



August, 2021

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

Our August 10 meeting will again be both in-person and online. In-person will be at Long Acres Ranch, 2335 Richmond Pkwy, Richmond, TX 77469 (where we met last month, not far from the Community Center where we used to meet). ZOOM contact information is the same as before (an email with clickable links will go out soon). We'll be called to order at 7:30 pm after 30 minutes of socially distanced social time.

More than 221,000 have been vaccinated at Fort Bend County sites, but our COVID-19 infections have taken a scary uptick. The County also reports that we have had 63,530 confirmed cases with 59,416 that have recovered. Sadly the number of COVID-19 deaths in Fort Bend has grown to 746. We all need to continue being careful about contacts with others. Members that have not been vaccinated are strongly advised to attend our August meeting online.

New variants of this disease continue to crop up. The vaccines don't appear to be 100% effective, but they do prevent hospitalization and death. COVID-19 is easily transmitted and carries huge uncertainty of outcome. You may have few symptoms, but if you have symptoms resembling a cold, you should self-quarantine and get tested for the virus. If you do contract the disease, a few days in ICU can wipe out your bank account even if you have good health insurance. This disease will continue to be a huge problem until virtually everyone has been vaccinated (or recovered from it).

August meeting

The August 10 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will again be both online and "in-person" beginning at 7:00 pm. We plan to be ZOOMing from our in-person meeting at Long Acres Ranch, 2335 Richmond Pkwy, Richmond, TX 77469. A clickable ZOOM link will go out by email. The LAR gate will be open until 8 pm. If you arrive after the gate has closed, the keypad code is 2337 (bees). This code will only work during our meeting. We'll be called to order at 7:30 pm after 30 minutes of social time.

If you haven't been vaccinated, don't feel well or have a medical condition that concerns you, we ask that you join the ZOOM meeting rather than attending in person.

Our guest speaker for August is Tony Andric. Tony is a beekeeper in Lockhart and will be coming to speak in person. His presentation is: The Untamed Bee: Methods to Managing Defensive Colonies. This is an important topic since managing bad bees is critical to being a safe, responsible beekeeper.

Thanks to the AgriLife Extension office and the LAR staff for arranging the Long Acres Ranch meeting.

July Meeting Notes

We had 26 in-person and 7 Zoom attendees at our July meeting. After social time, President Craig Rench opened the meeting.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk announced two important upcoming events: The Brazos Valley Bee School is on September 25th, in Bryan, Texas. The cost is \$70/person, \$125/couple. For ages 12-17 the cost is \$15 if attending with a parent/guardian. The fee includes a Chicken Fajita Lunch. For more info and to register go to: www.bvbeeks.org

The Texas Beekeepers Association Fall Convention will be at Moody Gardens in Galveston, Friday November 5 through Sunday November 7. The annual convention isn't usually this close to home, so consider attending. For more info and to register go to: www.texasbeekeepers.org.

Danessa also went over the "In the Bee-yard" for July and August. You should get your honey harvest done in July. Despite all the rain this year, July and August are usually hot and often dry. Ensure bees have a consistent supply of water. Providing shade and extra ventilation is a good idea. There is little for bees to forage on in August and

colonies can be very cranky during the nectar dearth. Bees can starve in August so feeding may be needed. August is the time to treat for varroa. Varroa mite indication can be from using sticky boards, powdered sugar rolls, or checking drone larvae. For an accurate count use an alcohol wash (if the varroa count is 5 per 100 bees, treat immediately). Consider re-queening in the fall for a healthy hive entering the winter. If you plan to purchase a queen, make arrangements in advance.

The presentation, given by our officers was "Time to Pull Honey!" and covered all the ways to extract honey and the equipment that can be used to do so. The club's extracting equipment was there for members to see and members had a good discussion and shared tips on getting bees out of supers, equipment preferences, and clean up afterwards. Unfortunately, for those attending via Zoom, we experienced some technical difficulty and they did not have good visual or audio of the presentation. (If anyone would like to receive the PowerPoint slideshow, send a request to info@fortbendbeekeepers.org)

Danessa and Lynne conducted the door prize drawings. Thank you to those who provided prizes and congratulations to the winners.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I know that swarm season is about over, but I want to give swarm capture a try. I'm new at beekeeping and a bit apprehensive about this.

A: Though we generally think of swarm season as being in early spring, swarms can happen at almost any time of the year. Bees form "reproductive swarms" in the spring to produce a new colony while "absconding swarms" are abandoning an unsuitable nest site. We usually see a jump in absconding in August and September. Reproductive swarms that moved into someone's attic may find that their home is unsuitable because it just gets too hot for them to deal with.

The fact is, catching a swarm is not something that requires a lot of beekeeping skill. Almost anyone with protective gear that has been around bees is usually ready to take on a swarm capture. Of course it is probably easier with the guidance of an experienced beekeeper.

What's needed? Probably "what's not needed?" is a more important first question. Using your smoker is a bad idea since we want the bees to freely communicate by scent to find your box. At the scent of smoke, bees want to engorge on honey to be ready to leave since their home may be on fire. It just makes sense that you don't want to hide scents or encourage the bees to leave.

Aggressive behavior in bees is a defense mechanism to protect their home. Swarms are usually quite docile since they are "homeless". Nonetheless, protective gear is a good idea to avoid stings.

You'll need a box to put the bees in and a nuc works best since you can leave the bees inside to get established. Drawn comb is far better than empty foundation which is better than nothing. Without frames, the bees will quickly make a mess building comb for their new home.

A small pump sprayer from the beauty supply store is almost essential. Fill it with sugar syrup with a splash of feeding stimulant with essential oils. You can use something like Honey B Healthy or just make your own. If it is accessible, spray down the swarm. It makes them sticky and less prone to fly. They are probably hungry so they may quickly begin feeding on the syrup. It's a good idea to spray your comb/foundation too since the scent will help attract the bees.

Another essential is a can of insect repellent like Off!. Never spray any bees with it, but if you spray where the bees were clustered they won't go back there and enter your box instead. You can also use it to keep the cluster from moving higher by spraying a paper towel and placing it above the swarm. Bees that cluster in small brushy live oaks in new neighborhoods are particularly difficult to capture. You can use the paper towel trick to push the bees down for more easy access. In fact, you can push them all the way to your box that way.

A small folding tv table is handy for keeping your box at a working level. Remove a few frames then shake or brush as many bees as possible inside. (Wooden nucs are pretty heavy, cardboard or plastic ones are easier to handle.) Don't close up the box right away; leave it open to attract more bees. Workers have a scent gland in their abdomen and you will see bees with their butts up and wings fanning to spread their scent so others know where everyone went. Give the wayward workers a few minutes to reunite inside your box.

It is usually not worthwhile to search for the swarm's queen. If it is a "pancake swarm" (on the ground) you can usually just put the nuc near them and they will begin marching in. You have little else to do while this is going on, so you may find watching for the queen to enter to be entertaining. Sometimes she will be among the first to go inside, or she may wait patiently outside for a little while.

Pruners or a small pruning saw may be handy if the swarm has clustered on a small branch or limb. Carefully clear the area first then cut the branch, holding it in your spare hand. You can then shake the bees into your box. Another option is to put the box on the ground on an old towel and shake the bees in front of the entrance (the towel prevents bees from going under the nuc).

Your bee brush is helpful for swarms clustered on a fence or a wall or a heavy tree limb. You'll really appreciate a light weight nuc as you hold the box up to brush the bees in. Use Off! to deal with bees that are clustering instead of going in your box but be aware that sometimes the queen may not yet be in your box. Look carefully for her before putting the cluster to flight with your bee brush. As soon as the queen is in your box, bees will rush to join her. If need be, Off! can be used to keep them from going back instead of entering your box. Bees really dislike insect repellent so be judicious in its use.

Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$3,500.58. Since our last report we collected \$50.00 in dues. Our only expense was \$12.99 for the monthly email cost. The resulting balance is \$3,537.59 (\$3,487.59 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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