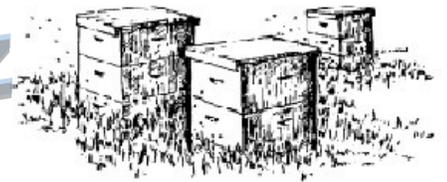




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



August, 2016

The August 9, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Carol Gubbels who volunteered to bring salty treats and Glenda McGaughey (something sweet) in August. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Cindy Masengale will give an opening invocation and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I want to be a "safe, responsible, successful beekeeper". What are the most important things for me to be doing?

**An A:** Wow! That is a great question and "everything" isn't the answer that you are looking for. Probably the best way to address this is to try to define "safe", "responsible" and "successful", then describe the sort of things to do to achieve each end.

"Safe" would refer to both yourself (proper protective gear) and, more importantly, anyone else that may be impacted by your bees and beekeeping. Always remember that there are people that could have a fatal reaction to a single bee sting. A large number of stings can be fatal to anyone. Also remember that pets and livestock can be injured or killed by bees too. And fear of bees (and other stinging insects) is not uncommon, especially for moms and kids.

Your hive location should be discrete and chosen to minimize conflict with your daily activities as well as your neighbor's. It is best for hive entrances to encourage the bees to come and go "up and away" from people. For your personal safety, always "suit up" before opening a hive since hive behavior can be far different than it was the

last time you worked your bees. This is especially true as the colony numbers build and the availability of forage drops during summer. Always use your smoker to prevent things from getting out of hand and don't work bees when the weather is unsettled. If things start to get bad, stop and get away to try again later. Always have a plan for refuge if things get really really bad.

Always consider the safety of others when deciding to open a hive. If neighbors will be mowing their yard or hosting a kid's birthday party you shouldn't be working bees on the other side of the fence. Always remember that pets and livestock that are penned or chained cannot escape from attacking bees.

The most important aspects of being a responsible beekeeper are a thorough knowledge of honey bees and beekeeping, only keeping docile bees and managing the colony's natural instinct to swarm. Attend beekeeping club meetings, never miss an opportunity for a beekeeping class and subscribe to beekeeping magazines (reading each issue cover-to-cover).

Routine requeening in the spring with "sweet" stock helps a lot since young queens are less likely to swarm and bad bees aren't likely to become "sweet" on their own. Bees need a lot of water to drink as well as cool the hive in summer. Make sure that a water source is

available since you don't want the neighbor's koi pond, pool or hot tub to become the "go to" place for water. If that happens, the only way to change things is to force the bees to find a new place to get water by draining the pool.

In the spring when resources are plentiful, bees form new colonies by swarming: they "multiply by dividing". At other times bees may "abscond", leaving their home to escape overcrowding, pests, disease or an unsuitable nest site. In our area, it is common to see an uptick in swarms in late summer as the bees escape nest sites chosen in the spring that are now hotter than h\*\*l. If your bees swarm, it is your duty to capture them before they move into the wall of a neighbor's house. Of course you can't watch for swarms all of the time, so a swarm trap or two is a must. Scout bees find every potential nesting site in the area. It makes sense that a new home in close proximity to their old one is less desirable, so a green belt a few hundreds yards away is a better trapping site.

Part of understanding why you want to keep bees is to define "success". Every beekeeper falls into one of two categories: bees are your "pets" or your bees are "livestock". No matter how you choose to define your success, being safe and being responsible are key to continuing to enjoy bees and beekeeping.

## July Meeting Notes

59 members and guests signed in at our July meeting, including six first-timers. Thirteen new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues at the meeting, bringing our roster total to 152 members. New members added to the roster in July included Jeannie Bain, Larry R. Boecker, Clif and Gay Dickerson, Mark Gonzalez, Mike and Zach Huddleston, Margaret Kostka, Ed Lake, Marty McDowell, Emil Pampell and Ed Veiseh.

After 30 minutes of social time, Dave Grimme opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. VP Nancy Hentschel welcomed everyone and recognized the first-timers to our meeting. She reminded us that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. Thanks Herman Hoot for getting coffee and lemonade ready for the meeting.

Our meeting program for July included three member presentations. First, Gene deBons updated us on illegal honey that continues to make its way to U. S. markets.

In 2015, 71% of U. S. honey consumption was imported. Imports from China have been banned because of extensive processing and contamination with antibiotics, etc. To get around the ban, Chinese honey is simply relabeled as coming from other countries. 195 drums of Chinese honey (labeled as coming from Vietnam) was recently seized in Chicago. In the lab the honey's floral source could be identified by studying pollen grains, so the crooks began microfiltering honey to remove traces of its origin.

"Chinese beekeepers aren't like us", says Gene, since Chinese honey is made in factories, not hives. With the view that gathering nectar is all the work that must be done by bees, Chinese beekeepers extract the nectar with a moisture content of 35%. Instead of water being removed in the hive, it goes to the factory for dehydration and filtering using res-

in beads. The resins works like a water softener to remove antibiotics and other chemicals as well as all traces of the honey's origin. The resulting "white honey" has no color or flavor and is used to dilute real honey (with its floral source intact) then exported to the U. S.

As a followup to the Q-A in our June newsletter, Jeff McMullan demonstrated how our swarm traps are used. The traps are simply a pulp nursery pot mounted on a piece of plywood and baited with lemongrass oil. It is hung up where bees have been a problem. Scout bees seeking a home are attracted to the trap and hopefully convince their swarm to move inside. At that point, the "bees in a trap" notice goes out. The responding beekeeper shows up at dusk and first checks to make sure that the trap doesn't "leak" where it mounts to the plywood. Bees will usually be clustered at their point of entry and steel wool and a hive tool are used to plug holes. There are four openings in the bottom of the pots intended for use as entrances. They can be sealed with steel wool as well or, better yet, a square plastic bucket. The trap should be closed up after dark with all the bees inside. A few puffs from a smoker will usually chase the last stragglers inside. When it is all sealed up, it is time to leave. Make sure to keep the trap oriented the way it is found to prevent collapsing any comb that is inside. It isn't a good idea to remove the bees inside a hive at night. You can just set the trap on top of (or beside) their new home. You should open the trap up right away to avoid over heating. Then the bees are ready to be moved into a hive, sooner is better since they are still building comb that is best discarded after the move because small hive beetles are likely to take advantage of the disruption.

The third topic for our meeting was a brief discussion of "safe beekeeping" by Nancy Hentschel. It is very important that problems with bad bees are remedied ASAP. Bees act mean for a whole lot of reasons

(queenlessness, overcrowding, Africanized traits, etc.). Nancy likened the potential problems to the situations that pilots train for. It is not just about bad weather, low fuel, navigation or mechanical problems, etc. It is about several of these things happening at once, like bad bees, the neighbor's lawn crew and pets confined in the back yard. Always expect the worst. Gene deBons added  $\text{CH}_3\text{COO}[\text{CH}_2]_4\text{CH}_3$  (amyl acetate). Don't snack on a banana on your way to the beeyard since bananas contain this organic compound and so does the honey bee alarm pheromone!

Sharon Moore reported that the moisture content of some of her flow hive honey was high (more to follow). It looks like she will need to check that the honey is capped.

Congratulations to our July door prize winners and thanks to the donors.

## Treasurer's Report

Our July treasury balance was \$2,178.26. Since then we collected \$25.00 for a new mentee plus dues from 13 new and renewing members (\$65.00). Mike Jurek and Milton Woods scored a \$200.00 donation after removing bees from an old barn in Guy. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,468.26, consisting of \$40.00 in cash and \$2,428.26 in our checking account.

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