



Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Tuesday February 11 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 and the sooner you join, the cheaper it is.

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 really enjoyed my first beekeeper meeting, but it is hard to avoid being overwhelmed! Can you help me with the things a new beekeeper would benefit most from knowing?

An A: That is a truly loaded question, but we'll take a swing at it.

Our goal is safe, responsible, successful beekeepers. First (and it may be a bit controversial), a new beekeeper is most likely to be successful if their first hives are standard Langstroth boxes. There is lots of encomia on the internet, but experimenting with various hive designs is probably best left for experienced beekeepers. Bees do best on foundation, and some bees just don't take to plastic alternatives. We've seen nucs with five frames on milled beeswax foundation ignore five frames of plastic foundation when introduced to a ten frame box. Beeswax foundation is more likely to be accepted and crimped wire support is important. Cross-wiring wax super foundation prevents disasters in the extractor.

Choose your apiary location carefully since moving hives can be difficult. If the hive is moved only a short distance, the foragers will return to the old location and become hopelessly lost. Consider weed control and potential conflicts, es-

pecially with neighbors. From the get-go, make sure that your bees will have a source of water nearby.

Taller smokers hold more fuel and will burn longer and there is no known advantage to smaller ones. A self-igniting propane torch makes short work of smoker lighting and is really handy for burning off the black gunk that accumulates inside your smoker. Almost anything that burns slowly can be smoker fuel (buying fuel seems silly).

There are lots of beekeeping gadgets in bee supply catalogues. Most of them you really don't need. Before buying stuff, wait until you can really see the need. You're gonna need a hive tool though and it is a good idea to have a couple since they tend to get misplaced.

Good protective gear is important and you will most likely end up using a ventilated jacket. You'll be spending more money up front, but the cost of cheap veil and a helmet goes a long way toward the cost of a jacket and protection is far better. Dishwashing gloves do ok for beekeeping so long as they fit loosely (and they are easily washed with your bee jacket).

You should plan on using the club's harvest equipment. A honey gate from the bee supply catalogue turns a white five gallon (food grade) plastic pail from Lowe's or Home Depot into a bottling bucket. When installing the gate, soften the plastic bucket with a heat gun or your

torch so it doesn't crack when you install the gate.

There are lots of alternatives for dealing with mites. Doing nothing is akin to not vaccinating or treating your dog or cat for worms or fleas.

We hope this will be helpful in getting started as a beekeeper. There is certainly far more to learn and plenty of other opinions to listen to. When you ask a dozen beekeepers a question, expect fourteen answers.

HLSR, March 3 - 22

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo AGVENTURE in Hall A of NRG Center is a great opportunity for both adults and kids to learn about agriculture. Besides the livestock show entries, there are a wide variety of exhibits open to visitors from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm every day of the show.

One of the most popular AGVENTURE stops is the honey bee exhibit that includes two observation hives. Our club joins with other area clubs to show visitors the exhibit. During the day there are guided school groups while afternoons and weekends are busy with rodeo performance attendance.

It takes a lot of beekeepers to volunteer for the AGVENTURE honey bees. Don't miss the chance to sign up and take the opportunity to both learn and teach about honey bees and beekeeping. Entrance and parking are free for volunteers.

January Meeting Notes

We had 56 names on the sign-in sheets for our January 14 meeting. Once again our head count matched! Thanks to all for registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

President Craig Rench opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance. First-time visitors were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves and share their interest in beekeeping.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made announcements on the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's Beekeeping School on March 21st and of two events in April which will need club member volunteers: Sugar Land Earth Day Celebration on April 18th and Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' Nature Festival April 25th.

Harrison Rogers announced that Monica Siwiak is our new TBA area director and that Danessa is now on the Real Texas Honey Board of Directors. Harrison briefed us on the upcoming Rodeo exhibit. He will bring the sign-up sheet to the February meeting along with grounds passes. Additionally, he is offering his 5th Annual Beekeeping school which starts next month at Friendswood High School. Classes are Feb 6 through April 9, every Thursday evening from 7:00 – 9:00 at Friendswood High School. If interested in attending send him an email (brooksidebees@gmail.com) and he'll send you registration information.

Pete Konyndyk was in Germany recently and had the opportunity to visit with a couple of beekeepers. He enjoyed learning of things we do the same and sharing a few things that we do differently here in Texas. Germans find it important to know the type of flower nectar the honey is made from and this is included on their labels.

Gene DeBons shared an article from the American Bee Journal magazine about a Vermont bee-

keeper (Kirk Webster) who had started beekeeping in 1980. At that time, it was common practice to purchase queens every year from the South because they could be obtained early in the year. In 1985, tracheal mites became a problem which resulted in the disastrous loss of colonies. Kirk eventually learned by accident that nucs could be overwintered in the north, so queens reared later in the year would be useful the following season. He then found all the techniques he had "discovered" were developed and documented during the 1870-1890 period, including the raising of queens in the north and the technique of overwintering nucs in the north. Once again we learned that it pays to study history.

Danessa covered In the Beeyard for January and February.

Now: If you have not yet done so, order queens, nucs, or package bees. Check hives for sufficient food supplies. This can be done by lifting the back of the hive box. If it is light, further examination is needed. Always feed a hive that is in danger of starving with 2:1 sugar water since hives with small food reserves can quickly starve to death. In a mild winter you should find about one frame of brood and at least 3 deep frames of honey. You can inspect if the temperature is at least 60 degrees, the sun is out, and very little wind, but make sure to finish as quickly as possible. Order, assemble, inventory, and repair woodenware and supplies. Clean old frames and hive boxes to be used in the spring. Check hives for mites and treat as necessary before supering. Check stored frames for wax moth or mouse damage and add more paradichlorobenzene moth crystals if needed.

Get Ready: Check hives again in February for adequate food supplies, to verify a queen-right hive and to look for the presence of disease. Combine weak colonies with fewer than 2 frames of bees. Remove or enlarge entrance reducers near the end of the month. Do this sooner if the weather warms and

bee activity indicates congestion at the hive entrance. Treatment for varroa should be completed no later than February 1 to allow treatment time before the nectar flow. Follow product directions exactly for the amount to be used and the time to leave in place.

Craig led our main presentation which was a discussion of the pros and cons of nucs, packages, and swarms. The discussion panel was comprised of Gene DeBons, Steve Brackmann, and Rana Mehmood and each had good comments which should be helpful for those who are new to acquiring bees. There was great interest in swarms, the FBBA swarm catching list, and how to catch a swarm. (Our March meeting will focus on swarm catching, so be sure to attend if you want to learn more.)

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

Treasurer's Report

Our January treasury balance was \$3,450.28. Since our last report we collected \$240.00 in dues (48 new and renewing members) and \$25.00 for a mentoring program enrollment fee. The only expense was \$6.38 for the monthly website cost. The resulting balance is \$3,708.90 (\$3,658.90 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Boone Holladay

Boone Holladay

County Extension Agent– Horticulture
Fort Bend County
jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu
281 342-3034 ext. 7034
1402 Band Road, Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281-342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.