

East Texas Beekeepers Association



March 2022

March Report by Jim Biles

If you ever sell or give away honey you've produced, you may get a question about why local honey is perceived to be better than "store bought". One answer to this question relates to the perceived differential health benefits of local honey. I'll leave a discussion of this to health experts.

Another compelling reason to buy local honey, however, is that food fraud is rampant for honey moved in the international honey market. You may have heard that honey is the third most adulterated food product in the world. This means that much of the honey sold in stores is not pure honey (despite what the label says!), but is cut with corn or rice syrup. Several years ago a study was performed that tested honey in grocery stores across the U.S. It was determined that 40% of this honey was adulterated. Why does this happen? Purely for greed! Corn syrup is much cheaper to produce than honey and many in this world are willing to lie to the public in order to make more money. Incidentally, this is a violation of Federal law. The result is that the unsuspecting public buys "honey" off the shelf for health benefits and are instead ripped off, to their health detriment.

The issue started with large exports of adulterated honey from China. For the past 20 years, the U.S. Feds have banned the import of honey from China due to the dumping of large volumes of honey at very low prices. To get around this import ban, the Chinese started "trans-shipment" of honey through other countries, relabeling shipments with false information as to its origin. This resulted in artificially low prices of imported honey for many years.

In the past year, several events are coming together that are having a positive impact on honey prices:

- Last summer, the U.S. Department of Commerce published a table of import duties to be imposed on various countries suspected of facilitating trans-shipment of Chinese honey (think Vietnam, Ukraine, India, e.g.). Additional duties are assessed on individual exporters who are moving very high volumes of cheap honey.
- In March of 2021, numerous large U.S. honey producers filed a class action suit in Federal Court against most of the major honey importers, alleging that they knowingly import adulterated honey. Discovery in this lawsuit is just now getting underway.
- Congress has authorized the extensive use of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance technology to determine the source of imported honey. This will lead to additional duties, confiscation of adulterated product, and criminal action against offenders.
- The pandemic resulted in significant increases to international shipping costs, including the movement of honey to international markets. Long shipping delays are common.

All of this has resulted in stronger wholesale prices in the U.S. For example, imported honey from Argentina (a major exporter of honey to the U.S.) was \$1.25/lb a year ago, went to \$1.75 by July, and was over \$2.00 at the end of 2021. Commercial beekeepers in turn, are now starting to see price improvement. And whether from the stress on imported honey supplies or general inflation, local honey prices are creeping up as well.

Honey fraud will continue to be a problem for the foreseeable future. As beekeepers, it pays for us to be aware of the facts about honey markets and fraud. Doing so will allow us to demonstrate the differential value of Texas honey to our customers.

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Next Meeting

March 3rd

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web:

www.etba.info

FYI *by Meagan Elzner*



The March Program...

*Our March speakers are
Janelle Cole and Kimberly Krueger
from the Henderson Co. Beekeeping Association*

They are going to go over all of the wonderful health benefits of honey!

Kim has been keeping bees since 2015 and loves all things from the hive--honey, propolis and pollen.

Janelle and her family (you may remember her boys were amazing Ambassadors for our club!) own Milk and Honey Meadows and she is passionate about creating natural handmade non-toxic skin products.

Her website is www.ourmilkandhoneymeadows.com

We look forward to learning from them this month! See you there!



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~ Meagan and Isaac Elzner ~



Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

by Stan Brantley



Have you noticed what is going on in the outside world? In my area, the lawn is not green but has that hint it will not be long before a green mat appears. If you are lucky, there will also be some henbit, dandelions and some five petal light purple flowers on a single stem that bees really like to work. When the bee puts her full weight on the flower, the stem is not strong enough to support her weight and the flower slowly bends its head until the bee finishes her work and moves to the next inviting bloom. I am waiting for a Master Gardener to identify this plant for me!

While driving through a branch bottom the other day, I saw my first maples showing really red on the ends of the limbs. It is not going to be long before the oak, elms,

redbuds and privet hedge provide pollen or nectar for the buildup of 2022 hives. Our bees are just waiting for more consistently warm weather to begin their life cycle of swarming and making a honey crop for us. What we are now doing and how we have prepared through the winter will determine our crop outcome.

An avid fisherman told me last week that he was already seeing a surprising amount of pollen floating in the lake. Elms along the shorelines were already showing a good bloom. He said that a consistent breeze was pushing pollen downwind. It was collecting as a surface scum of pollen in the backs of downwind coves. For the newer keepers of bees, know that the warmth and the length of the day dictates the actions of the queen and triggers her to begin laying eggs in the hive. On a seventy degree day last week, I checked several hives for capped brood. Of the four hives inspected, three had solid bottom boards and one had a screened bottom board. I was not prepared for what I found. The three with solid bottom boards each had a medium super of honey. The screened bottom board had a deep brood box with about forty pounds of honey. This was a hive I was using to try and save a high-dollar queen, separating the two brood boxes with an excluder. This hive had at least a frame and a half more capped brood than the hives with the solid bottoms. I will clarify that I did not close off the screened bottom board but left it open all winter. I do not think it is necessary to close the screened bottoms in our Texas winters.

While inspecting for capped brood, I noticed about thirty-forty hive beetles on the capped frames of honey in the brood chambers. The frames were covered with bees and you did not notice the beetles until the bees moved out of the way. Why were the beetles there? The bees were keeping the beetles warm, probably also feeding them. The beetles were biding their time and waiting for better spring weather before the female begins to get interested in laying eggs.

In a recent article in one of the bee publications, the writer diagrammed a method of feeding pollen patties that allowed the bees to have access to the patty from all sides. He used ¼ inch hardware cloth attached to a bracket that kept the patty suspended. If you are considering feeding a patty to your bees, consider experimenting with placing the patty on top of a queen excluder. Since the workers can pass through the excluder, they would have access to the bottom of the patty as well as the sides and top.

Questions are always asked about the best hive configuration for our Ark-La-Tex area. This area has a relatively short nectar flow, usually beginning when you see the Plum trees bloom (late February-mid-March) and ending around the third week of June. A commercial beekeeper whose goal is to obtain the maximum amount of honey will use two brood boxes. For a small scale beginner with a couple hives, I would suggest a single brood box. The single brood box hive requires you to look at only ten frames when you are doing a hive inspection, looking for a queen, or checking for varroa mites. A single brood hive is also lighter if you have to move it around. With proper management, it will produce enough honey to meet your needs and possibly give some to friends and family members.



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!*

Connie Collins - ETBA President

Hello Beekeepers!

I missed seeing everyone last month due to the weather, but I hope you all are doing well. At the February meeting, I was hoping to introduce our 2022 ETBA Scholarship students. Since I was not able to do this in February, I will be introducing them to you at the next meeting in March. We had a lot of applicants this year, and every one of them was superb! It was not an easy decision, but we have selected a few. I have high hopes they will help our youth participation grow in our club again. I hope we will have volunteers to help mentor the following scholarship students as they learn to keep bees.

One of our 2022 ETBA scholarship recipients is Craig Robinson, and we were so delighted to meet him. He is the son of Marc and Deborah Robinson. Craig attends his local church, participates in living history events, and 4-H. Within 4-H, Craig helps organize a home school group and gives demonstrations there at the living history events. Craig told us he likes watching bees around his magnolia tree and thought it would be fun to have his own beehive where he could study the bees. He also looks forward to sharing any knowledge he acquires with others. He is also interested in presenting antique beekeeping equipment for future living history projects. His parents are keen to help and have an interest in entomology.

The next to receive scholarships from the ETBA are two sisters: Kylie and Avery Dorr. Their parents are Erin and Philip Dorr, and they are looking forward to learning about bees with their daughters.

Kylie attends Good Shepherd School and attends church there as well. Kylie enjoys learning and finds bees to be incredibly intelligent. She hopes to learn more from them as she progresses. Kylie states bees have a way of "...making you truly happy, and that to be raising them would be such a delight." Gardening is a favorite hobby of hers; she hopes the bees will benefit her sweet, flowering plants.

Avery Dorr also attends school and church at Good Shepherd and is involved in nearly every activity they offer! Avery especially enjoys choir and art. She has played volleyball with the King's Academy for two seasons. Avery is excited to learn about bees and says they are an amazing part of creation. She wants to learn more about their life cycle. Of course, she is hoping to get honey, but she also would like to be a part of helping honeybees thrive in our area. Avery especially hopes they will benefit her small family farm.

The last two scholarships from ETBA were awarded to the Singler Family. We loved all three of their children, but as the youngest one was below the age limit, we decided to let him be included with his older siblings in their hives. Their parents are Gaelen and Shannon Singler. They are very excited to help their children learn about bees. This family has been gardening, homesteading, and hobby farming for the past fifteen years.

Rhone Singler is home-schooled through the Classical Conversations Community in Lindale. He is the president of Top Shot, a 4-H shooting club member, and enjoys hunting with the TX Youth Hunting Program. Rhone also takes ballroom dancing and plays soccer at the Christian Heritage School. He is excited to learn about taking care of bees and hopes beekeeping is something he can do for years to come. He is looking forward to learning valuable life skills from beekeeping as well as the art of making honey and wax products.

Lindy Singler is home-schooled in the Classical Conversations Community. She is an advice columnist and reporter for her school newspaper. Lindy studies dance at Art Rangers Studios and is involved in the youth group at CCF in Garden Valley. Lindy is curious about bees and how they make honey. She enjoys flowers and the mutualistic relationship between flowers and bees. She would like to provide safe places for bees to live and thrive.

Rylan Singler is also home-schooled in the Classical Conversations Community and has been an active member of Top Shot and the 4-H shooting club for the past four years. Rylan enjoys hunting with the TX Youth Hunting Program, and he is also an AWANA at his local church youth group. Rylan thinks bees are cool and loves to eat honey. He is looking forward to selling the honey and wax.

Please help us by welcoming these families to our club and supporting our 2022 ETBA scholarship students. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting. Happy Bee Season!





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Matt Thomas - Member at Large

Greetings Beekeeper!

It certainly is one of the most exciting times of the year to be a beekeeper! Your management last summer and fall will determine the fruitfulness of your Spring and summer. I have heard by many over the years that if your bees made it through winter you are officially a beekeeper and not just an owner. Congratulations! Your stewardship of the bees last year equates to the success you will experience this spring.

This month I decided I would share some inside baseball with you on the what and when of beekeeping. I'm going to share my schedule. Let me first footnote that this schedule will vary depending on weather and how you managed your colonies last year. The schedule is also filled with best practices.

Summer Management

July-Pull honey and extract from Mediums and second deep. Take deep comb back to colonies, treat them for Varroa mites, and give them a gallon of thick syrup. Don't leave all the honey in second deep if they have 9 full frames. Take at least 6 out. One reason to feed them a gallon of syrup is to ensure they make it to fall honey flow and encourage that queen to keep laying.

Fall Management

October 15- Make sure bees have enough stores for winter. They've been treated back in July so you are good on treatment. If the fall flow was modest give them another gallon of syrup. Colony should go in to winter with 6-8 frames of honey in the second deep. After you know colony has been treated for mites and has enough honey to make it through the winter your work is done until mid January to first of February.

Spring Management (January 15-April 15)

(January)

That's right. For a beekeeper spring starts in mid January. Do a hive inspection and see how big your cluster is around the middle of January on a nice day. The cluster may be in top deep or may be in bottom deep. Around this time period I will inspect and see how big cluster is and count how many frames of brood are in the cluster. I will often break a honey comb open in my first initial inspection after winter. A few days after that I begin feeding a light syrup. I feed through a hole in the lid (1-1/2) with a gallon feeding can. A light syrup conduces a honey flow. Regardless of whether you feed this early or not the bees will be eating the stores you already have and growing larger by the day.

(February)

Keep Checking and feeding. If I discover the cluster is in the top box by the last week in February I will rotate the deeps and put the box the cluster is in on the bottom board. Bees like to build up. If you don't rotate the levels of carbon dioxide increase and the bees feel congested. The bees will often work down if they are in the top box down to the bottom box if there is comb. When you rotate them you ease pressure under the lid and aid the natural inclination of the bees to work upward. Will help reduce swarming tendencies.

(March)

By the first week of march bees are becoming very populated. February and March I have already discovered which ones are strong, moderate and weak. I will often, (to prevent swarming) Equalize the resources from the strongest to the weakest. I move frames of brood from the giants to the weaker colonies. I will break honey combs open and set them in the middle of the brood nest. I will set frames of foundation in between a pollen and honey frame. Bees don't like negative space between brood and pollen or pollen and honey. What I'm doing is un-crowding bees, giving them something to eat and do and putting that queen to work by freeing up space for her to lay.

(Second Week in March)

Shaking nurse bees out of colonies to create what we call a cell builder. The purpose of shaking bees out is to relieve congestion and swarming tendencies. The nurse bees we shake out will be used to raise new queens. I will find a couple queens I like and graft from her larvae. I introduce the larvae I graft to the cell builder I made with all those extra nurse bees. 5 days after I graft I check to see how many queen cells are in the cell builder. 4 days after that the cells are ready to be used. On that 9th day I will split the colonies like I want. The next day I will put the queen cells in the new splits. Two weeks later I will check on the new queens! As clear as Mud?

March 15-20 bees are split and cells put in to them. Feeding continues for a month. When you buy bees from someone you need to keep feeding them until the deep box has 9 good frames of bees.

I teach my classes how to actually do this and raise queens for themselves.

Hope you have a wonderful season of beekeeping! -Matt



.....from the Editor

Don't forget to send in your business card size ads if you have something "bee" related you want to buy, sell or give away!

There is no charge to place an ad! Send ads to jenifer@babyak.org. If you need help getting your info in "ad format", let me know, and I'll try to help.

Also, don't forget to renew your membership in ETBA for 2022. You can do this at the meeting or send Jennifer Palmer a check in the mail.



ETBA Beginner Beekeeping Class

Join us April 9th - 8:30am-4pm - Whitehouse, 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 at least 3 hours checking hives

Details:

- Cost: \$100 (box lunch included)**
- You can pay Jennifer Palmer at the meeting or mail a \$100 check (post marked before March 20th) made out to East Texas Beekeepers Association to:**

East Texas Beekeepers Association

PO Box 9662

Tyler, TX 75711

- All proceeds go to the club for 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.

Classified Ads

There will be NO charge for placing an ad in the classifieds. It needs to be a business card size ad (one ad per person). Your ad needs to be "bee" related. Please send your ad to jenifer@babyak.org.

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