



August, 2020

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association usually meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. (We are called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.)

We were last able to meet in person on February 11 and the Community Center remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is impossible to predict when we will be able to meet in person again. For details of our planned Zoom online meeting, see the announcement below. Hopefully our meetings can return to normal soon.

## August meeting is online

Because of the continuing (and seemingly never ending) COVID-19 threat, our August meeting will again be online:

**Tues., Aug. 11, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**

**login:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83123303567?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83123303567?pwd=b2FJa2FMbHI0QzgzVTEloZ EJzdG1Td09)  
**pwd=b2FJa2FMbHI0QzgzVTEloZ EJzdG1Td09**

**Meeting ID: 831 2330 3567**

**Passcode: 187002**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 831 2330 3567, Passcode: 187002.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting.

As a followup to last month's program on the varroa mite, our meeting topic for August will be varroa mite sampling, treatment thresholds, and treatment.

Our "beescussion" on the day after our July meeting was a success so we'll do it again in August: Wed. August 12, at 7:30 pm. You will be receiving an email invite.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** How much is it gonna cost me to get started as a beekeeper?

**An A:** This question is often asked and it requires coming up with what needs to be on the shopping list then figure out how much one should spend on each item.

Since our County Judge still has us in lockdown, we probably should go ahead and work on the answer. (It's called a lockdown because no one knows how to spell kwaranteen.)

We'll divide our list into three categories. First is protective gear, tools and beekeeper equipment. Hive components will be next, then the colony of bees itself (they may even be free).

It is usually not a good idea to buy a "starter kit". You don't really save much money and you are likely to be disappointed with what shows up in a few days. If you buy quality protective gear, tools, etc. and your new adventure doesn't work out, you can sell it to a fledgling beekeeper.

Your protective gear should be more than just a veil and some gloves. You won't regret spending up to \$140 or so on a good quality ventilated jacket (all of these costs include sales tax but figure on free shipping). It is probably a good idea to buy beekeeper leather gloves (\$20) but dishwashing gloves from the grocery store are usually adequate.

You'll need a hive tool(\$10) and a beekeeper's brush (\$8). An extra hive tool is a good idea since they have a way of disappearing. The "paint scraper" style is a must-have and one with a frame lifter hook is a good addition. Buy a bee brush with yellow plastic bristles since bees sometimes take offense to the

odor of natural bristles.

You should expect to spend about \$50 on a quality stainless steel American-made smoker with heat guards. The larger version costs about the same and it holds more fuel so it stays lit longer. You also should probably get an entrance reducer (\$2 or just make one). You'll need a feeder, but a ziplock bag from the kitchen works ok.

It is always recommended that you have two hives so that you can easily compare colony performance and have options when problems arise. It's a good idea to double the dollars below...

You should be able to come up with bricks, cinder blocks or landscape timbers to set the hive on (\$0). The recommended 10 frame Langstroth stack starts with a ventilated bottom board (\$25). A solid bottom board is preferred by some members and costs a few bucks less but the bees will appreciate a screened bottom. Mites that lose their grip fall outside of the hive and the hive is easier for the bees to cool in summer (hives should be in full sun). It is also less work for them to keep the hive tidy.

Beekeepers are usually pretty handy so unassembled boxes and frames are recommended. Assemble the boxes using deck screws or the nails provided. Always use quality wood glue on the box joints, being careful that you keep things square and tight. Once you have the boxes assembled, carefully caulk any cracks then prime and paint all sur-

faces not in contact with the bees. You need to figure on spending about \$25 at Home Depot (so long as you can find suitable mistinted top quality house paint). Primer and at least two coats of paint will help assure a long life. A little trim roller makes painting really easy. Hives that are stained and varnished to look cute don't hold up in Texas sun.

Plastic foundation is easier for the beekeeper to use, but not all colonies take well to it. Wired wax foundation (with hook in a wedge top frame) is usually best.

An unassembled select grade brood (or deep) box with frames and foundation for each hive will cost about \$50. A medium super is about the same cost. Some members use all medium boxes in their stack, but it adds \$50 to the cost since it takes two mediums for the brood nest.

Before you decide to just make your own boxes, you need to look at the price/grade/availability of lumber and how much of it ends up as sawdust and cutoff (you're not going to find what you are looking for at Lowe's). Buying unassembled boxes is cheaper and far better quality. Plywood or particle board is a bad idea.

A standard 10-frame telescoping cover and inner cover will be about \$50 to complete our hive stack.

Lots of our members get bees for free by capturing a swarm. If you don't feel ready for that, we are lucky that we can buy bees and queens nearby. Laying mated queens are about \$35. Three pound packages with a caged mated queen with unrelated workers is about \$200. An established four or five frame nuc ("nucleous" colony) with a laying queen is about \$300 and most likely to get established easily.

Now, hold on to your wallet, here comes the bottom line. The total for protective gear, tools and equipment is about \$350. Hive components for a deep + medium stack add up to \$175 and we need two of them (another \$350). A nuc of bees

will cost \$300 and we need two (\$600) but we may get lucky with a swarm. (There goes your COVID-19 stimulus check.)

To help recoup your cost with honey sales, the club owns a harvesting setup that you can use at low cost, saving you \$700.

Spring is the best time to get bees, but now is a great time to be getting ready. To soften the shock, you can put some of this stuff on your Christmas or birthday wish list.

Your actual mileage will vary.

### July Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the ZOOM meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the 26 members who had logged in.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

Last month we had our first Bee-scussions Zoom meeting. This was a separate virtual meeting, the evening after the June meeting. It was very informal and we talked about what's happening with our bees. Questions made for good discussions.

If you have a sad bee on your newsletter address label, it means you have not paid your 2020 dues! Please send an email to [info@fortbendbeekeepers.org](mailto:info@fortbendbeekeepers.org) to let us know you want to remain a member and stay on our newsletter mailing list.

Robert Armstrong is urgently looking for a location to place his one hive for 3-4 months. If you can provide a temporary home, please check the Zoom onscreen "Chat" for his contact information.

Danessa then introduced Harrison Rogers with a program on varroa mites, a devastating hive pest. Harrison is a club member who keeps about a dozen hives in the Pearland area.

*Varroa destructor* is a parasite to larva and adult bees and a vector of diseases. Varroa feed on the "fat body" of the bee which decreases their weight and weakens them. It is

important to monitor and treat for varroa.

Door prizes donated by Bee Man Dan Jones were won by Clayton Wrzesinski (a bee brush) and April Koury (a beekeeper key chain).

### It's gotta be true...

'cause I read it on the internet (and this time we really hope that it is).

Chinese doctors have reported that a beekeeper group in Hubei province ("the epicentre of COVID-19 in China") had conducted a survey that found that of 5,115 beekeepers, none had developed COVID-19 symptoms. The doctors then surveyed 121 apitherapists and their patients with the same findings (including several with direct exposure to the virus). Immune system reaction to bee stings is well known and perhaps tolerance of bee stings is a good thing when someone is exposed to the corona virus. Further study is proposed.

### Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,624.32. Since our last report we collected \$60.00 in dues and the only expense was \$12.99 email costs. In addition, the bank made a two cent check posting error that is not worth pursuing. The resulting balance is \$3,671.31 (\$3,621.31 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



Boone Holladay

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

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