



September, 2021

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

Our September 14 meeting will be online only due to conditions from Tropical Storm Nicholas. Hopefully everyone's power will have been restored in time. 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.

The Fort Bend COVID risk level remains at RED or HIGH COMMUNITY RISK. Vaccination is highly recommended. Almost 224,000 have already been vaccinated at Fort Bend County sites. The County also reports that we have had 76,575 confirmed cases with 68,549 that have recovered. The number of COVID-19 deaths in Fort Bend now stands at 838. Members that have not been vaccinated are strongly advised to attend our September meeting online.

The vaccines aren't 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 the ICU can wipe out your bank account even if you have good health insurance.

## September meeting

The September 14 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be online only beginning at 7:00 pm. A clickable ZOOM link will go out by email. We'll be called to order at 7:30 pm after 30 minutes of online social time.


Our program topic for September will be on managing varroa mites presented by Jeff McMullan. These eight-legged pests are the largest ectoparasites in the animal world. No other host is attacked by a parasite of such large relative size! They are an invasive pest that originated in Asia and their natural host is the eastern or Asian honey bee. The Asian bee has adapted to the parasite and it seems to cause them only minor difficulty (which makes sense since a parasite that kills its host is going up and evolutionary dead end). When our European (or western) honey bee was brought to Asia, *Varroa destructor* began a host shift over a period of 50 to 100 years. It infests European honey bee colonies almost everywhere.

Varroa presents the biggest challenge in keeping bees no matter how many hives one has. We will go over the interconnected biology of honey bees and varroa mites and the management options we have.

## 2021 Dues

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association dues are \$5.00 per person per calendar year. Our dues have not changed since the club was formed, due mostly to support from Fort Bend County AgriLife Extension Service and donations made when our members help in our community with problem bees. Our club's financial needs are met year after year and we have a healthy account balance. Those that feel that our dues are too low are encouraged to donate whatever amount they like.

Members whose 2021 dues have not been paid were recently notified by email. If someone believes they've already paid for 2021, please do not hesitate to let Lynne Jones know at [info@FortBendBeekeepers.org](mailto:info@FortBendBeekeepers.org).

 If there is a sad bee on your newsletter address label this month it is a reminder that our records show that you have not paid dues for 2021.

If you haven't paid your dues and wish to continue your membership, you can send an email to [info@FortBendBeekeepers.org](mailto:info@FortBendBeekeepers.org) to get info on mailing in your payment.

## Herbert Wesley Carew

### 1942 - 2021

Club member Wes Carew passed away on Thursday, September 2. Wes and his wife Marja have been members for several years. Please keep Marja and the Carew family in your prayers.

## August Meeting Notes

We had 32 in-person and 13 Zoom attendees at our August meeting. Due to our guest speaker, Tony Andric, coming from Lockhart, we started Social Time at 6:30 to allow everyone a chance to meet and visit with him. Also in attendance was special guest, Stan Gore, owner of Texas Friendly Beekeepers facebook group.

The announcements and other information were shared during social time via a slide show on the room's presentation screens. Of particular note:

September 25th Brazos Valley Beekeepers Assn., Bryan, TX \$70/person, \$125/couple \$15/ages 12-17 w/ parent/guardian includes chicken fajita lunch [www.bvbeeks.org](http://www.bvbeeks.org)

November 6th through November 7th. Texas Beekeepers Association's Fall Convention will be at

Moody Gardens in Galveston.  
<https://texasbeekeepers.org>

If you have been a beekeeper for at least a year and attend FBBA meetings regularly (in-person or via Zoom), have an enthusiasm for beekeeping and want to share it with a new beekeeper we need you to be a Mentor! Contact Margaret - [mje52@hotmail.com](mailto:mje52@hotmail.com).

To allow as much time as possible for the presentation, at 7:30, we skipped all formality. Tony Andric introduced himself and began his presentation, The Untamed Bee: Methods to Managing Defensive Colonies. (But for the record, Tony describes himself as a Beekeeping & Bee Removal Addict. He has 50 hives in Lockhart and his colonies are treatment-free with under 10% annual losses. Tony is the inventor of the Everything Bee Vacuum and a maker of Chicken Doors.)

Tony's presentation was not about how to 'fix' an overly defensive, or "hot" hive; rather, he shared his experience and techniques for working with defensive bees in a way that is safe for the beekeeper, the people and animals in bees' vicinity. It is important to understand, this is not for new or inexperienced beekeepers. Making a mistake with these bees can be deadly. First, why intentionally keep "mean bees"? In Tony's experience they are heartier. He doesn't treat any of his colonies and has very low losses. In order to keep colonies of mean bees, the location is very important. It must be at least 300 feet from a residence and 500 or more feet from any confined animals. The apiary should be in full sun and fenced to keep other animals away from the hives. Each hive should be uniquely marked and spaced as far apart as possible. There needs to be a constant source of water that is not near humans (no pools, bird baths at the house, etc.). The apiary needs drive-up access. You need a full, vented (3-layer) suit, PVC-coated gloves, and shrimp boots (PVC muck boots). A ball cap's brim will keep the veil away from your face and wearing a sweat band is a necessity to keep

from being blinded by sweat in your eyes. A pair of tube socks, with the ends cut off, pulled over your gloves and up your sleeves make a good barrier to keep the bees from getting under your gloves or up your sleeves. Duct tape seals up unexpected holes and gaps. It's a good idea to have epi-pen, Bena-dryl, sting-relief available as well. For equipment, Tony recommends two smokers, both filled and lit, with plenty of available fuel, an assortment of hive tools, and a frame grip. Have boxes, bottom boards and covers with you, even if you don't expect to need them. Tangle-foot is a good product if your hives are having problems with ants. Wash your suit regularly to remove attack pheromone. Planning and preparation are important. Make sure you have a phone signal. Make sure you have a way to escape (clear path). Make sure there are no innocent bystanders (people/ animals). What is your purpose? Before you open a hive, you should have set up all your equipment on a work surface (tailgate or table); prepped supplies (sugar water, pollen patties, hive boxes, frames); and gauged the mood (are they ignoring you or already bumping you?). Some management rules: never risk safety, get in and out (no dilly-dallying), don't let a hive get hungry or crowded, don't thump boxes/ bang frames/leave the hive open, don't try to find the queen, don't introduce outside queens, don't do mite counts (you aren't going to treat, so you don't need to count). The good news, is you aren't going to inspect the bees very often. Unless they need to be fed or need a brood box or honey super added, you're going to leave them alone for the most part.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Tony answered a few questions. He then shared some published research on feeding bananas and colony growth.

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:** My back yard hive has managed to fill a super. What are my options for extracting the honey?

**A:** The most straightforward thing to do is "crush and strain". You cut the comb out in chunks, saving some comb honey if you want. Strain the honey through a kitchen strainer lined with cheese cloth (a slow process best done at warm temperature but not in the open outside).

A better option may be to borrow the club's extracting equipment. We own a manual two frame extractor, uncapping tools, an uncapping tub, and a double sieve. Our honey refractometer allows you to check moisture content before extracting, especially honey that is not yet capped.

## Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was \$3,537.59. Since our last report we collected \$80.00 in dues and received a \$200 donation for a swarm collection done by Gene DeBons. The expenses were the \$12.99 the monthly email fee and \$50.00 Texas Beekeepers Association annual membership. The resulting balance is \$3,754.60 (\$3,704.60 in the checking account, plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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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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