

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

August 2018

NEXT MEETING:

TUESDAY, Sept. 25
7:00-8:30: Beekeeping 101/201
Georgetown Public Library

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Summer Dearth: Don't Let Your Honey Bees Starve

By Laura Colburn WCABA Program Director

If you've been keeping bees for more than even a few months, you've probably heard the term "summer dearth." In other parts of the country grass is green, flowers are blooming, rain is replenishing the earth on a regular basis. Not so in Central Texas. July hits with a hot punch: little rain falls, the grass turns brown and crunchy, and foraging sources are scarce. This year was worse with a dry winter followed by a dry spring and earlier than usual 100 degree temps.

In the hive, that means resources may also be scarce. I've talked about the importance of nutrition and tend to speak about nectar and honey stores more than pollen. This is in part because when sources are available, the bees really pack it away. But this year has been different, at least in my hives. I keep notes on every inspection and transfer them to my online records in HiveTracks. Here's what I've noticed: beginning of May, my strongest hives had 8 frames of brood spread across two deeps. Several frames of pollen and honey as well as a little in the supers. Skip to the end of June. It was hot and dry with no rain forecasted. After last year's dearth, I knew what to expect: a shrinking brood nest. Why? There was almost no pollen. No pollen means no royal jelly, it means the queens are fed less which means she isn't laying as much. This is especially problematic because the eggs she will be laying over the next few months will be the winter bees that care for the hive until spring. Without proper nutrition they won't be fat enough to survive.

Last summer, I turned to Randy Oliver and his series on the role of pollen in the bee hive as well as his comparison of pollen substitutes. He explains: "When a colony goes into protein deficit, the nurses cut back on the amount of royal jelly to feed larvae.

*Continued on page 3



Side view of pollen feeder

Please note:

There will **NOT** be a meeting in August.
Our next meeting is September 25
at the Georgetown Public Library.
See President Jim Colbert's column for more information.



A Message From Our President



Things have been pretty crazy the last few weeks. The weather has been hot and the bees have little to forage on, so feeding is in full swing and my girls are sucking it down. I have tried to feed dry pollen, but haven't had any luck. It kept disappearing, but I never saw the bees taking it. I finally decided it was slugs and/or snails eating it. If anyone has had similar experience, I would like to talk to them. It is also time to do a mite count and treatment. I need to do that this weekend.

In addition to the bees keeping me busy, we have had a major change in our meetings. As most of you know by now, we can no longer meet at our regular place because the church needs the building for its own ministry. That left us in a smaller site in July, and it was just too small. My good friend (and past president), Chris Doggett started looking for a new place nearly a month ago and after a long and diligent search, the board of directors has settled on meeting in the Hewlett Room at the Georgetown Public Library starting in Sept. We will also change our meeting days to the 4th Tuesday of each month.

This will require a change in our constitution, so be ready to vote on that when we meet Sept 25. Unfortunately, that meant we had nowhere to meet in August and we have had to cancel that meeting. I don't remember that we have ever had to do that and it is frustrating to say the least. By September we will be settled into our new home and things will be back to normal. I must say that throughout this process, both our board and the members I have heard from have been nothing but positive and supportive. It reminds me of what a wonderful group these beekeepers are! I hope the rest of your summer goes well and we'll see you in September.



**Summer Dearth....continued from page 1*

[And] pollen-starved nurses may also consume newly-laid eggs, and eventually larvae.” Low pollen is even more detrimental than low honey stores.

Fortunately Randy isn’t all doom and gloom. While nature may not be providing, a beekeeper can intervene when pollen runs short. Pollen patties are not a good solution this time of year because small hive beetles love to hide and reproduce there. Yuck. But dry pollen is a viable solution. Placed in feeders, honey bees collect it just as they would pollen from flowers. Flying produces static electricity which allows the tiny grains of pollen supplement to adhere. They fly away from the feeder coated in bright yellow replacement and happily carry it back to the hive.

I encourage you to check the pollen stores in your own hives. If they’re low or out, begin offering a dry pollen substitute. You can buy it from various online sources or at Busy Bee Beekeeping Supplies in Florence. You can make an inexpensive feeder with a 2’ section of 4” pvc pipe, capped on one end and with an elbow at the other. Turn the elbow down slightly so if it rains, the pollen substitute won’t get wet.

I also encourage you to read more on the topic.



Pollen Feeder

Visit Randy Oliver’s website, scientificbeekeeping.com for his series on bee nutrition and on his comparison of pollen substitutes.

<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/fat-bees-part-1/>

<http://scientificbeekeeping.com/a-comparative-test-of-the-pollen-sub/>

**photo - Laura Colburn*

Scholarship Report – August

By Jimmie Oakley WCABA Scholarship Chairman



As July turned out to be hotter than normal in the bee yard, August has not been quite normal either. Thankfully some beneficial rain during what is normally the driest month of the year, brought some cooler temperatures also.

In the scholarship apiary things are progressing as we work toward our fall activities. In the latter part of July the recipients extracted some honey (a reward for all their hard work), as reported in last month's newsletter, and shortly afterwards the Apiguard mite treatments began. It was decided to apply 25g each week for 4 weeks to accomplish the 100g max allowable. An alcohol mite sample was taken earlier to determine the prudence of treating.

During each scheduled check of the hives the recipients record the distribution of resources in the frames to determine if there are any deficiencies. As a result, pollen supplement was also added to the menu along with the 2 – one gallon feeders of 1x1 sugar syrup. The syrup and the pollen serve to continue a steady progress forward during the Texas drought we normally experience before the fall flow kicks in.

Fall queens have been ordered and will come in the first part of September, so they will be available for the proposed piggy back split that will go on top of the hives going to the winter season.



Apiguard gel, bulk pack. Approximately 25g on a hive tool.



All the hives are still well populated and honey reserves are above average. We will work on pollen reserves, maintaining population, and hold down the mite counts with planned future application of Formic Pro strips before winter.

We are fortunate to have interested and engaged recipients to work in this advanced program and it appears Randy has them on track for a successful program year.

Thanks to all who participate and support us.

Jimmie Oakley – Scholarship Chair

**photos provided by Jimmie Oakley*



Preparing Honey for Show

By Jimmie Oakley WCABA Scholarship Chairman

***Note:** Bees make the honey and you are not winning on the honey, but your presentation of the honey. Judges look at how you present the honey and taste is a secondary (sometime deciding) factor.

Make sure you present your honey in the container called for by the contest.

Use the right container: Queenline Jar – 1#, 2# - and good lid!!

Cleanliness is next to...

Make sure your containers are clean. Wash in dishwasher by themselves.

Never touch the jar with your hands after that; use lint free cloth (flower sack towels) or photo gloves.

Pick the Jar Well (blemish free). Look carefully for bubbles or flaws in the glass, even the bottom.

Put Good Honey in your Jars. Honey Quality Check - Choose only fully capped frames (moisture) and taste it for flavor (no bitter weed, leafy spurge, goldenrod).

Filling your Jars: Slowly, holding with a towel, tipped at an angle to prevent bubbles.

Fill Level of Jar: Up to the top screw thread (the first time). Reduce lever before entering into the contest. This allows for removing bubbles and/or debris later.

Cover Jar with Plastic Wrap: Judges look under the lid and no honey should be there, remove the plastic wrap before giving to judges.

Bottle Honey Early as Opposed to Late: Give your honey time to settle up and provide opportunity to skim or remove bubbles and/or debris. Remove top layer with a silver spoon to above the inside fill line. You should not see empty space below the lid.

***Honey is judged on three categories, Light, Amber, & Dark, the Appearance of the Bottle (cleanliness of the bottle inside and out, no honey under the lid), the Uniform Fill (up to fill line), Free of Foreign Matter (granulated crystals, bubbles, foam, wax, lint), Flavor, and Brightness (clear, sparkling, transparent).**

Hints: You can heat honey slowly and allow bubbles to rise by leaving the jar in a closed, parked car all day (in Texas = 100+ degrees).

To remove specks, wax, or lint try long wooden squares to move the foreign matter to the top and dip off with silver spoon.

Polish jars with silk cloth.

Use individually cut moist square of lint free cloth (white men's handkerchief) to wipe underside of lid before presentation.

Store honey in room temperature above 57 degrees to avoid granulation.

September - National Honey Month Celebration

By Jimmie Oakley WCABA Scholarship Chairman

It's not too early to be thinking about the Honey Judging and Tasters Choice Contest that is always held at the WCABA regular meeting in September when we celebrate National Honey Month.

In regard to that I would like to cover for our new members and remind our veterans of what we do and why and maybe offer some tips as you prepare for the September event.

As far back as I have been a member of WCABA we have had a "honey tasting" as a fun thing to do as the summer harvest season draws to a close. I retired from commercial beekeeping after 10 years in North Dakota and experienced my first tasting while a new member of WCABA myself. Believe me, it was an eyeopener. Having produced and sold semi loads of northern honey to packers in the twin cities, it never really occurred to me just how different honeys can taste.

Texas is blessed with some really fine flavored honey and many of them come from our area, so bring your baby food size jar of your honey to be placed with all the others as we once again do the "TASTING", just for the fun of it. There will be a first (blue), second (red) and third place (white) ribbon presented and the bragging rights for the next year that go with it if you are a winner.

The judging is all subjective based on the individual palate, because everybody tastes, and everybody judges. As all of the small samples of honey are lined up on the table, all who participate in the tasting get three votes to mark by the ones they think deserve their vote, and the one getting the most marks is declared the "Tasters Choice" for 2018. That's easy enough, right? The hard part is that you only get three votes.

On the Honey Judging side, there are actually judges (3) that are tasked to judge the honey going to the State Fair of Texas held in Dallas in October. Any club member can submit a *2lb. glass queenline jar of their honey to be judged against the standard and then donated to be sent to the Fair where it will be on display in the Texas Beekeepers Association Honey Booth while the Fair is in progress. The honey will then be donated to the Happy Hills Farm in Granbury, Texas in support of their work with children.

The judging is based on a 100 point system where credit is given for container appearance and fill level, the freedom from foreign material, and the flavor and brightness of the honey. Each entry will be presented with a ribbon based on how the honey stacks up against the standard.

I have provided some additional tips on preparation of your honey for this part of the competition in hopes that you'll have an enjoyable experience and learn something about the presentation of your honey.

I hope this may become one of your favorite part of the beekeeping year. JO

*If you need a 2lb. glass jar for your entry contact Jimmie Oakley at the Bost Farm [512-507-3009]



**photos provided by Jimmie Oakley and show 2017 honey tasting and judging activities*



Welcome New Members:

New Members:

Jimmy Morton - Rockdale

Johnny Morton - Rockdale

Erin and Tim Weaver - Hutto

Ken Dennis/Linda Becker - Coupland

Kyle and Mia Koepp - Hutto

Keith Fisher - Thorndale

Door Prizes:

Have you ever thought about the door prizes that are given each month?? They all come from the generous donations of WCABA members like you! Have a beekeeping item in good shape you don't need?

Something from your garden? Extra plants??

Bring a donation and help keep our door prize tradition and fun continuing.

As we approach the fall, it isn't too early to consider the role you play in the Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association. Ready to give something back to the club that gives so much to you?? Elections take place before the new year so the new officers can assume their positions in January. Consider stepping up and taking on the challenge of leadership in a growing and busy beekeeping association. Talk to President Jim Colbert or one of the other officers if you would like more information. From organizing refreshments to editing the newsletter to assisting with scholarships, the club royalty, library books, or secretarial responsibilities. There is a leadership role for all who are interested and willing. Think about it!



Membership Application

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association
Dues \$15.00 per year - Individual or Family Membership

New Member / Renewing Member (circle one)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Amount: _____

Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Please print, fill out, and bring to club meeting or mail with check to:

Membership

Shirley Doggett, 400 County Road 440,
Thrall, TX 76578

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association * 4355 County Road 110, Georgetown, Texas 78626*<http://www.wcaba.org>/*email: info@wcaba.org

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