



East Texas Beekeepers Association

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February 5, 2015

February Report by Dick Counts

We had a big crowd at our January meeting with 110 members and guests present. I was pleasantly surprised at the attendance as we were meeting on an alternate week and on a cold wintery night. Our February meeting will be back to our usual meeting night of the First Thursday, February 5. I hope to see you there.

Our program for the February meeting will feature ETBA member Johnny Cox. Johnny operates a commercial bee operation near Neches, Texas, the Cox Bee Company. He not only extracts and sells honey but also places hives for pollination in some commercial farming operations. Before relocating his beeyard to Neches, Johnny was in the Lufkin area. He was a source of nucs, hives and queens for many beekeepers in the Lufkin club. We are fortunate to now have that service available to ETBA and beekeepers in our area.

Our 2015 Beginners Beekeeping class is underway. So far, I have twelve students, including four scholarship students. We are in the process of learning about bees and building our boxes.

While placing the orders for hive components and beekeeping equipment and tools, I am already finding some low supplies and prolonged delivery times. If you need to order boxes, equipment, tools or bee suits, I encourage you to get your orders made as soon as possible to avoid delays.

February is an important month for bees and beekeepers. Even though we still have a lot of cold weather before Spring arrives, our bees are already in transition from the dormancy of winter and preparing for the coming season. The daylight hours are getting longer and the elm trees are starting to show blooms. Bees are already finding pollen and bringing it into the hive on warmer afternoons. The next few weeks are a critical time for beekeepers to make sure their hives don't run out of stores and starve during some of the February and even early March cold fronts we always seem to have.

Bring your questions about what you need to be doing to ensure your bees get off to a great start this season. We will talk a little bit about what you need to be doing.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—John Holladay

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley, Larry Tarr

Program Director — Matt Thomas
Brenda Sheridan, Eddie Collins

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

Next Meeting

February 5

**United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse**

6:45 PM

On the Web: etba.info

Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

Photo by Martha Jeske

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Vi Bourns*



The year 2015 will bring new and exciting changes for the Honey Queen Program. Queen Willow and Princess Brittany have begun to think of new ways to educate children and adults around the East Texas area. Requests are coming from new organizations as well as those we have visited in the past. New questions are being asked which make the young ladies do more research to find the answers. These questions also keep the seasoned beekeeper on their toes. Please come to our February 5th meeting and find out how you can become involved in the queen program. Everyone has an idea that can help these young ladies with presentations and education of the public about the honey bee. It is always a new and exciting endeavor. But it is not just about our Queen and Princess — everyone is important to the program.



As this year is getting started, I have been asked an increasing amount of questions about Colony Collapse Disorder and the plight of the honey bee. This prompted me to dig into the topic a little more. While researching, I rediscovered an article on glyphosate and how it affects the honey bee, written by Hayden Wolf, (The 2014 Texas Honey Queen, and the 2015 American Honey Princess) [1]. Hayden's article spiked my interest and spurred me to dig deeper into this subject. Here is what I learned:



You may be asking, "What is Glyphosate?" Glyphosate is the main ingredient in many widely used herbicides. The brand common to most of us is Round-Up, made by Monsanto. (The use of trade names is for product identification purposes only and does not imply endorsement.) According to the National Pesticide Information Center, glyphosate works by being absorbed through the leaves and stems of the plants. After being absorbed, the glyphosate proceeds to disrupt the "shikimic acid pathway", the biochemical process that allows plants to manufacture amino acids. When this process is interrupted, it results in a deficiency in amino acids that are vital for protein synthesis and for plant growth [2].

This may seem like no big deal because bees are not plants so they do not rely on the shikimic acid pathway to produce amino acids. They ingest amino acids in their diet and assimilate them through the digestive process. However, the flora found in the bees' intestines are devastated by glyphosate [3]. Glyphosate based products are sprayed widely on major crops to kill and dry the crops evenly to produce a higher and better quality yield. Glyphosate has been shown to accumulate in and remain in the crop on which it was used. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are crops that have been genetically engineered to be sprayed by a glyphosate based product. A few of these Round-Up ready crops include soybeans, field corn, and hay [4].

Studies are showing that glyphosate has many negative effects on the honey bee. In the article written by Hayden, it states that glyphosate has been shown to kill two vitally important kinds of bacterium in the bees' honey stomach. These two varieties of bacterium are lactobacillus and bifidobacterium, which the worker bees use to turn pollen into bee bread. Lactobacillus is also vital in fighting the bacteria that causes American Foul Brood and other such bacterium [1]. Without these good bacterium, the honey bees are not able to obtain the nutrition they need and become susceptible to viruses, harmful bacteria, and other diseases. Although these are some of the major digestive problems that occur from the glyphosate, a recent study showed that prolonged exposure to glyphosate also impaired the worker bees' learning capabilities and they began to suffer from short term memory retention [5]. This is a terrible thing for worker bees because of how much the hive relies on the quick learning of the worker bee and the memory retention of the forager. These are just a few of the negative impacts glyphosate has on the honey bees.

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The question now is, "How do we protect the bees?" Well, we don't have to do anything big. We can just do a lot of little things that protect our bees. We can stop using glyphosate based herbicides and persuade our neighbors to do the same. We can buy non-GMO products and urge our friends to buy non-GMO products as well. We can send letters to our political representatives and prompt them to research the matter themselves and take action. I hope I have been able to share something new with all of you, and hope your bees stay happy and healthy. ~Willow

Sources and Links

- [1] (2014) Wolf H. "The Buzz on Glyphosate." The Texas Beekeepers Association Journal, July/August 2014 Issue.
- [2] Henderson, A. M.; Gervais, J. A.; Luukinen, B.; Buhl, K.; Stone, D. 2010. Glyphosate Technical Fact Sheet; National Pesticide Information Center, Oregon State University Extension Services. <http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/glyphotech.html>.
- [3] (2014) "Gut Wrenching: New Studies Reveal the Insidious Effects of Glyphosate" cornucopia.org
- [4] (2015) Technical Factsheet on: GLYPHOSATE, Page 1. Available in PDF form at <http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/pdfs/factsheets/soc/tech/glyphosa.pdf>
- [5] (2014) "Is Glyphosate Killing Our Bees?" <http://www.nyrnaturalnews.com/article/is-roundup-killing-our-honeybees/>



Honeybees are driven to pollinate, gather nectar, and condense the nectar into honey. It is a magnificent obsession imprinted into their genetic makeup by our Creator. It is estimated that to produce just one pound of honey, the average hive of 20,000 to 60,000 bees must collectively visit millions of flowers and travel the equivalent of two times around the world.



Over its short lifetime of just a few weeks to four months, a single honeybee's contribution of honey to its hive is mere one-twelfth of one teaspoon.

Though seemingly insignificant when compared to the total, each bee's one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey is vital to the life of the hive. The bees depend on each other.

Workloads that would be overwhelming for a few bees become doable because all of the bees faithfully do their part.

Imagine what the millions of people in the world could accomplish if we functioned like a beehive.

Imagine what good we can do in the world if we all join together, anxiously and busily responding to the needs of others and serving those around us - our families, our friends, our neighbors, and our fellow citizens.

Stay focused on your mission to others, just like the honeybees focus on the flowers from which they gather nectar and pollen. Go through out your day with your heart full of faith and love, looking for someone to help!

~Brittany



Honey Queen Willow at Rotary Club
In Athens

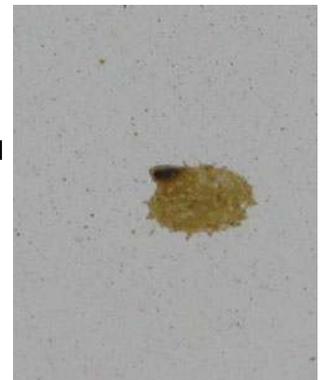


President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

With the advent of the end of January, our beekeeping season will begin to increase in intensity. The bees should be rousing from some of their winter slumber and getting ready for Spring, which will be here before we know it. Your queen should be laying and the bees starting to rear new bees to replace the long lived winter bees. It is a great time to check whether they have enough stores to support the rearing of new brood. Elm trees should be blooming and making some pollen available to them. I have even seen plenty of dandelions blooming, though most of them have bloomed all winter.

If you are not supplementing your colonies with protein patties, you can open feed a high-protein food. You can use dry bee supplement powder or a high protein bean powder such as garbanzo bean (chick pea) or soy flour in an open feeder. Two years ago, I constructed open feeders from plastic piping and had great success with them. I lured the bees to the feeders by adding a few large drops of honey. After attracting them with the bait, they freely took the organic chick pea flour in the feeder by dancing in it and covering their bodies. I don't know if it really helped the bees, but other people do it and it did make me feel better!

Earlier this week, as the weather moderated and warmed, I noticed a phenomenon around my house, particularly on my cars. I wonder if you saw it on yours. You would have if, like me, you have bee hives fairly close to the house. I got into the car one morning and noticed dark yellow spots all over the windshield. The washer fluid had a hard time dislodging it and I knew right away what it was. Bee poop! After being confined to the hive for extended time due to cold weather, the bees come out on a temperate day to relieve themselves. In East Texas, they are probably not confined for more than a couple of weeks before they can come out for one of those cleansing flights. It makes me wonder what the bees are like in Vermont or Alaska where they might be confined for months at a time while the temperature is down in the single digits. Given that many places experience a "January Thaw" where the temperature warms for a short time, the bees may be unable to tend to their necessities for three months or more. Maybe that's another good reason not to open a hive in the winter! They are going to be cranky. I know I would be.



Yesterday, I lifted the back three bars to my top bar hive to replace their feeder and get an idea of how they are doing. And they are still there. Lots of bees on the last "frame" so the hive must be doing well. The days this week should be fairly warm, so, if I have time, I will perhaps take a better look and do a thorough evaluation. It looks like I'll need to get the larger box ready for them before they outgrow this one.



As I write, the current American Honey Princess, Hayden Wolf, is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, receiving her training. All of what has gone before, ETBA Princess, ETBA Queen and Texas Queen, has really been preparation for this role. Over the last 5 days, she has received training by no less than six former American Honey Royalty in all facets of marketing. She has been trained in social media, public speaking, presentation skills, and in interviewing by regular media. They have spent time in mock interviews that were recorded and critiqued so they can learn to give the best impression. It was all serious stuff before but this is on a whole new level. It has been "stay up late and get up early" every day to maximize the training time. She does plan to be at the next ETBA meeting and is anxious to see East Texas friends.





Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

January had numerous cold and freezing days that our hives hopefully survived. Bees will do well in such weather if the hive is properly prepared, has adequate stores, and is properly ventilated to prevent condensation. Heat and moisture generated by the cluster must be allowed to escape and not condense in the top of the hive. Condensation in the hive can cause the cluster to become damp and susceptible to cooling. Placing a thin piece of wood on the rim of the Inner Cover is sufficient to allow condensation to escape.

If you use Telescoping Outer Covers, as do most non-commercial beekeepers, you should also have an Inner Cover between the top box and the Outer Cover. Inner Covers have a deep side and a shallow side. The shallow side is usually turned down to preserve the correct bee space over the frames. When I feed pollen patties, I place the patty on top of the frame topbars. Then I add the Inner Cover with the deep side down. The added space on the deep side makes it easier for the bees to move about between the topbars and Inner Cover to feed on the patties.

If you use Migratory Covers, you will not have an Inner Cover underneath. In order to give the bees room to feed on the patties, you can add a shallow super between the box and the Migratory Cover. Some of the beekeeping supply houses sell a shallow feeding super for about \$20 plus shipping. A frame made of 1x2 strips works just fine and gives enough room between the topbars and the Migratory Cover for the pollen patty.

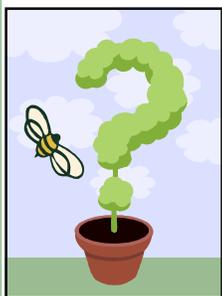
It is a good time to do some early season inspections on the warmer days we have between cold fronts. I know most of us do inspections when circumstances and schedules allow but the general rule of thumb says it is better to be opening the hives when it is at least 60 degrees and not windy or rainy. I always carry a good flashlight to check the cluster. By shining the flashlight down into the box, I can easily see how the bees are distributed on the frames. If the bees are clustered, I pull a frame or two along the outside of the cluster to determine if there are stored food supplies. I try to leave the cluster intact and undisturbed to ensure that they can survive the cooler evening temperatures.

On warmer days, the bees may be out of cluster and spread over all of the frames. Then you can quickly check to see if brood is in the hive. At this time of the year, you will generally find small patches of capped brood, ranging from the size of a silver dollar to the size of a tea cup. Strong hives with large bee populations and a healthy queen may even have brood on a couple of frames.

If you do pull frames, be aware that the queen is light at this time of the year and can easily fly off and often will. Do not keep the frame with the queen out of the hive very long. She can become nervous, begin to run, and then fly away.

During warmer day inspections, have a few frames of foundation or drawn comb with you. Use it to replace any damaged frames you find in the hive. If the frame has undrawn foundation, only place it on the outside of the box, i.e., spaces 1,2 or 9,10. After the bees draw out that foundation, you can move it more toward the center of the hive. Never put a frame of undrawn foundation in the center of the brood nest. This effectively divides the brood area and may cause serious problems from which the hive may not recover.

Let's talk about bottom boards. Many beekeepers use screened bottom boards as a part of their varroa mite control. I have some hives with screened bottom boards and some with solid bottom boards. I do not close the screened bottom boards during the winter. Some beekeepers do place a piece of plywood under their screened bottom boards, feeling it is needed to keep cold drafts out of the hives. At the 2014 ABF convention, I sat next to a sideliner beekeeper from Illinois. Winters in Illinois are a lot colder than winters in East Texas. He used screened bottom boards and did not close them for the winter. He reported no problems with his hives surviving the cold Illinois winters with their screened bottom boards open.



If you have not done any mite treatment, you still have short window for an abbreviated treatment. Most miticides state that treatments should be removed before the honey flow begins. In East Texas, depending on weather conditions, we usually see honey flow starting by mid-to-late March. Be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions.

The Got Questions? room will be open 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or have some beekeeping questions. We will try to help you find some answers. After missing the last three months because of schedule conflicts, I do plan to meet you there on the 5th.



Bee Facts by Eddie Collins

When does the beekeeping year start for you? For me, it starts this time of the year - February. This is the time I start frantically getting all my equipment ready for the upcoming spring. I also start looking in the hives and getting great expectations of the beekeeping year to come. The trees start to let go of their pollen and, with a little added feed applied, the queen will start to lay. The hive will explode with new activity. The transformation of the hive activity is just amazing. Before you know it, the swarm calls will start and we will have honey dripping out of the suppers. Get ready, it's coming and I can't wait. After all these years of keeping bees, I still get excited!

Over the past weekend, I checked my hives and in the larger clusters, 6 or more frames of bees, most of them had a 6-inch patch of capped brood and a lot of open brood around that. The bees were also bringing in a lot of bright yellow pollen.

To feed, or not to feed, and how to feed? This seems to be the main question at all the recent meetings and I can't tell you how many meetings in the past. The main thing to remember this time of the year is -- if your bees are out of stores and you don't feed them, they will die!

Take advantage of one of the warmer days and open the hive. If they are out of honey or stored sugar water, then feed them. If they do have honey and it's a long way from the brood nest, move it closer but make sure you do not separate the brood nest. Don't get hung up on if you should or shouldn't or if it is or isn't too cold. Just check on them when you can and give them some food if they need it. If you have to do it on one of the colder days, then just don't spend a lot of time and try not to disturb the brood nest longer than necessary.

Another question this time of year is "To Rotate "or" To Not Rotate" your top and bottom brood boxes. This is a very good question about which Dick and I always seem to have different opinions. There is no absolute answer to this question. What's your opinion? Think through your reasoning and make sure you have reached a solution that will work for you and your bees.

I will bring deep and medium boxes to the February meeting. These are unassembled boxes from Shastina Millwork (www.shastinamillwork.com) with the new improved top finger joint. I find the material and quality control of Shastina boxes is excellent. Their top finger joint seldom splits during assembly. I am not a marketer of Shastina boxes but I do buy them in bulk and am happy to share with ETBA members. Deeps \$13 Mediums. \$11.50

Here is a Beekeeping Trivia question for you -- How many nails (or whatever type of fasteners you use) does it take to put together the four sides of a standard Dadant 10 frame 9 5/8 brood box?

Don't forget to renew your ETBA Membership for 2015.

After the March meeting, we will update our membership list and mailing list for 2015 members. If you do not renew your membership, you will drop off the mailing lists and will no longer receive the monthly newsletter. Membership dues will remain at \$10 for Individual Memberships and \$20 for Family Memberships.

When you renew your membership, make sure your contact information is up to date. Include any changes of address, phone or email with your renewals.

You can renew your membership three ways:

See our Treasurer John Holladay at the meeting.

Renew online at our website ETBA.info

Mail a check to ETBA, PO Box, 9662, Tyler, TX 75711-9662.

Make all checks payable to ETBA.