



# East Texas Beekeepers Association



December 5, 2019

## *December Report by Dick Counts*

ETBA has enjoyed a great long-term relationship with our corporate sponsor Eastman Chemical of Longview. Eastman has not only provided financial support but also provided many opportunities for ETBA to share with the public about the importance of the honeybee in our lives. This month marks the beginning of our twenty-first year of partnership with Eastman. We are very appreciative for the opportunity to work with a corporation that is as ecologically aware and public service focused as Eastman.

I read a fascinating article in the Sunday, November 17 edition of the Tyler Morning Telegraph about four high school beekeepers in Hawkins. The four students became involved with the Ozarka Springs Water Company in Hawkins, TX as a part of their FFA project. Ozarka Springs approached the beekeepers to help solve a problem with native bees living in the vicinity of their loading facility and causing problems with workers. From this initial contact grew an award winning FFA project.

If you missed this article, you can still find it online at tylerpaper.com. It is a well written article with a good story about four girls, their FFA teacher and a local company. I encourage you to read it. It is an uplifting story about good people doing good things. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to meet these impressive young ladies. They shared with me some of their plans for the future and I extended to them an invitation of visiting us at an ETBA meeting.



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## Next Meeting

*December 5th*



United Methodist Church  
405 West Main in Whitehouse  
6:30 PM  
On the Web:  
[www.etba.info](http://www.etba.info)

*In Memory of Daron Hickman*



Another beekeeping year is almost finished and we will soon be looking for the first January blooms on the Elm trees to tell us a new season is starting. As we wind down this year, all beekeepers should take some time to reflect on the successes and failures of 2019. What did you do right and what could you have done better? It is also time to make plans and set goals for 2020. What do you want to achieve and what do you need to do to achieve it? One of my perennial goals is to not allow a hive to die this year! I am happy when I achieve it and I try to learn from the experience if I do not!

I recently attended the Texas Beekeepers Convention in San Antonio, along with over 350 other interested individuals. Vendors offering all manner of useful items were abundant and those interested made contacts for future needs. Speakers from the East and West Coasts discussed the latest in research and assisted in judging the many excellent samples of Texas honey in the honey show. During the business meeting, changes were made to the Constitution and By-Laws and members of the TBA Board were updated as old members rotated off and were replaced by new well-qualified beekeepers for the coming years. To become a more complete beekeeper, I encourage you to consider becoming a member of TBA and take advantage of the opportunities to learn more about beekeeping. Plan to begin by attending the 2020 Summer Convention in Denton this July.

Also, I want to share with you that the ***Northeast Texas Beekeepers Conference is scheduled for Saturday, January 25, 2020 in Longview, Texas. This is a one day event at the Holiday Inn North in Longview. The keynote speaker is Dr. Jamie Ellis, professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida. Tickets are available 12/1/2019 – 1/18/20 at eventbrite.com. Tickets are \$60 for single, \$100 for couple, and \$20 for children. A meal is included.***

***(Tickets are non-refundable.) Additional information is available, call Beth 936-591-2399 or Myra 903-639-2910.***

Are you looking at the bee activity on your landing boards? I was amazed to see bees loaded with pollen just after a major cold front. With 20 degree temps and high winds on Tuesday and Wednesday, the following Friday in still 50 degree daytime temperatures, my bees from a screened bottom board hive were flying in, carrying loads of pollen. The hive sits in my driveway inside the city limits of Jefferson. So you might ask, "Where are the bees finding pollen in temperatures like these?" The members of our local Garden Club pride themselves in a flowering show around town all year long. I am of the opinion that if a flower is blooming within the flight radius of the hive, some of the bees will find it and dance others to its location. May I suggest you consider cultivating a relationship with the Garden Clubs and Master Gardeners in your local area? This could be a mutually rewarding partnership -- year around forage for your bees and readily available pollinators for the gardeners.

December is the time of the year to inspect and repair equipment, getting it ready for use in the coming spring. Since you will not be working in the apiary this month, plan to scrape, clean and repair old equipment and assemble and paint new equipment. It is also a good month to paint hives already in the apiary. More and more beekeepers talk about painting occupied hives in place in the apiary. Pick a cold day when the bees are clustered and not flying. I would suggest you at least wear a glove on the painting hand in the event some bees don't like all that back and forth brush movement and come to investigate. In my November and December articles, I often remind beekeepers to ventilate their hives to prevent build-up of condensation during cold weather. I usually talk about raising one edge of the outer cover using popsicle sticks or thin twigs or by placing one edge on the top of the top box. However, I would like to point out that in our East Texas winter, I seldom find a need to ventilate the hive at the top IF THE HIVE HAS AN OPEN SCREENED BOTTOM BOARD. The open screened bottom board is usually sufficient to prevent condensation from building up inside the hive. If you do close your screened bottom boards in the cold weather, you want to make sure the hive is ventilated at the top.





Greetings!

I was able to attend the State TBA meeting in San Antonio last month. It was a good meeting even though it was a little too far away from home. This caused me to miss the November meeting. I was so proud that Daron Hickman was voted as Beekeeper of the Year!

He certainly deserved it and is missed by so many.

It was even more cool that he won the Honey Tasting Contest. Wow!



Dr. Dennis VanEngelsdor from the University of Maryland gave some key points that are being revealed from the Sentinel project (part of Bee Informed). I was writing furiously but this is my takeaway for you! They have beekeepers signed up across the nation (Sentinels) that are monitoring their hives for varroa each month for 6 months. This includes sending the sample to their bee lab as well as letting them know when they treat. Very interesting results are emerging that could help us strategize the "top successful activities" that directly correlate with reduction in hive loss. He divided beekeepers into North/South and stationary vs migratory. For < 50 hives and stationary in the South...

- 1) How you start new colonies. Splitting (vs. package or nucs) increases the odds that you will have fewer losses. (Probably due to interrupting the brood cycle.)
- 2) Honey production. When you have a better year for honey production, you suffer less losses. (Probably due to good nutrition of your bees)
- 3) Varroa Mite Counting. Testing and treating (if needed) more than once per year increases odds of survival.
- 4) Using more than one type of varroa mite treatment in same year. (If you treat 3 times, use 3 different products) By the way, he recommended counting then treating:
  - a) in Spring before honey supers go on
  - b) checking while honey supers on – treatment limited if honey on hive,
  - c) after honey harvested.
  - d) in Fall as a mop up before heading into winter



\*\*This was quite a surprise to me. I usually count then treat 2x per year, so I need to check more frequently\*\*

I was also able to listen to some great speakers from East Texas (Myra Smith and Beth Darr) on products of the hive and another lady (Darbie) on projects with wax. I made the cutest tea lights with half of a roasted walnut shell. I'm very proud of myself as wax intimidates me. My mom and I also made fire starters (some wood chips drizzled with wax and rolled up into remnant Christmas paper then dipped. My mom has a wood stove, so she was super excited to take a few home. She is already planning how to make some more to last the winter from old candles she has at home.

God has been so good to me and my family. Take the opportunity of this holiday season to look around and count your blessings. Count them and you will find yourself smiling more and more! As I ponder what I'm thankful for, you are on my list! And as we enter December, we have even more to be thankful for. I am personally so thankful that my Jesus came in the form of a babe to save the world!



Merry Christmas Y'all! Melissa Maeker



*The December Program.....*

Our December meeting will be fun, with the presentation of Beekeeper of the Year award and also the announcement of the 2020 Ambassador. After that we will have an “Ask a Beekeeper” panel discussion, where you can bring your questions and have them answered by myself, Eddie Collins and Jim Biles. We’ve got a range of varied experiences so you can ask the three of us a question and most likely receive 4 different “correct” answers!

*See you there!*  
Meagan Elzner, Program Director

*Merry Christmas*

*and  
Happy  
New Year*

**2020**





## *ETBA Vice-President; Jim Biles*



The holiday season is a good time to reflect on the year and appreciate what we have. I have a confession to make.....there were times over the past 18 years (my tenure as a beekeeper) when thanksgiving was not on my mind! In 2012, I lost all but one of my beehives.

You may have experienced this as well, significant setbacks that make you think about whether you're cut out to be a beekeeper. In retrospect, this was an opportunity for me to learn some humility. Frankly, I had no right telling others how to keep bees when my own knowledge was so limited.

Now, as I think about my beekeeping operation, it's with a sense of gratitude for how I've been blessed. My hives are healthy, my customers appreciative, my fellow beekeepers supportive, and my family is always there for me. If you have beekeeping challenges, you'll almost always find benefit in working through these challenges, especially if you get help from your beekeeping friends.

If you were at the November meeting, you may still be puzzling over the honey tasting, just as I am. We had a wonderful turnout of honey to sample, and for the first time I can remember, there was no honey that I would not put on my table to eat! But what we all took away was the fact that Daron Hickman won best tasting honey for the event. This was not contrived.....rather, the process took place and his honey was voted best tasting with most of us not even aware that his honey had been entered.

I'm guessing that this is the first time we've ever had the same person voted Beekeeper of the Year and win the honey tasting.....in the same year. It's just another of the ways we can remember Daron, and I'll leave it at that.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the December meeting, and encourage you to take a little time during the holidays to reflect on your beekeeping year.



**Jim Biles**  
ETBA Vice President

## Honey in the Cold Season

Drinking hot tea or warm lemon water mixed with honey is a time-honored way to soothe a sore throat. According to some studies, honey alone may be an effective cough suppressant too.



It is very good, especially if you have a cough or congestion. The lemon juice helps break through congestion, while the honey soothes the throat.

Honey is also proven to have healing properties due to the fact that it offers antibacterial activity, and aids in the treatment of upper respiratory infection.

In studies, (James M. Steckelberg, M.D.), honey appeared to be as effective as a common cough suppressant ingredient, dextromethorphan, in typical over-the-counter doses.

However, please note that due to the risk of infant botulism, never give honey to a child younger than 1 year old.

Additional research link:

[www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/264667.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/264667.php)



*...from the Editor*



### How do you make honey and lemon for a cough?

Here's how ...

1. Combine one cup of honey with three tablespoons of lemon juice.
2. Add warm water to it and stir until the ingredients are mixed completely.
3. You can take one tablespoon of this mixture twice a day for a cough ; once in the day, and once before going to bed for an undisturbed sleep.

