



East Texas Beekeepers Association

January 7, 2021

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENT !!

Members of the board met and we are happy to announce that we are going to hold a **Meeting on Thursday January 7th, at 6:45pm in our normal location—Friendship Hall of the Whitehouse United Methodist Church.**

We will have seats placed 6 feet apart and the church has asked that we do not bring any food or drink into the Friendship hall. The meeting will be shortened to 1 hour, the first 15 minutes Mr. Brantley will host his Q&A and after we will do panel style Q&A, as we want everyone to be able to ask plenty of questions after so long without a meeting.

We look forward to seeing those who are able to attend, if you are at risk and aren't able to make it, we will miss you and look forward to seeing you when you're able to join us again. Hoping you all had a very Merry Christmas and we look forward to see your faces in 2021!

President—Melissa Maeker
Vice President—Connie Collins
Exec. Director/Reporter—Jim Biles
Ambassador—Carolyn Savage
Treasurer—Jennifer Palmer
Secretary—Tish Kennedy
Member-at-Large—Stanford Brantley
Program Director — Meagan Elzner
Newsletter Editor—Trish Wilson
Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson



I hope you had a Merry Christmas and have a very Happy New Year. Now we need to grit our teeth and grab the new year by its pandemic and get the 2021 beekeeping season started.

If you want to expand in 2021, now is the time to solidify your plan. Are you looking to buy NUCs or queens or will you be splitting some of your own hives to make the increase? Bee supply houses as well as queen breeders are changing their operational plans to offer discounts on equipment of all kinds, including woodenware and suits. MannLake had a March Madness sale for the last couple of years, featuring good prices on many items. Dadant and other suppliers offer similar discounts that can help you save money if you watch for their advertisements. I am hearing reports of honey container shortages in some areas. Unless the factory was declared essential, they probably had to shut down during the pandemic. Be aware of this and start looking for conventional or alternate containers early.

You may be able to find information about local companies on the TBA website -- texasbeekeepers.org.

Queen breeders, in years past, would not start booking orders for the new season until January arrived. Some are now taking orders as early as November. Booking orders early allows the breeder to plan their supply and work flow much better. Last year, I purchased some queens late in the season from a queen producer in the Beeville area. I purchased some of his Carolinian bees. No matter which race of bees you choose, educate yourself about the characteristics of that breed and any unique techniques needed to successfully raise them.

As we move into January, check the weight of your hives to ensure that your bees do not run out of stores. During colder weather, bees will consume stores rapidly. If the hive feels light, feed 1:1 sugar syrup.

On days when the temperature reaches about 60 degrees and not much wind is blowing, you can do quick hive inspections. Do not hold the frame with the queen on it outside the hive while you admire her. At this time of the year, she is light enough to fly off into the wild blue yonder. Should this happen, here is a tip that will usually allow the queen to safely return to her hive. Put the inner cover on top of the hive, covering the back half of the hive but leaving the front half open. Continue the inspection of other nearby hives. After fifteen or twenty minutes, move the inner cover into its proper position, replace the outer cover, and go home. DO NOT look for the queen until at least a couple days later. She has just had a frightening experience and will be scared and probably is running around on the frames so you will have trouble finding her until she acclimates.

If you are a beginning beekeeper, you can find a wealth of information on the Internet to help you get started. If the website is an ".EDU" site, you can expect the information to generally be reliable. Look at the University of Florida website as well as other universities with beekeeping programs. Information on other types of sites or on Youtube may or may not be reliable. Use your best judgment and the help of experienced beekeepers to determine what is the most reliable for your area. A couple of suggestions I would give you – Learn how to check for mites and develop a plan to check regularly and treat as needed. Mites are the most destructive pest we face.

Some good beginner beekeeping books include "Beekeeping for Dummies", "Backyard Beekeeping" and "First Lessons in Beekeeping". The Marshall Beekeepers Association will be conducting a school for new beekeepers on alternate Saturdays beginning January 2021. Contact Beth Derr for information about cost, place and dates: marshallbeekeeping@gmail.com 936-591-2399.

Current plans are to have an ETBA meeting January 7, depending on the Covid-19 situation. There will NOT be a Q&A session at 6:00 before the meeting. However, we will begin the meeting at 7:00 with a Q&A as a part of the regular program.

~ Mr. Brantley



The January 2021 Program.....

Hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. I'm sure you all are looking forward to the new year as much as I am! We plan to hold a meeting on January 7th at 6:45pm. It will be a condensed version of our regular meeting as we adjust to holding meetings during the pandemic, and work out any kinks that may arise. Mr. Brantley will host his Q&A from 6:45 until 7:00, and we will begin the regular meeting at 7:00. The meeting will end at 7:45. We plan to do a panel style Q&A for everyone, as we know many of you will have much to ask after so long without a meeting. You will notice a few adjustments in the room that the church has requested as we use their space so we can keep our members safe as well as ours. We will have chairs spaced apart, and the tables will be removed. They have asked that there be no food or drink either. The windows will be raised for ventilation, so you may want to bring a jacket as it could become chilly in the room. I'm really looking forward to seeing those who are able to attend. If you are unable to join us at this time, stay safe and know that you are missed and we look forward to you joining us whenever you are comfortable. Take care and happy 2021 !

See you there!

Meagan Elzner, Program Director

"The Rangel Honey Bee Lab at Texas A&M University is conducting a student-organized survey to better understand how COVID-19 has impacted Texas and Louisiana beekeepers (see attached flier). The purpose of this survey study is to identify what beekeeping practices, operations and/or available learning opportunities have been most impacted by the pandemic in 2020 and into 2021. By identifying what aspects of beekeeping have been impacted by COVID-19, our goal is to help the industry determine what solutions can be applied in the future to mitigate these issues.

We invite backyard, sideliner and commercial beekeepers with any level of experience to participate in this study. The survey is very short and should only take about 5-10 minutes to complete. You must be a beekeeper and be 18 years or older in order to participate. All survey responses are anonymous, and no personal information is tied to an individual's response. These survey results will be compiled and analyzed for

The survey can be found and completed at: <https://forms.gle/DTdGqgPDpDbuAZwQ7>

a future publication by our lab.

If you want to participate and have questions or comments regarding this study, please contact us at: tamuhoneybeesurvey@gmail.com.

Please share this and help us advertise the study with all of your beekeeper contacts. The more responses we get, the better able we will be at understanding the effects of COVID-19 on our regional beekeeping operations.

Thank you for your continuous support. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season!"

Sincerely,

Pierre Lau

PhD Candidate

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Happy New Year!

The beginning of a new beekeeping year is upon us. Are you ready? The elms, maples and dandelions will be blooming this month (pollen production) which will kick off the hive build up. Since the weather temps are up and down, find a day with temps at least 60 degrees and do a quick inspection of your hives (work quickly to avoid chilling the brood). Don't expect a lot of brood (may see none or a small 2-inch patch on one frame). Mainly look for quantity of bees and remaining stores. Don't let them starve this close to the honey flow. I will be treating my bees for varroa on a cold day in early January (need to be in a cluster) with an oxalic acid dribble. Consider treating your bees for varroa mites before the honey flow.

If you haven't already, make an inventory of supplies and plan for what you want to accomplish this year. I'm starting my seventh year in beekeeping and am now at the point of replacing old and/or damaged equipment. I have boxes to replace. I also plan to pull any damaged frames as well as old comb. It will be critical to move these to the outside edges of my boxes until brood hatches then replace before the spring flow ends so the bees have enough time to draw new comb on the new frames. Dealing with broken frames is not fun. So, move them to the outside edges of the box and plan to pull and replace as soon as you can.

Last year, I failed at queen rearing. I had a busy year with schoolwork, full time job and other things with the craziness of 2020. My bees were ignored too much. I am going to try queen rearing again so that I can replace my current queens. I lost 6 hives over the year and would like to split to add at least four back. Hopefully, I can accomplish this and minimize swarming. Wish me luck. Of course, my main goal is to maximize honey production. What are your goals?

If you are new to beekeeping, I know you are very excited and perhaps a bit overwhelmed. We speak our own jargon and there is a very steep learning curve. The ETBA club is here to help. Come to all our meetings, including the Q & A portion of the meeting and get to know the people in the club so you can ask questions. This will be our first meeting in person in a long time. It will look different as we will have to social distance as much as possible. But I think it is worth some restrictions to be able to meet again in person. If you feel you can't rejoin us just yet, that is OK. We love to meet but want to make sure we ensure everyone's safety.

May God Bless you abundantly,

~ Melissa Maeker





Bad News from the Bee Yard

Have you ever gotten your heart broken? Often, this takes many different forms to different people. It can look like a relationship that ended, or being furloughed from a job, it can be unmet expectations, or falling short of where you want to be. For me in the last month, heartbreak has looked like losing over sixty percent of my beehives.

After extracting honey at the end of June, life took over and the honey bees were put on the back burner. I had school and work to deal with, plus returning to church activities made it difficult to find time to even think about bees. I knew from previous experience the beekeeping season slowed down in the fall and the bees needed less frequent inspections due to the cold temperatures we'd been having. This negligence, and a hesitance to treat because the hives were still bringing in nectar, is what did them in.

At the first sign of agreeable weather in what felt like months, I checked the hives only to be greeted by emptiness. One hive, once so healthy, stood completely cleaned out. I remember watching many cartoons as a kid where a poor animal would want a new suit, or any other kind of decadence, only to pull out his wallet and be met by three or four moths taking flight. That was kind of how I felt as I beheld the sight before me. The situation became even more comedic as a few moths really did fly out, or at least would have if given a few more days. So ended the first hive.

I promptly contacted my beekeeping mentor asking for advise. The verdict was a heavy mite load weakened the hive and wax moths moved in to take advantage of the situation. With this in mind, the frames needed to be frozen to kill any moth larva in them, stored accordingly, and the other hives needed to be treated immediately. I treated, gave it a week, and check the hives again (which I know is normally a big no-no, but I figured these were extenuating circumstances). As I did, I discovered another hive had collapsed.

My remaining hive is not doing well. For reasons unknown to myself, they are once again queen-less. This hive has been queen-less in the last two years more times than I can count, and I don't think they will be able to raise a new queen this time. Even if they do, I think the probability of her finding drones in our area to mate with is very slim.

The last month has been a little bit of roller coaster in regard to my beekeeping experience. In that short amount of time, I have gone from three healthy hives to a struggling one. There was a great investment of time and resources that my own faulty management practices lost. This experience has proven to be enlightening, and I have learned the importance of swiftly and affectively treating Varroa mite populations. Even though it was a stumble, I'm not down, and will come back from this. I will be aiding some beekeepers in making splits this spring, and working closely with them to earn some bees. My hope for the future remains, I still have huge aspirations for our honey business, and am working to make those a reality.



Your Fellow Beekeeper and Friend,

~ *Carolynne Savage*

