

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

Minutes for April Meeting

April 15, 2024

Apprentice Beekeeper Meeting – began at 6:16 pm

Led by Ed Erwin with 13 in attendance

Question & Answer Period

Presentation Topic by Hive Inspection – Ally Clark: Hive Inspection

- **Available Resources**
 - MoCo Website
- **Why Do an Inspection**
 - Assess strength of colony
 - Queenright - performance and health
 - If feeding is necessary
 - Determine space availability and if new super is needed
 - Treat for pests and diseases
 - Get to know your bees
- **When to and Not to do Inspections**
 - Choose sunny, bright, warm day when temps are above 60F
 - Wait until forager bees have left hive
 - Bees are defensive before and during storms
 - Opening hive during cold temps can chill brood and bees
- **Bee Protective Equipment**
 - Veil
 - Jacket vs. full beekeeper suit - ventilated is most comfortable option and safest for bees
 - Clothing should be loose fitting
 - Gloves
- **Hive Inspection Tools**
 - Smoker and fuel
 - Hive tool, bee brush, frame gripper, queen clip, etc.
 - SHB - traps, oil, DE, Swiffer sheets, etc.
 - Record keeping materials - checklist, phone, etc.
 - Other equipment - woodenware, extra frames, medication, etc.
- **Plan Your Inspection**
 - What do you want to accomplish?
 - Always have a reason to go into hives
 - Lift & Look - light inspection
 - Deep Dive - extensive inspection 3-4 times per year, as it's more invasive
 - Generally avoid disruption of hive during nectar flow
 - Be flexible to deal with unexpected

- **New Hive From Nuc**
 - Inspect after 5-7 days
 - Confirm evidence of queen
 - Confirm new comb is being built
 - Confirm space is available
 - Inspect again every 2 weeks
 - Be prepared to move bees to full-size hive
- **Existing Hive**
 - Early spring
 - Confirm queen activity
 - Manage space
 - Add brood box
 - Reverse brood boxes
 - Move empty frames
- **Approaching the Hive**
 - Plan to work slowly, quietly, smoothly
 - Observe activity/traffic at entrance
 - Don't block entrance
 - If possible, have sun/wind at your back
 - Get sense of what "normal" looks, sounds, and smells like in your apiary
- **Smoking the Hive**
 - Gently remove hive, verifying queen isn't on underside
 - Use cool smoke
 - Fuel recommendation - pine needles, burlap, dried cow manure
 - Bees communicate by smell, and smoke interrupts their communication
 - You can oversmoke a hive, which may cause aggression
 - Always have at least 1 gallon of water available for fire hazard
- **When working the hive**
 - Use hive tool to unstick frames
 - Pull out frames vertically and slowly
 - Examine frames over the hive
 - Return frames to original position and orientation
 - Scrape excess burr comb or propolis from top of frames
 - Try not to squish too many bees
- **Inspection process**
 - Look for eggs, larvae, and capped brood
 - Look for nectar, pollen, and honey
 - Look for pests, such as SHB, wax moths, and varroa (must test for these)
 - Take care in replacing frames
 - Recommend placing rock or ratchet strap on hives
- **Resources in a Hive**
 - Bees - all 4 stages and 3 castes
 - Pantry - nectar, honey, pollen
 - Material - wax comb, propolis

- **Record Keeping**
 - Record what you saw
 - Journal
 - Spreadsheet
 - Commercial software
 - On your phone
- **Presentation questions**

Apprentice Meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm

Monthly meeting – began at 7:11 pm

Led by President Matt Thomas

- Pledge led by Matt Thomas
- Recorded in attendance were 63 members and guests

Announcements

- New officer positions available
- April 15 was Ed Erwin's final day as director of Apprentice Beekeeper Program, and Doug Stanley will be filling in.
- Beginner beekeeper books available for purchase for \$10
- 2024 membership dues are now being collected
- Montgomery County Appraisal District - Beekeeping Agricultural Evaluation Information provided by Boyd Murphy: PbMurphy@MCAD-TX.org (936-521-8835)
 - Application needed
 - April 30 deadline
 - Visit website for application, requirements, and more information
 - Five years of records needed - history of agricultural activity
 - History of 5 of 7 years of qualified beekeeping activity
 - Accumulation of records and evidence
 - Records can be provided yearly to the appraisal district
 - Yearly application not needed
 - Can reduce yearly taxable value of land from \$35-50K/acre to \$390-500/acre
 - Requires minimum of 6 hives for 5 acres, with 1 additional hive for each additional 2.5 acres (or portion thereof) up to 12 hives for 20 acres.
 - Number of hives operated on property is typically verified every 3 years by MCAD

Youth Program Update

- Isaiah
- Connor

Doug's Tips

- Swarm experience - always check again for queen

- Nucs - feed to help bees expand building out of frames, and don't disturb hive by looking inside too much

Meeting Speaker - Nanette Davis: Transferring nuc into your hive

- Smoke entrance of nuc to calm bees
- Transfer frames from nuc, one-by-one, in same order into brood box
- Carefully place extra frames to fill in excess space in box
- Leftover bees in nuc...
 - Turn nuc over above brood box, thumping nuc box or brushing them out
 - Leave nuc box leaning against brood box so bees remaining in nuc can climb into brood box
- Use instance reducer
- Feed bees
 - Entrance feeder
 - In-hive feeder
 - Top feeder
 - Frame feeder
 - Jar feeder placed over inner cover
 - Top feeder

Meeting Speaker - Brad Womack: Installing packages

Into Layens Hive

- Install 4 frames with starter strips into hive, to encourage bees to build straight
- Secure queen from package
- Remove feeder from package, sliding cover over feeder opening to prevent bees from leaving too early
- Remove cap from queen cage
- Remove queen cage and press into wax, making sure that bees can extract her
- Add protective divider
- Open door of package, and shake into hive
- Place package container inside hive so remaining bees can leave
- Add feeder inside hive

Into Top Bar Hive

- Place 4-5 top bars with drawn comb
- Secure queen from package
- Remove feeder from package, sliding cover over feeder opening to prevent bees from leaving too early
- Remove cap from queen cage
- Remove queen cage and press into wax, making sure that bees can extract her
- Open door of package, and shake into hive
- Add feeder inside hive
- Place remaining top bars to close hive
- Lean package container leaning against hive so remaining bees can climb into hive

Door Prizes

- LED Lantern
- MoCo Beekeeper Patch

Small Group Discussion Topics

- General beekeeping
- Feeding packages and nucs

Monthly Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

(Submitted by Keri Warren)