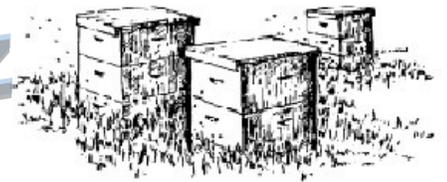




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



June, 2016

The June 14, 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 Sharon Moore who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jessica Boudreaux (something sweet) in June. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. We don't have a volunteer for our opening invocation, so if you can help with that, please contact President Daryl Scott. Our June program will include an update on Texas honey bee law by Mary Reed, Apiary Inspector with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service. Mary was originally scheduled for May but was able to postpone her presentation so we could explore Flow Hives before Sharon Moore and Doug Benson put them on their hives.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I harvested honey three weeks ago. I did 10 supers with the old fashioned crush and strain method. All of the honey done that way has crystallized on me: 15 gallons! I'm not really sure what caused it. What can I do with this honey? Should I just try to sell it as is?

An A: First off, crushing and straining probably had little to do with your honey crystallizing. Nonetheless, ten supers is a lot of honey to harvest that way and it is pretty wasteful.

Everyone seems to appreciate the effort required to make honey, the only human food produced by an insect. To make a pound of honey, bees have flown some 55,000 miles visiting two million flowers. The average worker contributes only about 1/12 teaspoon of honey in its lifetime.

What about the wax to make comb? It requires about six or eight pounds of honey to make a pound of beeswax, so a huge amount of effort will be needed to replace comb when we crush and strain to harvest honey. With top bar hives, crushing and straining is our only alternative. In fact, the invention of Langstroth hives as an alternative to straw

skeps and bee gums led to a 19th century boom in beekeeping because honey comb could be reused by the bees. Uncapping and extracting is much more efficient and, like most other beekeeper clubs, our organization owns harvest equipment for members to use. You can save your bees a ton of work if you use the club's equipment next time. We require a deposit to make sure the equipment is returned plus a \$20 fee.

Since it is a concentrated solution of various sugars, all honey is likely to crystallize. How long that takes depends on proportions from the various floral sources (or sugar water) and the temperature. If you stored three pails of honey in your nice cool kitchen, the conditions were right for crystallization. Warmer is better, but you can freeze honey and it just gets incredibly thick without crystallizing. Put it in the 'fridge though and it may well crystallize in a few hours. It is best to store honey pails in the garage or storage room so it stays relatively warm. It is less viscous too, so the bubbles and bits of stuff float to the top leaving crystal clear honey below.

What to do? Crystallized honey tastes fine but it is a lot like sweet tasting beach. Since this batch is prone to crystallize, you could make "creamed honey" using supplies that the bee supply folks sell, including

"seed" that you must mix in with a paint mixer on a cordless drill (<https://www.dadant.com/catalog/catalogsearch/result/?q=creamed>). Once you get going you can seed the next batch with some of your own creamed honey....or you can buy creamed honey at the grocery store and use it as seed. Most of the honey sold in Europe is creamed honey with a really fine texture that spreads like peanut butter. But you need to start with liquid honey.

How do you liquefy it? Some folks put it in the attic for a day or so, but wrestling a 60 pound pail of honey up a set of disappearing stairs presents a challenge. If you have a big enough ice chest, you can put the pail inside with a 60 watt incandescent light bulb and it will be liquefied in a few days. It is rumored that one of our members put a pail in a plastic bag (in case something leaked) and filled the jacuzzi tub with really hot water. It worked ok but his wife brings it up all the time in polite company.

Once it is liquid again, you can bottle it up. I suggest 2 lb squeeze bottles and tell whoever gets it to fill a cute honey dispenser for the kitchen table then store the rest in the freezer. When the dispenser is empty, very carefully microwave it just enough to be able to squeeze out a refill: ten seconds, wait 30 seconds,

check it, maybe ten more seconds, etc. Then quickly back in the freezer. Microwave energy makes stuff hot by exciting water molecules, and all the energy is going in to not much water. Blowing up a bottle of honey in the microwave is worse than a honey leak in the hot tub...and you'll be reminded of it for the rest of your life.

Speaking of blowing things up.....understand that when honey crystallizes, the moisture content of the remaining liquid goes up. It can ferment and explode the container....another good reason to store it in the garage in a plastic bag.

Honey Container Order

Seventeen Association members took advantage of this year's group order of honey containers.

The numbers are incredible: The order totaled 36 huge boxes of containers shipped to a single address for \$10.09 per carton. Our members saved over \$1,000 in shipping costs this year. The order totaled 4,640 containers, enough to bottle 7,370 pounds of honey (over 600 gallons or 125 five gallon pails)!

Texas state law now permits beekeepers producing less than 2,500 pounds of honey to sell it (or give it away) without any food safety or inspection requirements. Nothing can be added to the honey and there are restrictions on when and where it can be sold. There are special labeling requirements as well. You can read the rules on the internet at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HS/htm/HS.437.htm>. It is important that beekeepers know and understand these rules. It is also important that we preserve and protect public perception of honey as a safe, wholesome food.

May Meeting Notes

64 members and guests, including ten first-timers, signed in at our May meeting. Thirteen new and renewing members paid their 2016 dues in May. There are still quite a few folks who haven't come up with five bucks for their 2016 dues.

If this newsletter didn't come in the mail it is because you haven't paid your dues and have been dropped from the mailing list.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott introduced Steve Mims who opened our meeting with an invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl welcomed everyone and again reminded us that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. He thanked Steve Mims and Rosie McCusker for volunteering to bring snacks for the meeting.

Daryl's monthly fun facts for May came from the stats published in the May edition of the American Bee Journal, including the fact that the 2015 U. S. honey crop was down 15%. The "beekeeper's calendar" for spring includes installing queen excluders (if you use them), making more splits, and getting ready for your harvest.

Jeff McMullan gave a quick status report on our honey container order and Jeff Murray updated us on TexasHoneyTrading.com.

The scheduled program for May was a presentation by Apiary Inspector Mary Reed. Mary was able to postpone her trip to Rosenberg so that we could learn more about Flow Hives™. Sharon Moore and Doug Benson brought their new Flow™ Supers for all to see and touch. We watched a YouTube video of the hive in action then discussed Sharon and Doug's plans to give it a try.

We had a door prize extravaganza in May since we forgot to have a drawing in April. Winners were too many to list; congratulations and thanks to the donors.

Visit to Hawk's Nest Farm

As a follow up to our May meeting, Sharon Moore invited every one to a field day at her farm on May 22. Her bees were filling Flow Supers™ and there was lots of beekeeping equipment and gear to see, including club-owned equipment and out-

reach materials. Fresh made lemonade and special recipe honey cookies, prepared by Sharon's sister Catherine, a real treat.

Within a week Sharon was hard at work collecting her first gallon of Flow™ honey. The jar was full in five minutes.



Treasurer's Report

Our May treasury balance was \$2,186.46. We collected dues from 13 new and renewing members (\$65.00) and received donations of \$96.05. We spent \$85.98 for flowers honoring Boyd Dawson (largely offset by a \$55.00 donation in memory of Boyd). We also spent \$8.97 for bottled water for the field day at Sharon Moore's, \$28.57 for coffee, cups, etc. for our meetings, and \$6.48 for a replacement tire for our red wagon. We collected and disbursed \$3,286.95 for our group honey container order. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,188.46, consisting of \$45.00 in cash and \$2,143.46 in our checking account.

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

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