested in a specific curriculum and online instruction, the University of Montana's three year university level Online Beekeeping Certificate Program may interest you. It has three levels of progression and the Master Beekeeper level requires a written research report. The program is traditionally non-credit, but students can elect to take the courses for University of Montana academic credit.

## October Newsletter Delay

It appears that many of our members did not receive their October Buzz until a week or more after our October meeting. The newsletters are mailed so that they are a timely reminder of our monthly meeting. They should show up in Saturday's or Monday's mail delivery before our second Tuesday meeting. The October newsletter was mailed on time (despite all the activities of the Fort Bend County Fair). It is our understanding that mail was delayed by severe damage to one of the USPS sorting facilities that serves the Houston area. Mail normally processed in Houston had to be rerouted all over the place.

## October Meeting Notes

We had 43 names on the sign-in sheets for our October 8 meeting. A head count came up with 43 too! Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Jack Richardson opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, gave an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Four first-time visitors introduced themselves and let us know of their beekeeping goals.

Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk reminded everyone that the Texas Beekeepers Association's Annual Conference is in San Antonio at the Hilton San Antonio Airport on November 8 - 9. To register, go to [www.texasbeekeepers.org](http://www.texasbeekeepers.org).

Jeff McMullan let everyone know about the Louisiana Beekeepers Association's Fall Open House on November 2 in Baton Rouge at the USDA Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics and Physiology Laboratory. Cost is \$35 for pre-Registration or \$40 at the door (includes a catered lunch).

Gene DeBons spoke about the arrival of africanized honey bees in Texas in 1990 and how our organization, Houston and other cities made advance preparations to respond to "killer bee" emergencies. These efforts were thwarted by the Texas Structural Pest Control Board. A regulation made it illegal for anyone to kill bees unless they are a licensed pest control operator. The rule also required individuals, such as firefighters, to post a notice 48 hours before rescuing someone in a commercial establishment. Someone thought bees would agree to postpone their attacks for 48 hours? Typical government bureaucracy. In the end, pest control operators, who thought they had captured a lucrative opportunity, decided that they didn't want anything to do with bad bees. Rules got changed.

Danessa then introduced our main speaker, Dennis Gray. Dennis runs Cactus Village Birds and Bees and is the president of the Coastal Bend Beekeepers Association which serves beekeepers from Wharton to Uvalde to Laredo to Brownsville. Dennis gave us a presentation on the current laws in Texas for selling honey from the most restrictive to the least restrictive.

To sell honey wholesale or for resale, such as at a restaurant or store, food safety rules require that you must have a Food Manufacturer License and bottle your honey in a facility licensed and inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Some of the requirements are: the room/building cannot open directly into a dwelling; smooth nonabsorbent (easily cleaned) walls and ceiling; cold water and 110-degree hot water; separate hand-washing facilities; tight fitting doors and windows; no eating, drinking, smoking, or pets allowed; everything must be off the floor on shelves (except the trash can); and if you aren't on city water, you must test well water every month the honey house is in operation. Liability insurance is recommended. If you sell outside Texas, you must register with the FDA, it's optional otherwise.

A Small Honey Producer can bottle honey in a home kitchen as long as it is less than 2,500 lbs (200+ gallons!) per year. In accordance with Texas Agriculture Code Chapter 131, subchapter E. The honey must be from hives in Texas and managed by you. Sales of pure honey may only be made by you or an immediate family member direct to the consumer. Labels must include the statement, "Bottled or packaged in a facility not inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services." This is in the statute, so do not abbreviate the statement.

On September 1, new laws went into effect in Texas' Cottage Food Rules. Now, any food that is "time and temperature safe" can be sold direct to consumers. You don't

need to bother with bees and it includes honey, infusions, and mixtures. Only one-half of the direct sale must be in person. You can sell online, but deliver in person. Or you can sell in person, but ship the food. The food must be prepared in your home kitchen (not a separate building) and using appliances meant for residential use. The limit is \$50,000 total food sales per year and you must have a current Food Handlers card. There are specific labeling requirements regarding allergens and preparation in an uninspected kitchen. Be aware that while honey is not taxable, honey candy is, and some other honey products may be. Cities cannot prohibit selling of cottage foods; however, HOAs/POAs may have rules that restrict operating a business in your home.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

## Treasurer's Report

Our October treasury balance was \$4,106.91. Since our last report we collected \$10.00 in dues, \$50.00 for mentoring registrations, and \$283.00 for t-shirt orders. Expenses were \$100.00 speaker donation, \$237.50 for ten copies of The Beekeeper's Handbook, and \$6.38 monthly website fee. The resulting balance is \$4,106.03 (\$4,056.03 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



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