



November, 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 March 10 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.

## November meeting is online

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

**Tues., Nov. 10, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**

**login:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2436305183?pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VfdXJXUT09)

**pwd=UzJTNmpLVUE4WjYrUDZvd0VfdXJXUT09**

**Meeting ID: 243 630 5183**

**Passcode: 690069**

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 243 630 5183, Passcode: 690069.

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

Our program for November will be presented by VP Danessa Yaschuk and Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones. They will cover how to make infused honey and creamed honey as well as gift ideas using honey and beeswax.

We have tentative plans for a "beescussion" again this month. You will be receiving an email invitation.

## Election Time

Just when you thought it was finally over, you have another vote to cast. It is time to elect club officers for 2021. Our current officers (Craig Rench, President; Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President; and Lynne Jones, Secretary Treasurer) are willing to continue in their positions.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I can't wait for 2020 to end! It has been awful. Since November would be our last in-person meeting (and newsletter) of the year, how about some more hints on what a beekeeper should be doing over the next couple of months.

**An A:** Aside from hiding out from COVID-19, you may find that you have more to do than you were expecting and it seems like advice on winter preparations is coming out of the woodwork. Chris Moore's ZOOM program last month was very informative and here are a few more tips (some worth repeating):

It is important that overwintering colonies have a low mite load since varroa transmit disease and can lead to overwintering loss. If you have neglected this chore, one last mite treatment may be in order.

Since we'll probably see a few more warm days, we need to get one last hive inspection done. The warmer it is, the better, since eggs and young larvae are very susceptible to chilling. 70° is better than 60° and if it's going to be in the 50°'s it would probably be better to wait. No matter the temperature, you should make it quick. If need be, set aside boxes to get access to the brood nest. Don't be surprised if there don't seem to be as many bees as before. If it was cool overnight, many of the bees may still be

clustered together in the brood nest keeping their brood warm. And the colony will be trimming down to over winter. After a few puffs of smoke, pull a frame from the middle of the brood nest. Give it a quick look, expecting to see brood and perhaps a bit of honey and pollen (and maybe even the queen). You might want to check an outside frame for honey before restacking the hive. Uncap some honey away from the brood nest to get the bees to move it closer to the cluster.

You should probably wrap up by lifting the rear of the hive to get an idea of its weight (and honey stores). A quick lift every few weeks is good.

## October Meeting Notes

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

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk made several announcements:

Please type your name or names using the ZOOM "Chat" feature, so we can ensure everyone's name is on the attendance sheet.

Texas Bee Supply is having the Grand Opening of their Dayton store on October 24th. They have several speakers scheduled and good door prize drawings.

The Texas Beekeepers Association's Fall Convention has been cancelled. Instead there will be a 2020 Virtual Beekeeping Event on November 7th. For more info and to register, go to TBA's website:

texasbeekeepers.org, click on Events, then Virtual Beekeeping Event.

Our Bee-scussions meeting is NOT tomorrow. It will be next week on Thursday, October 22nd from 7:30 to 8:30. The meeting is an informal get-together to talk about what's happening with our bees and a perfect opportunity for someone to ask a question or describe a problem. Even if you don't have a problem, you'll enjoy the fellowship of your fellow beekeepers. We hope you will join us. You will receive an email invite and a Zoom link a day or two before the meeting.

Danessa then introduced Chris Moore, our guest speaker. Moore Honey Farm is owned and operated by the Moore family. Built from the ground up, they have 2500 colonies in Southeast Texas from Houston to Beaumont. Their honey is available at numerous stores in the Beaumont and Pasadena area, as well as on their website. Chris has held several leadership positions with the Texas Beekeepers Association and is currently on the Board of Directors for the Texas Honey Bee Education Association.

Chris' topic was preparing for winter, focusing on hive management, food reserves, pests (varroa mites and small hive beetles) and viruses and diseases.

**Hive Management:** remove queen excluders, reduce entrances, use a solid bottom board or put the insert on a screened bottom. Knock the hive size down to a deep or two deeps; you don't want them to have more space than they can keep warm and police.

**Food Reserves:** feed 50/50 syrup for three weeks in a row; 70/30 for colonies that are light. Honey in the super is like food in the deep freeze in the garage; honey near the brood nest is food in the pantry. Bees don't want to go to the deep freeze in the garage. To encourage them to keep the outside frames full of honey, on a warm day, uncap some of the honey in their super and they

will move it closer to the cluster. Hive top feeders are good because you can see if they need to be re-filled at a glance. If the bees aren't taking the syrup, it means the hive needs to be inspected.

Beekeepers that send hives to pollenate almonds need to boost populations in the fall and feed pollen supplements also. Powder is good, but more difficult for commercial guys to feed. Put a shim on with patties so the bees can access all sides because patties are fertile breeding ground for small hive beetles. It's much better to feed smaller and more frequently. Chris likes Ultra-bee and Spirulina (an algae) patties.

**Pests:** Normally, small hive beetles aren't enough of a problem for a colony that you need to take any action, but when making splits the colony is weaker and vulnerable to the SHB. They use Dixie Dynamex H700 towel cut into quarters, in the corners under the lid to entangle the pests. Fold the towel in half and staple it down. The beetles like to crawl inside and they get stuck. For varroa, Chris recommends following the recommendations of the Honey Bee Health Coalition's publication and videos. The natural controls are not as effective as miticides. Whatever you use, get the varroa count down before winter.

**Viruses and Diseases:** Most of the viruses and diseases are related to heavy varroa mite load, so keeping varroa low is the best way to keep bees healthy.

Once winter is here, a single deep hive needs a minimum of two solid frames of honey. If you have a double-deep and the bottom box is empty, remove it completely.

The lowest temperature to open the hive is 45° - 55° and you want to get in and out quickly. Every three weeks or so on a warm day, go in and uncap some of the honey furthest from the cluster/brood nest so they'll move it closer.

In January, if they are bringing in pollen you need to check regularly and feed 1:1 if they are light. They

go through stores (and feed) fast if they are raising brood.

Lynne then conducted the Door Prize drawings. Bee Man Dan Jones donated a Yellow Hive Tool (won by Keith Mattheessen) and a Smoker Key Chain (won by Danessa Yaschuk). Jeff McMullan donated a Perfect Pocket Hive Tool™ (won by Gerald Verran).

Craig reminded everyone of the "beescussions" meeting on October 22nd, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

## Condolences

Margaret Smaistrila, wife of past president Albert Smaistrila, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, October 24, 2020. Margaret and Albert were married 61 years and were long time members of the club. Sons Ray and Ron are Association members as well. Please keep Albert and the family in your thoughts and prayers.

## Treasurer's Report

Last month's treasury balance was \$3,705.33. Since then we collected \$20.00 in dues (including \$10.00 for 2021). Our expenses were \$12.99 in monthly email costs and a \$50.00 gift card for our October speaker. The resulting balance is \$3,662.34 (\$3,612.34 reconciled balance in our checking account and \$50.00 in cash for change).

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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