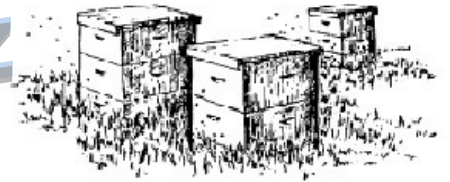




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



February, 2019

The February 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 (dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year). Stash a five dollar bill in your pocket and get your dues paid early to stay on our newsletter distribution list!

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) 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 heard that the club has swarm traps for us to use. How do I get one?

An A: That isn't exactly the "system" that we have set up. Several years ago we noticed that some neighborhoods had real problems with swarms, many of them infesting people's homes. At that point, removal is no longer a beekeeping issue: it is a pest control problem. And when people ignore the problem, it snowballs into more swarms and more homes with bee problems.

In our area we sometimes see really really mean bees, and most beekeepers are ill equipped to remove bees that are aggressively intent on defending their home. You really can't appreciate it until you run into one of these "Africanized" colonies. If members elect to do removals, it is not with the sanction of our club since it is easy to get in over your head. At that point we get really really angry calls!!

It is not good for honey bees to become pests! After much discussion, it was decided that our role as beekeepers was to prevent such problems, to focus on swarm management and to quickly respond to swarms. A critical part of responsible beekeeping is to manage swarms, especially in neighbor-

hoods. Our members are strongly encouraged to read up and diligently manage swarming as well as to provide homes for any swarms that come around (not necessarily from our managed hives).

We focused our web site on getting honey bee help for our community, but a key change was for our Association to provide homeowners with traps to keep bees from moving in somewhere if no one was around to spot the swarms (members can easily leave a nuc box or hive out with old drawn comb that is almost irresistible to swarms).

Here is how the swarm trap program works: Brandy Rader at the Fort Bend County AgriLife Extension office issues our traps to homeowners with bee problem history. Her phone number is 281 633-7029 during business hours. Brandy's phone number is on the traps and when it is occupied by bees the homeowner calls her to arrange pickup by one of our members.

If you are interested in retrieving traps (or catching swarms), let Gene deBons know at help@FortBendBeekeepers.org. He'll put you on the "bees in a trap" distribution list. You'll also need to get yourself ready. The traps are actually pulp flower pots attached to a 16" square of plywood with a wire to hang them from. Despite careful instructions from Brandy, there is no telling where these may

be hung. When you contact the homeowner, you will need those details. It is best to remove the trap when all the bees are inside after dark. If they aren't all inside, your smoker can quickly chase them in. The drain holes in the pot are our intended entrances, but be very mindful that there will likely be "leaks" between the pot and the plywood. They can be easily sealed with a roll of steel wool poked into the crack with your hive tool. You can use steel wool to close the drain holes too, but a better method is to use a square plastic pail like they sell chain out of at Home Depot or Lowe's (free for the asking). Some of them are red, but the black ones are better because it keeps the entrances in the dark with all the bees inside.



It is best to hive the trapped bees right away. You remove a few screws to separate the pot from the plywood and dump the bees into a hive. Drawn comb, or better yet brood (no bees) is great.

January Meeting Notes

We had 54 members and guests sign in at our January meeting. Always sign in at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Club President, Jack Richardson opened with an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed all present and asked three first time visitors to introduce themselves. Jack gave a brief description of the club and shared his story of becoming a beekeeper.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, asked for help with a brief survey. She then announced there are several upcoming one-day beekeeping seminars: 1/26 Longview, 2/2 Austin, 3/23 Brenham. Harrison Rogers will also be leading a 10-week beekeeping course through Friendswood ISD. The club's mentoring program for 2019 will be getting underway soon.

Gene DeBons presented facts about Chinese and adulterated honey. The United States originally placed a tariff on Chinese honey in 2001 over its dumping of honey at below market prices. This tariff was increased in 2008 and again in 2013 and now stands at about \$1.20/lb. Chinese exporters get around the tariff by transshipping honey and then fraudulently labelling it as being from other Asian countries.

Chinese honey has been found to contain the banned antibiotic chloramphenicol. When the USA began analyzing for it, they discontinued its use. Since then the antibiotic tetracycline has been found.

Chinese honey producers extract nectar not honey. It is done almost daily. Its moisture content is high so Chinese "honey" is dried out in a factory not a bee hive.

The use of resin technology can remove antibiotics, coloring agents, and other obnoxious impurities. It also makes the honey untraceable and improves its color grade giving it a higher value.

Adulteration of honey with a bio-

engineered sugar mixture from rice and corn can mimic the natural sugar profile in honey. This makes it harder to detect adulteration.

Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, urged those with Netflix to watch the first episode of the series *Roten*, which is all about the topic of Chinese honey and the difficulties of American honey producers.



Our Texas Beekeepers Association Area Director, Harrison Rogers, introduced us to TBA's Real Texas Honey™ program. Real Texas Honey™ promotes 100% Texas honey. Participants must meet strict program requirements and are subject to inspection and honey sampling to ensure the honey they sell displaying the Real Texas Honey™ seal is pure, unadulterated honey made by honey bees in Texas. The TBA website has a Honey Locator Map and both TBA members and Real Texas Honey™ participants can be included on the map.

A club member asked Harrison about a Lone Star Beekeepers group. Harrison explained they are a completely separate club formed a year ago by a few beekeepers with a vastly different agenda than TBA's. The Texas Beekeepers Association was established more than 100 years ago (1880). More than 50 clubs from all over the state are members. This year's Summer Clinic in June will be in Conroe. The Annual Convention is held in November. The TBA Winter Delegates meeting is on February 9th in Conroe.

Lynne mentioned that all first-year FBBA members receive a free one-year individual membership to the TBA.

Jack commented that he's never produced as much honey as he could have sold. People are becoming

more aware of the benefits of raw and local honey and the demand is continuing to grow. Honey collected at different times and different locations will taste different. It is up to us to educate the public though.

Thanks for the door prize donations and congratulations to the winners.

Dues Are Due

Most of our club expenses are funded by donations. It is tax time and members are reminded that we are not an IRS nonprofit so these donations are not tax deductible.

Our dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year which makes them a real bargain. Thanks to Albert Smaistrila for helping collect dues at our January meeting.

If you have a suggestion for a bee-related activity we can fund with our treasury balance (see below), be sure to mention it to one of our officers to help make it happen.

Treasurer's Report

The treasury balance reported last month was \$3,427.92. Since then we collected \$240.00 in dues (48 new and renewing members). There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,667.92, consisting of \$3,617.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

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