

# Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

## Minutes for Monthly Meeting

February 17, 2025

### Apprentice Beekeeper Meeting

#### Meeting started at 6:12pm

Introduction on Doug Stanley, information about the apprentice meeting

Help new beekeepers start as best as they can

- Different benefits of beekeeping, helping bee population and for ag exemption.
- Info about almond pollination
- Millions of hives are needed for California almond pollination

Other beekeepers introducing themselves

Information about ag exemption

- Montgomery now has bee ag exemption
- Properties between 5 - 20 acres (not including structures) are eligible for bee ag exemption

Best time to get into bees is March/April/May

- bees grow much better and are harder to kill in this time of year
- MoCo [bees.com](https://www.bees.com) has good resources to learn
- Main meeting starts at 7:00pm, more in depth information

Nuc - nucleus

- nucs come with 2 to 5 frames, easier to start out with small hive
- When nuc is ready, you transfer to a bigger hive
- The boxes are made to mimic a bee's best environment

Honey is the winter food for bees, like how humans can things

## **bees enzymes mix with the nectar, and bees then mix water with it and it will become honey**

- queen bees can lay up to 2000 eggs a day, and have a group of bees that take care of her
- Bees are classified as super organisms
- Not many animals are classified under this term
- This is because bees have many different jobs within the hive, and are mostly centered around the queen

## Facts about bees

- Bees actually have 5 eyes
- A beehive is pitch black inside
- If a beehive gets hot, bees will line up, gather water, and create a swamp cooler effect
- When a beehive gets too cold, bees will gather around the queen to keep her warm. They do this instead of hibernation
- A queen bee will mate with up to 25 drones (male bees)
- Drones pretty much only eat and mate
- In winter, because drones eat 3x more than worker bees, worker bees will kick drones out of the hive and not let them back in

## Propolis

- propolis has many microbial properties to it
- Helps the bees seal cracks in the hive

## Equipment

- You can make your own bee equipment
- People sell kits to make bee boxes, frames, etc

## Components of a beehive

- frames
- Box
- Inner cover
- Outer cover

- Bottom board

There are many different kinds of frames, like waxed plastic, pure beeswax, and wire ( bees build their own wax in the wire)

Most beekeepers prefer waxed plastic, so bees can start building easier. Frames made purely of beeswax typically melt.

- if bees do not have enough resources, you can feed them
- Right now, people are feeding 1:1 sugar water

Bee jobs

- Cleaning bee, queen attendant, forager, etc
- inside the hive, bees run off of pheromones
- Bees use their antennae as a “nose” and also to judge how they need to bring wax

Swarm

- once the queen lays the egg and the bees decide to make it into a queen, the queen takes about 30-70% of the original hive
- Splits are essentially a manmade swarm
- If you do not want for a queen to be made, you can buy a queen or a queen cell

Genetic on bees determines characteristics

Queens usually come marked

- determining on the year, the color will change. A mnemonic device to know the order is Will You Raise Great Bees? (White, yellow, red, green, blue)

This year, in some pollination businesses, there was a 70% loss

IPM, or integrated pest control, is a good way to control mite count in hives. Mites are one of, if not the biggest problem in the beekeeping industry.

Oxalic acid

- oxalic acid is a way to control mites, when vaporized. Though you have to be careful using it, as it can be very harmful if inhaled or comes in contact with your skin. Thankfully, it's also harmful for mites, but not bees.

It is good to find someone local to buy bees from, since they can also possibly give you advice.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm**

**13 people in attendance**

## **Main Meeting**

**Meeting started at 7:03pm**

### **Vendor announcements**

Every Saturday Winding Creek Apiary and Bee Supply has free beekeeping classes, and they also have free donuts, kolaches and coffee

### **Rodeo volunteering**

Great opportunity to help people learn about bees. You also get a rodeo and parking pass to that are valid from the beginning to the end of the rodeo. You also get Master Beekeeping credits from volunteering at the rodeo. The Texas Honey queen also comes by at the rodeo.

### **Youth presentation by Isaiah**

### **Main Speaker - Steve Butler on Swarms and Simple Bee Removals**

You can set swarm traps to try to capture your swarms

Swarms that are high up in a tree are difficult and even dangerous to get, but low hanging swarms are great

If responding to a swarm call, you want to ask questions such as the location of the swarm, ask for pictures, and you should know the weather as well. Just make sure you don't take too long, since swarms won't stay in the same spot for very long.

Make sure you're prepared with things such as equipment, yard location, resources, transportation, caller info, and compensation, and safety.

Make sure you have an established price before doing the job.

Some swarms are extremely docile, since they gorge themselves on honey beforehand. But other times, bees abscond and they are hungry and angry, and these can be aggressive. You also don't know if swarms are Africanized. So make sure you always have at least a veil on when checking them, and stay safe.

If a swarm is up high, you can put a handheld clamp on a frame, then attach it to a fishing pole and cast it over the limb. Make sure to put lemongrass on the frame to attract bees on to it. Once most of the bees are on the frame, you can lower the frame back down.

If you do not have a bee box to transport the bees, a cardboard box or plastic tub works too.

Lemongrass oil is a good swarm lure. A 10 frame box seems to be the most successful swarm trap, but a nuc box works too. The recommended height for swarm traps is 10 to 15 feet. The lemongrass mimics the Nasarov pheromone in bees.

Common places swarms move in to include mail boxes, hollow fence posts, etc.

"Tanging" or banging metal against metal, probably doesn't work. There haven't been many scientific studies that prove it works, however some people do say it works. Try it, do research on it, and see if it's something that you think will work.

A good background in construction or engineering is a good thing to have if you're doing bee removals, since sometimes you have to take things apart then put things back together.

Simple removal places are water meters, owl boxes, compost bins, open air hives, barbecue pits, non structural hives, etc. though with swarms below ground or on ground level, there is a higher chance they are Africanized, so be careful. Ways to get swarms to stay are feed them, and also use a queen excluder so the queen can't leave. The bees won't abscond if the queen doesn't. Just make sure after a few days you remove the queen excluder, since after a few days she'll have laid eggs already and the bees are more hesitant to leave brood.

You can contact your local police, fire, and water utilities department and give them your information as a local swarm removal professional.

Some people will crisscross several rubber bands over a frame, so when you cut out a piece of comb you can just secure it inside the rubber bands.

Once you get your swarm or removal in the box, you should feed them.

Outside feeders tend to cause robbing. If the feeder is inside, it's much easier for bees to protect it and harder for other bees to rob it.

Plan on what you will do with the comb you remove. You may not want to save all the comb you remove. If the wax you choose not to keep is still relatively good, you can use it for swarm lures.

If you have a removal and discover it's been sprayed with poison, it's a good idea to bag the wax and throw it in a dumpster. Typically, bee poison is a contact kill that dissipates within a month, so it won't last extremely long in a landfill.

### **Steve finished his presentation at 8:10pm**

Short break until Bob Rogers presents

### **Second Speaker - Bob Rogers starts presenting 8:30pm**

Beekeepers are reporting 70% hive losses this year, mostly California almond pollinators. The main causes of hive losses are varroa mites, starvation, and pesticides. Bad weather means short pollen flow, which is bad for the bees.

Worker bees are born hungry, and immediately eat a lot of pollen.

If there is not enough pollen, nurse bees will cannibalize the pollen eggs, so it's important to feed your bees.

Vitellogenin is a bee's body fat.

Fat bees are the key to colony health and most of your beekeeping goals.

Wax production requires 5x as much nectar as honey production. Nectar has to be converted to honey before wax.

Feeding in early spring can help stimulate brood production and wax production.

You want to feed your bees before the flow, not during.

Dearth is when bees are active, but there is

no nectar or pollen.

Feeding in late fall will help conserve honey stores and help your bees make it through winter.

Vitellogenin in bees promotes longevity of bees.

It is protein that is stored in fat bodies and is what makes winter bees live longer than summer bees.

Vitellogenin is what varroa mites feed on in larvae.

Knowing when and how much to feed is an art and science, since the weather doesn't fit a pattern. If you buy a nuc or a package or catch a swarm, you need to feed them. Same with if you requeen your hive or after a swarm.

Trickle feeding is to sustain the hive, not grow the hive.

In spring, hives that need food can consume a gallon of sugar syrup per day. Typically, it's just two gallons per month.

When the flow begins, you should stop feeding (as long as your hive isn't struggling)

Signs of flow include when you start to see white wax, and bees don't eat sugar syrup as readily. Watch your hives to make sure they do not get nectar/honeybound.

Signs of this is more than 8 frames of honey is the super, smaller brood patterns, and honey comes right to the edge of the brood. When harvesting, you want to leave at least 40lbs of honey for the bees to overwinter with.

When feeding bees you have to be careful not to breed small hive beetles in pollen patties. Keep the pollen patties in smaller proportions so the bees can eat them faster. Sugar bricks are good to feed when it's very cold, since you want to keep moisture out of your hives.

When using a frame feeder, you have to be sure to clean out the "ladders" frequently, since mortician bees will sometimes throw the dead bees inside.

If hives that are usually calm begin getting more aggressive, there is a possibility that there are skunks, raccoons etc that are bothering them. They could also be mad that you mowed around them.

Peppermint candies can be used to repel small hive beetles. You can put peppermints at one end of the hive, then put traps of your choice on the other end so they get stuck in them.

You need to feed your bees protein, carbs fats, and vitamins and minerals. Pollen patties are good to feed protein. Sugar bricks/syrup are good for carbs and, if you put supplements in it, vitamins and minerals.

Pollen substitutes seem to expose bees to a disease called nosema, so most people stay away from them. Hive alive and Global pollen patties, among other brands, seem to be safe pollen patties.

Fatty acids are also a need for your bees, and bee supply stores sell some to put in your syrup.

Feeding syrup stimulates egg laying, wax production, and also encourages the bees to go forage.

To help keep your sugar syrup from spoiling, you can purchase 6ccs of Clorox per 5 gallons.

High fructose corn syrup isn't as good for bees as sugar.

Avoid powdered sugar feeding, since it has starch that upsets bees' stomachs in it.

Avoid spilling syrup, since it encourages robbing.

Don't use brown or raw sugar for sugar syrup.

Make sure your bees have enough water.

Vitamin C is very good for bees, and you can put some in sugar syrup.

SuperDFM is a good bee probiotic. It's sold at most bee supply stores. It's good to give them some after a mite treatment, and make sure you do NOT put it in your sugar syrup. It is meant to be dusted over the top of the frames. Make sure you read the directions.

**Presentation concluded 9:17pm**

**Meeting ended at 9:20pm**

**49 people in attendance.**

(Submitted by Sofia Clark)