

East Texas Beekeepers Association



Dear Beekeepers:

We are deeply saddened at the loss of one of our founding ETBA members, Mr. Richard Counts. His friends and family called him "Dick."

The ETBA board debated many ways we could honor Mr. Counts for his tremendous contributions to the beekeeping community. One thing is for sure, Mr. Counts helped countless people and touched many lives through his love of beekeeping.

We decided the ETBA would honor his great achievements by asking anyone who knew Mr. Counts to record a memory you have of him. The board will then collect these and publish a special issue of our newsletter in remembrance of Mr. Counts.

Please do not feel there is a length requirement. We will accept statements, paragraphs, or full essays. Whatever you feel inclined to share is appreciated. We hope to present this to his family as a token of our deep gratitude for all that Mr. Counts gave to the beekeeping community.

Please send your memory of Mr. Counts to Connie Collins at Connie@cncfarms.com (mailto:Connie@cncfarms.com).

Thank you,
Connie Collins

ETBA President



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Next Meeting

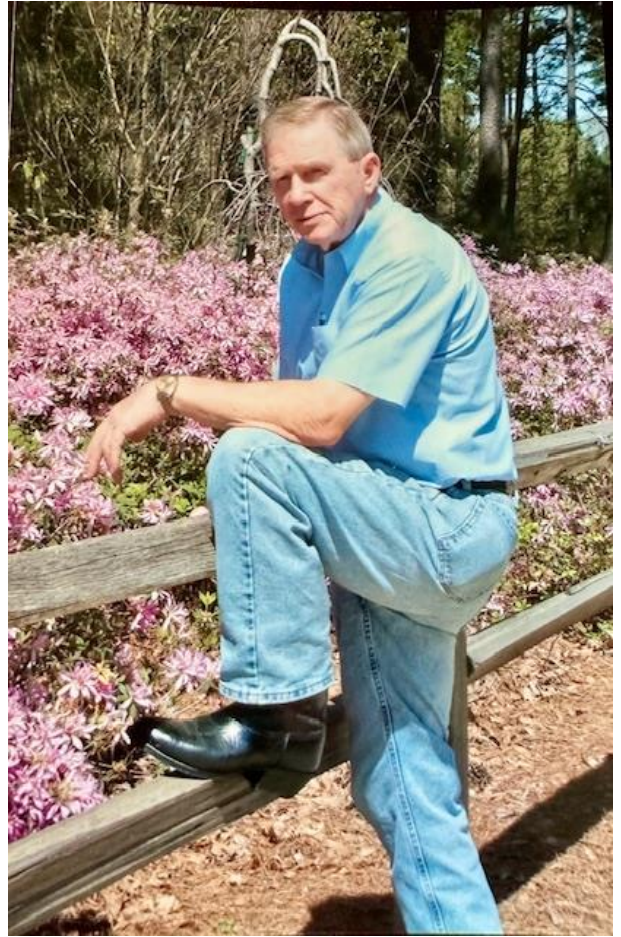
February 6th

Whitehouse Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web:
www.etba.info

Richard Earl (Dick) Counts went home to be with the Lord on January 28, 2025 at 92 years old. He died from natural causes in Tyler, Texas and will be deeply missed by his family and friends. Dick was born on September 1, 1932 in San Antonio, Texas and graduated from high school in Palestine, Texas. He then attended Texas A&M for a couple years before being drafted in the Army during the Korean War where he worked as a helicopter mechanic. After getting out of the service, he worked in the oil and gas industry as a seismograph drilling foreman all over the western United States before moving back to Texas. Most of his life was spent in the Tyler area where he was employed by Smith Tank until retirement. At his farm in Whitehouse, he raised cattle and started with his first hive of bees. His knowledge and love of beekeeping increased, and he was very involved in his retirement years running his bee company near Arp where he held beekeeping training, built many observation hives in Tyler and surrounding areas, and was often called out to remove bees from someone's home. He was the founder and President of the East Texas Beekeepers Association and later became Executive Director where he served as point of contact for the media and frequently spoke to schools and organizations on the significance of bees.



Also important to Dick was his church family at Green Acres Baptist Church where he served as an usher, was a member of the Seekers Connect bible study, and enjoyed his work there in the coffee bar.

In addition, he had good neighbors and friends in all walks of life and always enjoyed a good game of cards or dominos. He was hard to beat.

Preceding in death were his father Velman Earl Counts, his mother Claudia Counts Eichelberger, his stepfather Roy Eichelberger, his sister Shirley Roper, and his brother John Robert Counts.

His loving memory lives on with his daughter and son-in-law, Stephany and David King, grandson Brian King (Ashley), his nephews and nieces, and his many friends.

To God be the glory for His great plans for our lives and the intertwining of paths and families.

You are all loved.

Private burial services to be held in Slocum, Texas.

February Presentation

*Our speaker for February is past ETBA
President*

Melissa Maeker

*Melissa owns Honey Maeker Bee Farm and
is an excellent beekeeper, usually keeping
around two dozen hives.*

*She has taught the ETBA class in the past
with club founder Dick Counts and will be
giving a talk on Beginning Beekeeping.*

See you there!

Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

by Stan Brantley



My area of the Ark-La-Tex has not yet had any snow in 2025 but had several nights in the low 20s. I am hoping we do not have a repeat of last year when everything, including the Chinese Tallow, froze to ground level.

February is the first time many beekeepers open their hives for a quick check of the brood nest, the queen's brood pattern, if any, and the amount of remaining stores. It is also a good time to remove any mite strips placed in the hive late last year.

If you find there is little food remaining in the hive, you can add granulated sugar on top of the inner cover.

Sugar bricks are another way to feed but you must add a spacer due to the thickness of the sugar brick. If you do not have a spacer, you can add another empty super to protect the brick and still allow the Outer Cover to properly seat and seal the hive. If you are not familiar with sugar brick feeding, check with your local bee supply stores about their use.

It is generally agreed a hive should have at least two 9 5/8" frames of honey at this time of the year. A strong hive may have six to eight frames of brood and ten to twenty pounds of honey. Open fed dry pollen substitute or pollen patties inside the hive will greatly aid in the production of new bees, giving the hive a head start on the coming season.

The topic of feeding honey back to a hive of bees is usually a lively discussion. If you know where the honey came from and you can be sure it is not diseased, it is generally considered OK to feed it at a suggested dilution rate of 80% honey to 20% water. It is not recommended to feed honey from unknown sources because of the risk of disease or toxins it may contain.

While making early inspections, you may find a dead hive, commonly known as a dead-out. Disassemble the hive and examine the frames for wax moth damage. Store undamaged frames in a freezer for at least two days to kill any eggs or larvae from beetles or moths. After removing the frames and letting them return to room temperature, store them in air-tight garbage bags for reuse in the spring.

If you find frames with bare spots on plastic foundation, now is a good time to add melted wax to those bare spots. For new beekeepers with limited experience using plastic foundation, bees will not draw comb on plastic unless it is coated with wax. This is why you see foundation manufactures advertise that their foundation includes two or three applications of wax.

Find something during an inspection that does not look right and need help? Check with the local bee club in your area for assistance. Other sources include the Texas Apiary Inspection Service at Texas A&M (<https://txbeeinspection.tamu.edu/contacts/>) or their new extension office in Overton, Texas, Garrett Slater (<https://entomology.tamu.edu/people/slater-garett/>)

Some nectar will be collected in February from early blooming fruit trees, dewberry vines, dandelions and henbit. Not familiar with henbit? Here is an interesting article about henbit. <https://susanalbert.com/look-down-henbit-and-chickweed/>. Both henbit and chickweed are common in the Ark-La-Tex area.

As your hives become more active, make it a practice to closely observe the activity at the landing board. You will notice the color of pollen on foraging bees is not always the same and changes as spring progresses. Early blooming Elm pollen will be light yellow or grey, depending on the type of Elm in your area. You will see green pollen as the Oaks begin to bloom and red pollen from Maples. A Google search on "pollen color chart" returns numerous links. You can find online charts as well as printed charts you can purchase. Check to see if the chart includes trees and flowers for your area.

I encourage every beekeeper, new or experienced, to maintain a record of the date various plants begin to bloom in their area. These observations help in your planning to have the hives in your apiary ready to gather the first nectar available. If you have never recorded blooming dates, this February is a good month to start.



Got Questions?

Question & answer group will meet from 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or just have beekeeping questions? We'll try to get you some answers!

ETBA Beginner Beekeeping Class

Join us April 5th - 8:30am-4pm – New Summerfield, TX



You will learn:

- Basic bee biology
- How to check a hive
- Beekeeping equipment
- Pests & diseases of the hive
- Yearly overview of bee hive management
- Hands on experience

We will spend approximately 3 hours checking hives

Details:

- Cost: \$100 (lunch included)
- Sign up via our website <https://www.etba.info/etba-beginner-beekeeping-class/>
- All proceeds go to the East Texas Beekeepers Association towards the Scholarship Program
- You need to provide your own protective gear and bring it to class that day.

Students without proper protective equipment will not be allowed to work in the bee yard.

This class is intended for those who are new to beekeeping or have very limited beekeeping experience



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**ALL ETBA MEMBERS RECEIVE A
10% DISCOUNT ON ALL
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**NOW OPEN! M-SAT
9:00-6:00**

SUNDAY 9:00-5:00

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