



Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



July, 2018

The July 10, 2018 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. The main topic in July will be a presentation by Kellie Jensen about the queen rearing initiative of the Brazoria County Beekeepers. 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. Thanks to Mike Jurek who volunteered to bring salty treats and Annette Gonzales and Steve Martin (something sweet) for our July meeting. The meeting 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) 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 harvested more honey than I know what to do with! The rules for selling it seem confusing. Can you help?

An A: First of all, the *Buzz* doesn't give legal advice. With that being said, here is a shot at helping to understand what you need to know about selling your honey. You will still need to research specific requirements.

It is important to understand that Texas' requirements aren't regulations or rules written by bureaucrats in Austin. Their rulesmaking process is pretty detailed, starting with a law (sometimes called "enabling legislation") that gives government agencies the power to write rules that carry the force of law. The rulesmaking process progresses step-by-step and requires that all public comments are addressed before they are final. Needless to say, Agency rulesmaking takes a while.

The folks prowling the back rooms in Austin see agency rulesmaking as being tedious and in their way. Instead, they contrive poorly written laws: passed by both houses of uninformed legislators and signed by the governor. The only "public comment" is what goes on in the "smoke filled rooms"! It is sadly

true that "if you aren't at the table you risk being on the menu".

I think that most would agree that food safety rules are a good idea, especially in today's world. Besides human blunders, deliberate acts can contaminate our food supply, sickening or killing lots of people. The safety of our food supply is addressed at all levels of government. County and city inspectors check the kitchen at Whataburger, the state licenses and inspects food production facilities, and the Federal government writes rules, performs inspections and maintains a system to quickly identify the source of contaminated foods. It is almost incredible how quickly the source is identified when someone is sickened at a salad bar or Chipotle.

Texas' Department of State Health Services licenses and inspects food manufacturing facilities with two significant exceptions. (Local government and Washington do as well). In 2011 the legislature passed and Governor Perry signed Texas' "Cottage Food Law" that allows the sale of a specific list (in the law!) of low-risk foods produced in home kitchens. There are basic food safety requirements along with restrictions that in essence serve to protect licensed facilities from competition that has no compliance cost.

There is another category of foods referred to as "raw agricultural products". Honey isn't on that list either.

In 2015, the Texas Beekeepers Association sold the Texas legislature a "Small Honey Producer" law (or "exemption law") that eliminates even the most basic food sanitation requirements for honey and includes a "shiny object": SMALL < 2,500 lbs per year. (that is 200+ gallons, 40+ five gallon pails, or the crop from 35 or so hives). Distracted by SMALL you may overlook all of the other requirements for the source, labeling and the actual sale of honey. In fact, the law reads "sells or distributes" so it would seem to apply even if you just give your honey away to family and friends. The law applies only to pure honey (no additives or flavorings) and labeling must contain the following wording: "Bottled or packaged in a facility not inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services." The Texas Beekeepers Association sells labels that don't comply with this very specific requirement. What a mess!! It is no doubt true that even the things that government does best, it doesn't do very well. This seems to be especially true when legislators are involved.

So you are really on your own on how to sell your honey. It is unlikely that you are of the scale needed to justify building and licensing a

“food manufacturing facility”. The fact is, though, it is not all that difficult and the TDSHS is very helpful in getting it done at minimum cost. If you wish to remain SMALL, there are significant restrictions, most significantly being that you cannot sell honey on the internet or for resale or use in producing other food products. It has to be your honey, from your Texas hives, and sold (or given away?) directly to the consumer by you at your home, at a (defined) roadside stand, farmer’s market or at a nonprofit event.

Since you are on your own here, you should read the TDSHS guidance on licensing and inspection on their website (search for “honey” at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/>). It is creepy that you won’t be finding anything about being SMALL on the TDSHS website probably because of the “exemption”. Our website at <https://www.fortbendbeekeepers.org/state-of-texas-resources/> has some other light reading to help you figure all this out. Kids long ago figured out that it is sometimes easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission.

June Meeting Notes

We had 72 members and guests sign in at our June meeting. The head count came up with the same number. Amazing! Thanks for signing in.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson opened the meeting with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized and welcomed four “first timers”.

Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones reminded all of the upcoming TBA Summer Clinic on June 30th in Conroe. There will be presentations for every level of beekeeper and the registration is discounted if you are a TBA member. All new members who joined this year have first year free memberships to TBA. The registration fee is higher if you pay at the door.

Jack Richardson reported on the tours at Kate Osborn’s and Michael

McLean’s beeyards and the picnic that followed. Jack also spoke of the TBA Annual meeting which will be held in Temple in November.

Larry Hoehne reminded everyone of the Brazoria County Beekeepers Association’s annual Honey Expo at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds in Angleton on July 21, 11 am - 5 pm.

Planning is underway for our Painted Hive Contest and Bee Photography Contest at the September meeting. Rules for entries will be available at the July meeting.

Long time officer and member Elton Reynold passed away in March and Gene DeBons conducted a silent auction of some of his beekeeping equipment. He donated a home-made smoker to Jack’s smoker “Wall of Smoke” exhibit. Gene also announced that our website had six swarm removal requests on Memorial Day. Gene provides contact info for swarm captures as well as for members who do paid removals.

VP Chelsea Murray gave a presentation on the club’s honey harvest equipment that is available for members to use. You must pay a \$20 fee and a deposit or check which will be returned to you when the equipment is turned in properly cleaned and ready for the next member. An easy way to get most of the honey cleaned off is to leave it out for the bees to take care of, but don’t leave it near your hives because it could start robbing. Also be careful with how deep the honey is because bees drown easily.

You will need food grade buckets for your honey (available at Walmart, Home Depot or Lowe’s). Installing a honey gate on the bucket is very handy. The gate is flat and the buckets are curved; if you tighten the inside nut too tightly, you can get cracks in the bucket. Jeff McMullan recommended heating the side of the bucket with a heat gun or hair dryer to make it flexible for the gate installation. We have a strainer to catch debris in the honey when it comes out of the extractor.

Member Jeff Murray offers extrac-

tion service (The Texas Honey Trading Company). He demonstrated his extraction trailer outside after the meeting. You need to have your supers ready for him and he will buy all the honey from you, or you can pay for the extraction service, or something in the middle. A minimum of one full super is preferred. He might offer an Extraction Day where he sets up the trailer and you can schedule a time to bring your frames for extraction.

Nando’s Honey in Rosharon is selling nucs for \$165, 832 699-1960.

Our meeting closed with the customary drawings for donated door prizes. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the donors.

After the meeting, the silent auction was settled up and those who wished to take a look at the Texas Honey Trading Company extraction trailer did so.

Treasurer’s Report

Our June treasury balance was \$3,790.95. Since our last report we collected \$30 in donations, \$60 in dues, and \$25 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$65.35 for ribbons for the upcoming super painting contest and paid \$298.38 in web site costs. The resulting balance is \$3,542.22, consisting of \$3,487.22 in our Wells Fargo checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION**

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