

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

Minutes for Monthly Meeting

June 17, 2024

Apprentice Beekeeper Meeting – began at 6:20 pm

Led by Doug Stanley

Information about Nucs

- How often to check
- How they should be growing
- Difference between deep boxes and medium supers
- Purposes of different kinds of boxes
- The bees cap nectar with wax, almost like canning, so in the winter when there is no nectar they can still have food
- Going into fall, we don't put supers on the bees so they have food to eat during winter
- July, August, September are usually nectar and pollen dearths, meaning you should feed your bees 1:1 sugar syrup
- Going into winter, usually we feed 2:1 sugar syrup

Benefits of having multiple hives

- Ability to take resources from good ones and give them to your weaker ones, just make sure to shake bees off the frames
- If you use sugar syrup spray with vanilla oil, cherry oil, or lemongrass oil covers up pheromones of bees from different hives, meaning you don't have to shake bees off from frames being transferred. Just make sure your queen is not on the frames you transfer
- Benefits of transferring frames
 - Giving pollen and nectar
 - Giving brood
 - Giving young nurse bees

Ag Exemption for Bees

- Need minimum 5 acres (not including house) to qualify for bee ag exemption.
 - Check with your ag office to see further details such as required number of hives, etc.

Information about Texas Beekeepers Association

- MoCo is a member of the TBA
- TBA holds conventions in summer and fall
 - Many classes to choose from
 - Fall convention has the Honey Show, where people can enter honey and bee-related crafts.

- Conventions are extremely helpful for people to learn, since you can pick which classes you want to go to and there are many beekeepers who you can talk to and ask questions.

Question & Answer Period for new beekeepers

- Discussion on why bees build funky comb, such as only on one frame and on queen excluder.
- Use a queen excluder or not? Doug's answer was yes to queen excluder.
 - Some people don't put excluders on hives before bees go up to super, then once they begin building they put excluder on
 - Some people believe that once bees start storing honey in super, the queen won't lay because of honey-barrier. Not a guarantee since she still can go up and lay if she runs out of space
 - If the queen decides to lay in super, then you can't really extract it because of brood
- Should frames be waxed?
 - You need to wax your plastic frames, sometimes the genes in the bees make them want to build off comb.
 - Bees excrete their wax, so when there is a nectar flow, bees will make wax, since bees need 8 pounds of honey to make 1 pound of wax. So as of the end of the honey flow, if your bees haven't already drawn out wax as of now, they probably aren't going to this season.
- First year beekeepers typically shouldn't get honey, since the first year is focused on building out and strengthening your hive
- Some people put supers on hives that are too full as headspace, even not to get honey just so bees aren't as crowded
- Information about honey extraction
 - Winding Creek has equipment for the club members to borrow
Information about the honey flow
 - Doug doesn't filter his honey, we sieve it just so we get out impurities such as big bits of pollen and bee parts
 - To clean honey extractors and equipment, leave it about 200 feet away from hives and bees will clean it themselves
 - Make sure not to put extractor too close to hives, as it could cause robbing during summer dearth
- Relocating hives
 - Make sure to tape ALL entrances, including bottoms. Some hives have notches where the bees can get out in the inner cover, so you have to make sure that if you have one, that it is closed before moving hives.

Apprentice Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Monthly meeting – began at 7:00 pm

Youth Program Update

- Led by Nanette Davis

Announcements

- Information about membership
- Vendor Julie Norman - Winding Creek Apiary hosts a *Spit and Whittle* every Saturday, breakfast provided. Julie also announced availability of queens for sale during current monthly meeting

Meeting Speaker - Kyle Cosby, The Bee Supply: Honey Extraction and Production

Information about beekeeping

- When you ask a question and get an answer, ask why they do it that way. This way, you can decide what works best for your style of beekeeping.
- Deep box-medium super on top of hives typically is a good way for hobby beekeepers, since it's good to manage and some bees produce more honey this way. However, more people do double-deeps so it's more convenient to be taught with double deeps
- Bees typically need about 30 pounds of honey to survive the MoCo area Winter
- A medium box holds 30 lbs of honey
- While story-and-a-half hives tend to work for some people, doubles work better for others. An important part of beekeeping is figuring out what works well for you.

Maximizing honey production

- If you make a honey crop, try to split in April. If you split the first week of April and want to make a honey crop, use 3 frames of brood and 3 frames of honey. Add 1 frame a week.
- Know what your varroa counts are. Varroa weakens hives, so bees don't produce as much honey. Varroa mites should be your #1 priority for your hive, especially going into winter.
- Ask local beekeepers and mentors about how they treat for mites, since hobby beekeepers and commercial beekeepers have very different ways to treat. Again, find the way that works for you.
- There is a new product called Bee Cleanse. It's an herbal food supplement for bees that you mix with 2:1 sugar syrup to water your bees. It tends to help with varroa
- With treatments like Apivar, they kill the mites. Bee cleanse gets into bees' stomachs to get rid of the diseases. Diseases are the most dangerous part of varroa.
- Bee cleanse is a good way to prevent mites, however if you get a varroa spike you can treat with your mite treatment of choice
- Mites are usually the thing that kills bees in winter
- The Bee Supply is now vaccinating queens, and they now know those queens had no side effects and still were great, so now some companies are trying to vaccinate queens for varroa mite diseases, allowing hives to tolerate higher mite loads without being diseased. You would still need to control mites, but now we can target diseases.

- Vaccinated queens (which the enzyme in vaccine is fed to queens) will transfer the resistance to brood (just not new queens).
- if in a neighborhood, you should make friends with your neighbors, and see how they treat for mites. Depending on how they answer, you can decide how to manage your mites. If they don't treat, you might have to take more measures. If they do, you might not have to use as strong of treatments.
- When buying bees and transferring new hives to yards with hives you already have, you might be putting diseases in your yard. Put the new hive as far away as you can from your existing hives and treat it thoroughly. This way, this new hive won't make your other hives sick. If you can, take the new hive to a different yard so it's away from your other ones, acting as a quarantine.

Information about swarming

- Swarms tend to happen because they don't have enough room. Usually when bees swarm, there's something wrong with them. So typically if you catch a swarm, you should requeen, because you don't really know what's wrong with that queen. Sometimes they'll be aggressive or sick.

Post honey care

- Never put a wet honey super (supers you already extracted but still has a little honey left in the comb, and on the sides of super) back on a hive during the day. Now the entire box will smell like honey. You need to put the boxes back since in the summer it's hot, and they need the extra room. But since these boxes smell like honey, they can induce robbing. At night, bees will be home and you can put the supers back, they'll eat the honey by morning, and this won't induce robbing, as the honey is already gone by the time bees are flying.
- A dead beehive is still good for resources.
 - A living beehive contains resources, box, and bees. A dead beehive has resources and a box.
 - You can store your dead beehives (make sure to freeze frames first) and give them back to new splits in the spring or to feed your hives during dearth.
 - When storing boxes, make sure daylight is going through your boxes, or they're in the freezer. Or, use Paramoth to store hives. DO NOT use mothballs, as it will contaminate your boxes. There is a new product called Cirtane that works similarly, however, if you use that do more research.
- Since you put that honey super back on, if they don't build it past 20% in an acceptable time, they probably don't need it. They probably won't need it once dearth ends.

Presentation Q&A

Presentation ended at 8:33 pm

Announcements

- Looking for speakers

- No July meeting
- Giveaway- 4 gift cards for Winding Creek
- Break

(Submitted by Nadia Clark)