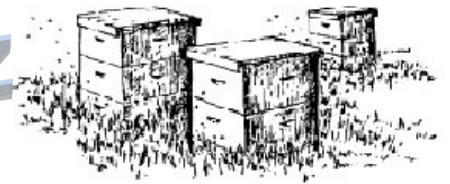




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



March, 2015

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) 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). Our next meeting will be Tuesday, March 10. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks (thanks to "B" Bohus). Thanks to Daryl Scott (something salty) and Christopher Murphy (something sweet) for volunteering to bring treats for our March meeting. We still need volunteers for vacant spots on our refreshments sign-up sheet.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: At our November meeting we talked about exemption from some of the food safety requirements for me to legally sell my honey. Texas' Cottage Food Law was discussed as well. The legislature is now in session. What is the status of all this?

An A: The Texas Beekeeper's Association (TBA) is pursuing two very significant bills in this session of the legislature. One will address alternative food safety requirements for small honey producers and the other is intended to update the existing beekeeping regulations found in the Texas Agriculture Code Chapter 131.

As we discussed at our meeting in November, the Texas Cottage Food Law permits the sale of some home-prepared foods that are considered "not potentially hazardous" under far fewer manufacturing facility requirements and without inspection by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). There is a very specific list of some fifteen foods and consideration was given to just add honey to the list since its very nature is non-hazardous. While in some states honey is addressed as a "cottage food", TBA considered this approach unsatisfactory since many of the requirements are very restrictive and not appropriate for the beekeeper or potential customers. In a nutshell,

people don't make honey, bees do. Another major concern is whether DSHS can investigate the sale of adulterated honey produced as "cottage food". TBA decided to pursue specific exemptions for the small-scale honey producer with the intent of achieving comparable food safety protections while allowing beekeepers to legally sell their honey.

Texas Agriculture Code Chapter 131 - Bees and Honey was last updated almost 30 years ago. It is the principle legal foundation for the Texas Apiary Inspection Service (TAIS) and protections from pests and disease for the apiculture industry. Needless to say, this old law should be carefully reviewed and updated in light of today's many challenges faced by honey bees and beekeepers. You can read the current law (as well as rules published pursuant to the law) by following links on the TAIS web site: <http://txbeeinspection.tamu.edu/>.

The TBA submitted proposals and has received formal drafts from the Texas Legislative Council in Austin, a legislative agency that assists with bill drafting. Both proposed bills were widely distributed for comment to TBA members and the 29 beekeeping associations in Texas. Comments were due by March 2. The TBA Legislative Committee is now working through each and every concern expressed by beekeepers across the state. The next steps happen quickly as TBA works with TAIS and the Texas Legisla-

tive Council to prepare final drafts, seek sponsors and hopefully have bills introduced. The TBA and our club will make every effort to keep all informed of how this process is moving along. Of course we are all reminded of the quip "you don't want to watch sausage or laws being made!"

Election Results Are In

Congratulations to our Association officers for 2015. New to their jobs are Daryl Scott, President, and Nancy Hentschel, Vice-President. Secretary-Treasurer Jeff McMullan was re-elected. And thanks to Albert Smaistrila and Herman Hoot who have served for seven years!

Daryl and his wife Toni live in the Richmond area. They are starting their third year as beekeepers with two hives and wooden ware for two more. Daryl says that his principle goal is to identify and meet the members' needs of our rapidly growing association.

Nancy and Bob Hentschel live in New Territory. They've only had bees for four years, but now have some 25 hives in two beeyards. Nancy admits to having been "consumed by beekeeping" and is delighted to feed her compulsion as she serves as Vice-President. Nancy will be focusing on programs for our monthly meetings.

Jeff McMullan has been Secretary-Treasurer for seven years. He likes to say that it isn't much work when you know your way around a computer and the Extension Office.

February Meeting Notes

We had 68 members and guests sign in at our February meeting. That number was pretty close to the head count; thanks to all who signed in. We welcomed new members Arthur Reuter, Jennifer and Shane Steele, Michele Valdez, Rick Vice and Jason Weber.

Jeff McMullan brought in one of the 18 swarm traps the club has purchased. He shared the details of our plan to have the Extension office make them available to the public. County Extension Agent Boone Holladay will announce the program in a press release in a few weeks. If you would be willing to hive swarms from the traps, be sure to get on the list at our March meeting.

Jack Richardson displayed the ribbons and mini-smokers that will be the awards for our Super Decorating Contest. Entries will be judged at our March meeting (see the related article on the this page).

Gene deBons was pleased to report that he had members volunteer so we could elect officers for 2015. Bill Busch and Daryl Scott introduced themselves as candidates for President and told of why they had volunteered to help lead the Association. Nancy Hentschel (Vice President) and Jeff McMullan (Secretary-Treasurer) were elected without opposition. Daryl won a very close secret ballot.

Winter's end can't be far off so everyone should be getting their new wooden ware ordered and put together and if repairs or repainting are needed, now is the time. To help the newcomers to beekeeping, Jeff McMullan gave a short program on frames and foundation.

Jeff began by affirming that "It's Not All Your Fault", the title of an article in the February, 2011 edition of Bee Culture magazine. Author Jim Thompson took measurements and then gauged the compatibility of almost every manufacturer's Langstroth frame and super. His striking conclusion was that few

combinations of frame and super were compatible. His measurements showed that most manufacturer's frames violated bee space when used in competitor's supers. It is a good idea to get your frames and boxes from the same supplier.

For our newer members, Jeff recalled that "bee space" was the discovery of Rev. Lorenzo L. Langstroth. He observed that honey bees filled gaps that were smaller than 1/4" or larger than 3/8" with comb or propolis: not good for our "removable" frames. In between those two dimensions, the "bee space" was left open. His discovery in the mid-1800's led to his patented invention of the removable frame hive known to this day as the Langstroth Hive.

Langstroth's invention led to an explosion in beekeeping as it was now possible to remove frames, extract the honey and return the comb to the hive without destroying the honey bee colony. Many of the unique terms that beekeepers still use today were much more common words during this "golden age". "Supers" are *superimposed* on the hive for the bees to store honey. "Nucs" are *nucleus* hives that grows into a full colony. Can you think of others?

Jeff went on to describe the various choices to be made in buying frames and foundation.

Door prize winners in February included Alan L'Roy and Katie Garcia (Fort Bend Beekeeper ball caps donated by Bill Busch), Doug Rowell (a nuc trap frame donated by Albert Smaistrle), John Petter (a plant pot for a swarm trap donated by Bill Busch), Boyd Dawson (a honey pitcher donated by Steve Mims), L. D. Lewis (pocket knife donated by Steve Mims) and Toni Scott (a bromeliad donated by Alan L'Roy).

Dues Are Due

Our membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year. Check out the address label on this newsletter. If your name is in *italics*, you need to get your dues paid.

Rodeo Time

Volunteers are still needed for the honey bee exhibit in the AGVENTURE area at The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Our Association and the Houston Beekeepers are assigned the final week: March 15-22. Shifts are 9:00 am - 3:00 pm and 3:00pm - 9:00 pm. You can sign up for any day at <http://www.harriscountybeekeepers.org/>.

Treasurer's Report

Last month's balance was \$3,283.34. At our February meeting we collected dues from 36 new and renewing members (\$180.00) and received \$60.00 in donations. We contributed \$45.00 for rodeo flyers and spent \$50.00 for our Association dues to the Texas Beekeepers Association. Our treasury balance is now \$3,428.34, consisting of \$60.00 in cash and a reconciled balance of \$3,368.34 in our checking account.

Super Decorating Contest

There are only a couple of days left to get your entry ready for our Second Annual Super Decorating Contest that will be judged at our March meeting. Decorated shallow or medium supers (8 or 10 frame) can be entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older).

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EXTENSION

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