



October, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except December). The October 11, 2022 meeting will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors and new members are always welcome (membership dues are \$10.00 for the calendar year). We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our monthly meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., October 11, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Online login instructions remain the same:

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

pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emhIYm JDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

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

We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm puzzled by people offering up their property for my hives. Somehow they always seem to know exactly how many hives I need to put there. What's the deal?

An A: It is hard not to ask "where've you been?". It is all about reducing their property taxes. Property (or "ad valorem") taxes are based on the property's value. The Latin term "ad valorem" directly translates to "according to value". Depending on its location, there can be any number of taxing authorities: county government, local government, levee districts,

emergency services, etc. etc. Each taxing authority sets its own tax rate. Property taxes typically total to about 2% of the property's value per year. You may own your property, but you are "paying rent" in the form of ad valorem taxes.

Property value for tax purposes is not set by the taxing authorities themselves. Imagine how complicated things would get if they did! Central Appraisal Districts were created to set property value for tax purposes. It sounds very logical: the taxing authority creates a budget and their tax rate is simply their budget divided by the total value to the property they are authorized to tax. (Of course nothing remains simple in the hands of the knuckleheads in Austin or city hall.)

It makes sense that property value is its worth in a free market, largely influenced by its location, improvements, and use. Laws protect people from being "taxed off their property" as market values generally increase. In addition, there are various property tax exemptions in place for homeowners, property in agricultural use, etc. The "homestead exemption" limits taxes on your home and property in agricultural use is appraised for tax purposes at its value in agricultural production (even if it is in the Galleria).

"Beekeeping" use is a relatively new tax-advantaged property use. The Texas legislature passed (and the governor signed) a law that establishes "beekeeping" as an agricultural use. It was intended to benefit migratory beekeepers, many

of whom overwinter their hives in Texas. Property in Texas benefits from the lower taxable value even if the bees are in California to pollenate almonds.



September Meeting Notes

President Craig Rench opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Two first time attendees introduced themselves and were welcomed. Gene DeBons spoke on the novel, The Keeper of the Bees, by Gene Stratton-Porter, published in 1925. The novel was published posthumously after Mrs. Stratton-Porter died in an auto accident at age 61. The novel's main character is a wounded WWI serviceman who escapes from a military hospital and finds himself entrusted with the care of an apiary in California. (The novel is available as a free pdf download at: <https://bibleandbookcenter.com/> & search for "The Keeper of the Bees". Additionally, it was adapted to film in 1947 and is available on youtube.)

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk reminded everyone of three events taking place on September 24th: BVBA's Beekeeping School in Bryan and Beeweavers INFUZZED event and Honey Cookoff in Navasota. She also asked for everyone to mark their calendars October 8th when we will have an Outreach Ac-

tivity at Enchanted Forest from 9am-noon. Members will be needed to staff our table.

Danessa announced that new webmaster Dayna Druke is in the process of updating and improving our website. The monthly newsletters, which hadn't been uploaded in two years are caught up. If you find Jeff McMullan's "Ask a Dozen Beekeepers" column educational, you should check out some of the past issues. On the website click on LINKS, and then FBBA NEWSLETTERS. Dayna's next action item is to update the FOR SALE tab. If you sell local honey and hive products, bees and queens, or beekeeping supplies, and would like your contact information listed on the website, please complete the form and turn it in to Lynne Jones, Sec-Treasurer.

Danessa then introduced our guest speaker, Chris Moore, of Moore Honey Farm. Chris has been a commercial beekeeper since 1999 and maintains about 2,500 colonies in 5 southeast Texas counties. Chris is a past-president of the Texas Beekeepers Association, and has held several other TBA leadership positions as well. His passion for promoting pure and local honey led to the formation of the Real Texas Honey organization, which promotes honey that is 100% produced by honey bees in Texas.

Chris shared some statistics on colony losses in Texas. Almost all of our colony losses are colonies that have been weakened or killed by varroa mites. Chris discussed three different mite treatment options: Treatment Free, Natural Organic, and Miticides. Regardless of your mite management style you need to check for mites. Chris recommended the Honey Bee Health Coalition's website for information about varroa mites, how to do mite counts, and all of our treatment options. When it comes to feeding, some beekeepers pull all the frames of honey from the hive and then

feed the bees; whereas other beekeepers leave a box of honey on the hive for the bees. You can tell if a hive needs to be fed from the frames with brood – if there isn't any honey near the brood, they need to be fed. If there is a lot of stored pollen (several frames full) it probably indicates that the queen is not laying enough, and so the pollen is being stored excessively rather than being fed to larvae. If you are keeping your bees in a single deep configuration over winter, there should be 2 to 4 frames of brood, with two frames of honey on each side of the brood frames, and 1 or 2 empty frames for the outermost frames on both sides. In a double deep with honey super(s) configuration, it is important to keep the hive in the smallest configuration possible for the colony's size and to go into the hive every three weeks or so and uncap a frame of honey.

Chris compared honey in a super to food in your deep freeze. It's there, but you don't much like to get food out of it, compared to the food in your pantry. By uncapping honey in the super, the bees will then take it down to the brood frames where it will be used. It is recommended to feed heavy syrup at this time of year (2 parts sugar to 1 part water). For beekeepers with five or so hives, Chris recommends a mason jar with a nipple feeder inserted directly into the cover because you can see how much has been consumed without opening the hive. For a commercial operation though, he uses division board feeders. Chris commented that in the past, a queen bee could be productive for 4 to 5 years, but now commercial beekeepers requeen every year. He explained that systemic pesticides are incorporated into plants and though the chemicals do not outright kill bees, they do lead to queen failure (it is thought that they affect her stored semen).

Pollen is the bees' protein source. Pollen supplements are available as powder and patties. Unless you are sending bees to the California almond orchards, you probably don't

need to feed pollen at this time of year. Be careful when feeding pollen patties because small hive beetles will lay eggs in them.

Chris recommends the following for info about disease and pests:

- 2016 Honey Bee Diseases & Pests. A companion to Beekeeping in Northern Climates. A free pdf download is available at <https://beelab.umn.edu/manuals>.
 - "What's Wrong with My Hive?", an article by Rob Snyder with photo examples of diseases. <https://beeinformed.org/2012/11/01/whats-wrong-with-my-hive/>.
 - Honey Bee Health Coalition has three pdf downloads available at <https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/> Click on the "Resources" tab.
- Lynne then conducted the door prize drawings.

Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was \$1,316.23. Since our last report, we collected \$50.00 in member dues and received a \$60.00 donation. Our August expenses were \$33.07 for items for a TBA annual meeting table centerpiece, \$225.00 for a FBBA banner, a \$100.00 speaker honorarium, and \$12.99 for our email subscription. The resulting balance is \$1,055.17 (\$1,005.17 Wells Fargo checking account balance plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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