

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

Minutes for Monthly Meeting

06/16/2025

Apprentice meeting 06/16/2025

Meeting started: 6:24pm

Apprentices meeting speakers: Ally Clark

Right now the Chinese tallow honey flow is starting to end, so you need to monitor their honey stores.

If your hive is too full, you can split, especially if you have one hive. It's best to have two hives over one, since you can compare and give resources to the weaker of the two.

If you're requeening you may mix the breeds of bee, since it does not matter.

When making sugar syrup, it's a 1:1 ratio between sugar and water.

This time of year, robbing is a problem, so when feeding or spraying sugar water, you should be mindful on keeping it inside the hive.

When feeding, if your bees don't drink the syrup, don't be alarmed. They could have found a better honey flow. You have to be careful not to overfeed since it can cause you to be honey bound, which is when the bees fill nectar into the brood nest.

When a hive has a screen bottom board, it has a natural air flow. It helps them to cool their hive, and removes extra moisture. When you have a hard bottom, there's no natural air flow, but the bees will work harder to keep the hive cool. In dry summers, screen bottoms are best. However in wetter summers hard bottoms could be better, since the water on the ground will evaporate and could go into your hive with a screen bottom board.

If one side of your honey frame is filled and the other is not, you can extract it. If one side of the frame has nectar (which you can find out by shaking your frame, sometimes nectar will spill out) you can wait a little while for the bees to cap it over.

When you move your nuc to a hive box, you need to monitor its growth. The same 80 percent rule applies: if your box is 80 percent full, add a new box. You can feed them when you add a new box, since that encourages wax building.

If you're using 9 frames in your 10 frame box, you should keep 10 frames in there, since they will make extra comb, called burr comb, and that could kill your queen. If you do have a frame feeder, then 9 frames is fine since the feeder takes up room. If it really bothers you how little space, you can take one frame from the very end (make sure there's no queen on it) and set it aside while you work, then replace it.

If you're being overrun by small hive beetles, you need to reduce your space. The smaller the space, the easier it is for bees to defend their space.

Meeting concluded at 6:51pm

In attendance : 20 people

Main Meeting

Meeting began at 7:00pm

Began with the pledge of allegiance

Announcements:

- * You should be receiving the monthly meeting emails, see Sofie Clark if not
- * Julie Norman announced she had a free beekeeping class every Saturday, this week it will be about honey harvests. There could be a change in their sugar syrup (switch to corn syrup) because of Mann Lake.

Kyle Cosby is the speaker, an employee of The Bee Supply.

Topic: Industry Updates on Bee Losses and Alternative Mite Treatments, & overall tips

There was a significant hive collapse in commercial beekeeping this year. The leading cause of the collapse was varroa mites. It's now being found out that mites are becoming resistant to Amitraz, a very popular mite treatment. It used to be about 98 percent effective against varroa mites, and now the effectiveness rate is about 60 percent. This is a problem because oxalic acid already has a 60 percent effectiveness rate, and that was the main alternative mite treatment. Kyle has been running tests to find better and a bigger variety of alternative treatments. One of the big factors he found was it is very important to test bimonthly for mites, now that there isn't the large effectiveness of Apivar.

It's also important to split your hives, since this makes it harder for the varroa mites to reproduce. Some people use green drone frames to raise drones for varroa checks, but Kyle found that it is better to put a regular medium super frame instead. This allows female bees to normally hatch in the top half of the frame, and then there will be drones on the extra combs the bees will build out.

BeeCleanse is a new food supplement for bees. Essentially, varroa mites won't kill your bees, however, the many diseases the mites carry will kill them. This is why food supplements are welcomed. You can mix Bee Cleanse with 1:1 sugar syrup and spray your bees with it. This means the bees have to clean each other, which makes the mites drop off. Along with this, the bees will get the benefits from the supplement.

Many people lose hives during the winter, and this usually is because of starving. Typically, bees starve because of the diseases from mites.

In an example, people treat dogs for ticks before they even get ticks. People treat bees when they're already dying for mites.

Now commercial beekeepers are trying to find treatments to prevent mites.

If one of your hives is dying quickly, it's best to just take care of your healthy hives, not put your healthy ones in jeopardy to save the dying one. You still get benefits out of a dying hive, since you still have wax and frames. These wax and frames can help raise splits from your healthy hives, or you can put the now empty boxes from the dead hive to help your healthy one grow. You can even use the waxed frames in swarm traps. Focusing on healthy hives will help you keep your mite and disease levels down.

Commercial beekeepers usually have 'quarantine' yards where they keep new hives in to make sure they won't spread diseases to your healthy hives. Backyard beekeepers probably won't have these yards available, so just make sure you test thoroughly.

To apply BeeCleanse, you mix about three tablespoons into a gallon of sugar syrup. You fill a watering can with sugar syrup, and water them down. A gallon should last about 4 hives. However this causes a bit of a mess, so you have to make sure you do all the hives to prevent robbing, or do it at dark. Still, you should be careful, since you don't have control over nearby feral hives who may rob. Don't worry about hurting your bees, it's essentially impossible to drown them this way. People usually do this about every 3 months.

If you have a ball of small hive beetles under one of your frames, your frame is probably crooked. It's an easy fix, just straighten your frames and boxes. This only applies to random clusters of beetles.

If you have wax moths in your hive and it's dying, it's probably a different cause that's killing them. Wax moths are basically just vultures, so when your hive is already struggling they'll come in.

If your bees are becoming aggressive when you smoke them, you could be smoking them wrong. Just give them a few puffs under their lid, then close the lid to let it go through the hive. Then you

can do what you need, just when they start flying give them a couple more puffs. Oversmoking can make them more aggressive. If they're very aggressive when you just open the lid, then you probably need a new, nicer queen.

Sugar rolls are basically alcohol mite tests, except with sugar. You get a mason jar with a mesh lid (too small for bees to come out, big enough for sugar to come out) you put a cup of bees in the sugar, roll the jar a couple times and dump the sugar out to count the mites. Then you can just release the bees.

Kyle's presentation concluded at 8:20pm

Meeting concluded at 8:22pm