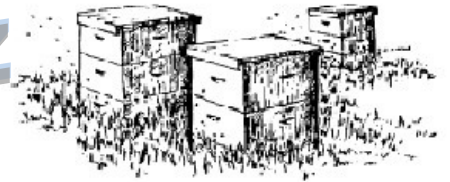




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



October, 2014

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, October 14. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm after a half hour of social time. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members usually volunteer to bring snacks. No one volunteered for our October and November meetings. The volunteer signup sheet will be on our registration table if you can bring snacks in November.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** I bought a five frame nuc (nucleus hive) this summer. They don't seem to be doing well at all. They seem to be healthy, but they are still on the five original frames and have done little to build any additional comb. What should I do?

**An A:** Bees sometimes do funny things. It is not uncommon for this to happen when the nuc was on milled wax foundation and the added frames for the move into a ten frame box had plastic foundation. It seems that the bees don't recognize the plastic foundation that we provide as a place to build comb. They may build small burr comb curtains between frames but refuse to draw comb as we intended. In fact, they may even swarm or abscond because of the perceived lack of space. As you have learned, mixing plastic and wax foundation is usually not a good idea. The bees have a strong preference for beeswax foundation and providing it quickly solved this problem for you.

The various types of plastic foundation afford many benefits to the beekeeper. It is easily installed or replaced in wooden frames and can even be quickly scraped clean with a hive tool to remove wax worm damage. Frames and foundation made completely of plastic are quick and easy for the beekeeper to

use. A heavy coating of beeswax on the plastic may be all that is necessary to fool the bees into cooperating with our plan, but sometimes the bees just remove the wax and use it to build burr comb. If you have many hives, the ease of use for plastic foundation far outweighs the bees natural reluctance to use it. With no other choice, bees will draw comb on plastic foundation. Packaged bees are successfully installed on plastic foundation all the time.

Wax foundation is fragile and, unless comb honey is the goal, it is usually reinforced with wire. When installed in the frame, a "hook" in the reinforcing wire at the top is secured behind a "wedge" or strip of wood. The sheet of wax should be cross-wired as well, especially if the frame will ever go in an extractor. Cross wiring for brood frames is a good idea too in our area where the comb can get soft with the heat and fall apart with a heavy store of honey. All this work makes many opt for plastic foundation despite the shortcomings. The important thing to remember is that it should be all or nothing with plastic foundation.

If you are building new frames for wax foundation, you need "wedge top grooved bottom" frames and foundation with the wire hook. Plastic foundation goes in "grooved top and bottom" frames. If you want to convert from plastic foundation, you can buy wax foundation without the hook that can be in-

stalled in the "grooved top and bottom frames". Or you can just cut off the hooks with heavy scissors so it will fit in the frame. In either case, cross-wiring is necessary.

As you've learned, bees have a strong preference for wax foundation. An extra heavy coating of beeswax helps fool them into drawing out the plastic and it has many advantages (for the beekeeper).

## TBA Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Texas Beekeepers Association will be held November 6-9 in Houston. The meeting itself includes exhibits, presentations and breakout sessions for beekeepers at any experience level. In addition, two events will run in conjunction with the meeting. On Thursday, Nov. 5, Dr. Larry Connor will present an all day "Practical Back-Yard Beekeeping" class. On Friday, Nov. 6 from 10:00 until 2:00 pm there will be a free "Kids Learning About Bees" event for school children accompanied by an adult.

Registration by November 1 is \$85.00 for TBA members and \$110.00 for nonmembers. For registration information and details, including the honey and photography contests, go to:

<http://texasbeekeepers.org/>.

For new beekeepers that have joined our association in 2014, TBA has offered a free one-year membership (see Jeff McMullan for details).

## Help with Projects!

The Association has two projects underway that can use some help. See Jeff McMullan if you are willing. The first is for the TBA annual meeting in November. We took the lead with four other beekeeping clubs to each buy four smokers for banquet table decorations and auction items. We need four members attending the TBA meeting to use the smoker in preparing an appropriate table decoration for the banquet on Saturday. All 21 smokers will become useful keepsakes since Jeff McMullan enlisted the help of Michael Kelling of the Central Texas Beekeepers Association to brand each of them with **TBA 2014**.

Our second project is a little longer term. In late winter we plan to issue a "swarm press relief" to inform our community about honey bees looking for a new home. For areas with consistent bee problems, we will work with AgriLife Extension to provide traps to capture wayward swarms before they move into someone's house. We have 18 16" square plywood panels ready to go and a gallon of paint. The trap backs and paint are in the bed of Jeff McMullan's pickup. Can you guess what is needed?

## September Meeting Notes

We had 43 members and guests sign the roster at our August meeting. A rough head count came up with 47 so it seems a few failed to sign the roster. Please make a point of signing the attendance roster at our meetings to help us track attendance. Detailed contact information is only needed for guests and those attending for the first time. Otherwise, a quick sign-in is all we need.

We offer an especially warm welcome to new area residents Emael Jabber (from Baghdad, Iraq) and Sam Nahar (from Jerusalem, Israel). They are being assisted in resettlement by Yani Rose Keo and the Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, a Houston area United

Way agency that helps refugees get settled and become part of our community. The organization has been keeping bees near Guy and is working on getting a new beeyard set up in Fulshear. Members that could assist in this effort are welcome (contact Jeff McMullan for details).

County Extension Agent Boone Holladay apologized for the late mailing of our September newsletter. If it had not arrived yet, it should be in the mail box shortly. Cameron Crane of the Liberty County Beekeepers reminded everyone about the upcoming Texas Beekeepers Association meeting (details are elsewhere in this newsletter). Nancy Hentschel showed up with a huge stack of plastic campaign signs for all to share (she has more in her garage).

Gene deBons reviewed The Honey Trail - In Pursuit of Liquid Gold and Vanishing Bees, a 2008 book by Grace Pundyk. He scored a pretty good read on the used book sale at the San Antonio library. It is the story of a fascinating adventure across Yemeni deserts and Borneo jungles, through the Mississippi Delta and Tasmania's rainforests, over frozen Siberian snowscapes and ancient Turkish villages all in search of honey.

Gene also clarified the meaning of ultrafiltration of honey. Most understood that it is a process that removes all traces of pollen and the ability to determine the floral source of honey. The process involves diluting 3:1 honey with water, filtering out all solids from the resulting fluid, then evaporating the water to return to "a sweetener derived from honey".

Jeff McMullan gave a short presentation on the life cycle of the varroa mite. The life cycle of this pest holds a key to its adaptive resistance to pesticides. Jeff commented on the futility of pesticide use to control varroa since the pest is such a fast moving target. Mating in varroa mites is between siblings so there is a pretty quick response to pesticide toxicity, espe-

cially suboptimal use. Surviving mites quickly create adapted offspring and pesticides become ineffective. Beekeeping practices and selection of honey bee stock are critical to dealing with varroa.

Albert Smaistrila reminded everyone that the goldenrod and ragweed bloom is almost here. Goldenrod honey tastes fine but smells awful while it is being made in the hive. It is obvious when the girls start bringing in goldenrod nectar!

We had our usual potpourri of door prizes in September but we ran out of space to thank the donors and acknowledge the winners individually.

## Treasurer's Report

Our September, 2014 treasury balance was \$3,630.25. Since that time we collected \$40.00 in dues (8 new members at \$5.00 each) and received donations totaling \$86.27. We bought four smokers for \$186.60 from Dadant for use as table decorations and auction items for the upcoming Texas Beekeepers Association annual meeting in Houston. We also collected and subsequently spent \$2,156.70 for member honey container orders from Sailor Plastics. The resulting balance is \$3,569.92: \$40 in cash and \$3,529.92 in our Wells Fargo checking account.

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.