



April, 2021

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

It has been over a year since the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association was last able to meet in person in March, 2020. We usually meet 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 sorely missed social time.)

Fort Bend County's COVID-19 alert status remains at ORANGE or "Moderate /Significant Risk". Fortunately the number of infections, hospitalizations and deaths have continued to show declines. COVID-19 vaccinations are becoming more available with the latest County vaccination count at 111,276. The County also reports that we have had 54,879 cases with 53,143 recoveries. Sadly we have suffered 579 COVID-19 deaths. Commissioner's Court extended their emergency declaration through April 30 so public access to County offices and facilities remains limited.

See the announcement below for details of our online meeting in April. Also, be aware that you can attend online beekeeper meetings being held almost anywhere in the world! Texas beekeeper groups have seized the opportunity to host online programs given by beekeeping experts sitting at their dining room table somewhere.

April meeting is online

Our April meeting will again be online:

Tues., April 13, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emh1YmJDNG1EK1UrUT09)

pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emh1YmJDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting. We plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

It is said that if you ask a dozen beekeepers a question, you need to expect about 14 different answers. With that in mind, here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I'm really gonna start keeping bees this spring. I've got bees on order and boxes of stuff I've ordered has showed up on my doorstep. How about some guidance on what I've decided to get into?

An A: First, it's usually not a good idea to buy "beginner kits". It is better to look at what's in it and decide, item by item, if it is what you want. It is a good idea to enlist the help of an experienced beekeeper.

Your boxes of stuff need to contain basic tools (like a smoker and hive tool), protective gear, and hive components.

You will probably end up with several smokers and hive tools, but this outcome is less likely if you buy the last one first. The same holds for protective gear. A ventilated bee jacket is a better purchase than a veil and helmet for not a whole lot more money. You'll probably find that heavy leather gloves are clumsy for handling frames (in fact, working without gloves seldom results in a bee sting). Dishwashing gloves work well so long as you can find a pair that fits loosely. You may have to shop around to find some big ones.

Guess what...smokers get hot and rubber gloves can melt. Be sure to get a smoker with at least a wire heat guard. An added solid shield is a plus. Smokers come in different sizes and bigger is better (for a few more bucks) since it is more likely to hold enough fuel to complete the job at hand. Wooden smoker bellows are the traditional design. Brightly colored plastic

bellows are ugly (you have 13 more opinions coming for that one). You might give the wooden bellows a coat of varnish (they should come that way) since it makes it easy to wipe off the inevitable gunk. Some stain from the garage helps if you are in a bellows beauty contest.

Never say never, but bees seldom fail to draw out embossed beeswax foundation. Plastic foundation is a whole lot easier for the beekeeper, but the bees sometimes won't cooperate. An interesting problem arises when five frames from a nuc (on wax foundation) are introduced to a hive body with five frames of undrawn plastic foundation. The bees don't understand. The first solution is to give the plastic a heavy coat of beeswax but they sometimes remove the wax and use it elsewhere.

We usually buy unassembled wooden ware. The boxes should go together with top quality wood glue. Check the hand holds and use a framing square to make sure you have it put together right. Caulk even the tiniest crack then use a top quality primer and a couple of coats of house paint. The bees really don't care what color the boxes are, but white is traditional and it's cooler for the bees in August.

Assembling frames is incredibly tedious, which is why the club owns frame assembly gear that you

can borrow. Be sure to use good quality wood glue when assembling frames since they can be damaged if they prove difficult to pry loose. If you have access to an air compressor, a pneumatic brad nailer or stapler is a huge help. Plastic foundation just pops in, but embossed wax must be secured with a “wedge”. A brad nailer helps this go much quicker.

Reporting in....

Past President and long time member Jack Richardson has reported in from Caddo Lake on the Texas side near Shreveport, La. (where he started with bees in 1966). His mom is now 99 and he still gets back to Fort Bend helping care for her. We hope she continues to enjoy good health. Member Michael McLean took over Jack’s hives in our area. Jack is building cabins on the lake and trying to get going with bees again. Before you complain too much about our recent cold snap, he said that he had to deal with -2° F, 8” of snow and ice on the lake. He also reported only a minor tsunami from the recent earthquake in the area.

March Meeting Notes

After 30 minutes of social time, President Craig Rench opened the FBBA ZOOM meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the 45 members and visitors who had logged in.

Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk introduced our guest presenter, Chris Barnes. Chris is the owner of Cornerstone Honey Bees in Bryan, Texas and the Youth Program Director of Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association.

Recently, Chris was instrumental in the formation of the Texas Association of Professional Bee Removers, a 501(c)6 trade organization. Interest in forming the organization came up in 2019 due to some Texas legislation (which ultimately did not pass). In addition to representing and providing benefits to its members, the association’s goal is to educate the public about bees and live removals. There are two levels of membership: Swarm Capture Spe-

cialist (\$25.00/yr.) and Colony Removal Professional (\$50.00/yr.) You can find more info at: <https://txapbr.org/>

Chris’ program topic was “How to Prevent Swarming”. Swarming is the honey bee colony’s natural means of reproduction. The urge to swarm is instinctive and as beekeepers, the best we can do is to manage and control the behavior to meet our needs and objectives. The types of swarms are: reproductive swarms and ‘bad hive conditions swarms’ (commonly known as absconding). Reproductive swarms usually happen in the Spring from March to June. The bees have engorged themselves on honey in preparing to swarm and are docile. The Bad Hive Condition swarms have left the hive due to flooding, mold, lack of food, infestation by varroa mites, hive beetles or other pests/disease. Bad hive conditions can be prevented or addressed before the colony reaches the point of leaving the hive. Once a colony has decided to make a reproductive swarm, it can’t be stopped. You have four options: 1) control WHEN your hive swarms 2) create an artificial swarm by splitting the hive 3) allow to swarm but catch them with swarm traps, or 4) let nature take its course and simply allow your hive to swarm and find a new home. Although some advocate letting nature take its course, you are losing a lot of your bees and if you live in town, the bees might make a home in your neighbor’s soffit. For the first three options, you need to understand and address the factors that trigger reproductive swarming. Congestion in the hive can be controlled by giving more space or transferring brood to a smaller colony. If you suspect reduced levels of QMP (queen mandibular pheromone) from as the queen gets old, replace the queen. Increase of food resources coming into the hive and longer daylight hours are factors you can’t do much about, but you can recognize when they are happening. Once you see queen cells (not queen cups), the urge to swarm is in place and if you see capped queen cells, swarming is imminent or may have already occurred. Either way, the best thing to do is to split the hive and always take the queen to

the new hive box. If you do not want an additional hive, after splitting, destroy all the queen cells in the old hive. Allow them to remain queenless for 3-4 days. Then go back and ensure they are queenless, destroy all new queen cells, and then do a newspaper combine with the ‘new’ hive on top of the old hive. The third option is to catch your swarm in a trap (which is a good plan even if you are taking action to prevent swarms), because try as you might, sometimes swarms still happen. (Also google Russian Scion.)

Next, Secretary-Treasurer Lynne Jones, drew for door prizes. Scott Smith won a Smoker Stopper, Andrew Marlowe won a Perfect Pocket Hive Tool, Gerrald Verran won a beekeeper key ring and Laura Parnell won a Smoker key ring.

After a show of hands, Craig announced that Bee-scussions would be the following week on Thursday, March 18. The meeting was then adjourned.

Treasurer’s Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,559.35. Since our last report we collected \$15.00 in dues. We spent \$12.99 for the monthly email cost and made a \$50.00 donation to the Hunt County Beekeepers (Barnes’ speaker donation). The resulting balance is \$3,511.36 (\$3,461.36 in the 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.