**Rowan County Beekeepers Association**

**Meeting Minutes**

**10/11/2021**

**Location: In Person and ZOOM Facilitated by Rowan County Extension Agency**

Marcel Renn called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and welcomed all the members there. There were 23 participants in person and 0 on Zoom.

**Program: Video: Staghorn Sumac vs. Varroa Mites Test (YouTube from Chase Christman):**

The theory is that Staghorn Sumac used in smoker will help control mites. Removed the bottom board and replaced with white poster board to better enable mite count. Did an alcohol wash mite count after using the staghorn sumac in the smoker.

(Tip: Ensure you don’t include your queen in the mite wash. Demonstrated how to perform an alcohol wash.)

Observations from his poster board did not show any mites. The bees completely removed the poster board used for the first experiment.

In the 2nd experiment, he used a removable bottom board that the bees couldn’t chew up.

Did staghorn sumac help with the mite population? He smoked the bees 5 weeks in a row. 2-4 days after the smoke, he noticed a significant mite drop. Skipped 2 weeks and did not find any mite drop on the bottom board. He was convinced that there is something in sumac that caused the additional mite drop.

This was strictly an experiment since staghorn sumac is not an approved method for treating Varroa mites.

Someone in the RCBA meeting stated that they had seen where he had done the experiment again the next year and did not see the same results. There was a question about the difference between staghorn sumac and poison sumac and Cody Claddock brought up pictures of both on the screen.

**Secretary Report:** One comment was received on the September minutes related to waiting 2-3 minutes after doing a sugar roll or alcohol wash before counting mites. Last month’s minutes were approved as amended.

**Treasurer Report:** Debbie Lucas provided the Treasurer’s report. Beginning balance as of 9/1/21: $2496.60. Ending balance as of 9/30/21: $2496.60. There were no expenses or additions in the month of September.

**Old Business**:

The Autumn Jubilee festival at Dan-Nicholas Park was held on October 2-3 and RCBA participated again in the Heritage Village. Honey and hive products were sold and monies collected = $1406.00. Lee and Mike Williams brought bees for demonstration on Saturday and Richard Lampe brought bees on Sunday. There was good participation from members helping with the booth at the event, including Paul Eudy, Randy Cox, Mark Heuser, Richard Lampe, Christian Stebe, Debbie Lucas, Marcel Renn, and David Talley. (Please let me know if any members were missed.)

**New Business**:

2022 Officers: Debbie Lucas is resigning as Treasurer at the end of 2021. Mark Heuser has agreed to be Treasurer. Mark is a physician at the VA and has been keeping bees since 2013 and donating honey sales to the VA Hospice program. Program Chair volunteer will be Kevin Watson. Kevin has been keeping bees about 5 years, 4 years in Central California, 1st year here in NC. Was VP of his local club in CA. That club was mostly commercial beekeepers, only a handful of hobbyists. He is newly retired. Marcel also stated that President is an available position, but will stay on since no one else has volunteered. Lee Williams will stay on as Secretary. Bryan Fisher will also stay on as Vice President. Debbie Lucas made a motion to accept the slate of officers as presented. Motion was seconded and the vote was unanimous. New officers go into effect on January 1, 2022.

There will be a fundraiser to benefit the local art gallery in Salisbury. There will be a chili drive through on October 23 from 5-7 at the F&M Trolley Barn. Tickets are $20.00 and are available on line at [www.watcherworks.org](http://www.watcherworks.org).

Cody Craddock explained about a beekeeping grant for a hive that would be kept for 4H at the Ag Center. Requires at least one mentor to work with the kids and a couple of others to serve on a beekeeping committee. Richard Lampe volunteered to be the main mentor. Marcel will be Richard’s backup. Lee and Mike Williams volunteered to be on the beekeeping committee.

RCBA received a certificate for being a sponsor for the 3rd Annual Rowan County Arts and Ag tour.

Someone asked about when the Ag Center would be moving to West End Plaza. Target date is July, 2022.

RCBA FB page has received a request for someone to put hives on a solar farm being developed in Southwest Rowan County. Someone suggested Randall Faggart might be interested and Lee will let him know about this opportunity.

Christian Stebe and Lucas Parker competed in state 4H competitions and Christian came in first in the grilling competition.

NCSBA is planning to have an in-person meeting on November 19-20 in Hickory at the Convention Center. There will be a number of interesting speakers, but no breakout sessions. Vendors will also be available.

Several folks are still feeding and treating. Some are using Oxalic Acid, others using Apiguard, or Apivar.

There were no additional Q&A.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Williams, Secretary

**CALENDAR FOR BEEKEEPING IN CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA**

Nancy Ruppert, Apiary Inspector, NCDA & CS nancy.ruppert@ncagr.gov Updated December 2019

This calendar was designed for general beekeeping use in most of central North Carolina. Recommendations are based on average climate/weather conditions, and may vary with significant temperature changes. Those who manage hives for commercial operations may have different needs than those listed below. Details regarding bloom types/dates and pest/disease management are not included here due to space limitations; consult reliable and current resources for this information. This calendar is subject to being updated as new information becomes available. Remember: bees often follow a different calendar than humans do!

January: Add pollen supplements, if needed; check amount and location of honey stores, and feed (2:1 syrup, candy board or fondant) if <3/4 super of stored honey left.

Check/repair/replace stored equipment; order wax/woodenware.

Consider single dose of oxalic acid vapor or drizzle early in Jan. to clean up residual varroa in hives.

Order nucs/packages.

Keep learning---beekeeping class, read books/journals, etc.

Combine or insulate smaller (less than 4 frames of bees) hives.

Combine hives where queen has failed, if they’re still alive and haven’t absconded.

Move hives if they’ll need to be relocated this year.

Bees may need help removing dead bodies and/or heavy snow from entrance area.

February: Noticeable pollen flow under way, especially red maple-; brood build-up intensifying.

Minimal if any nectar available---most hives need feeding (1:1 syrup in most cases, unless honey stores very low [i.e., <1/2 super left], or continue candy board/fondant).

Combine hives if needed (see January entries above).

Repair/replace equipment if needed; move hives if needed; keep learning.

During last half of February, consider adding super/hive body of wax foundation to allow bees to draw out more comb for spring. (Feeding or nectar is required for this.)

Replace a few (<4) frames where comb is old or damaged.

Some hives may need testing for Nosema disease, especially if too cold for cleansing flights. Also, late February is not too early to begin/continue varroa mite assessments, especially in southeastern NC.

Call your local cooperative extension office if you want your name on a “swarm-catcher” list.

Make plans to attend the annual NCSBA Spring Meeting in March.

March: NCSBA annual Spring Meeting (usually first weekend in March)---great learning opportunity!

Swarming under way-; implement prevention measures (make splits, remove queen cells, “checker board”, temporarily or permanently remove current mother queen); set up “bait” hives.

Reverse bottom two or three boxes on hive to give queen more room to lay: most hives have moved up above the bottom hive body, leaving it virtually empty. This measure also helps reduce swarming. Caution: be careful not to split up clusters of brood when you do this. Two to three weeks after this reversal, it’s likely that you’ll need to reverse them again. (An alternative to reversal: simply add another hive body or super.)

Assess for pest and/or disease problems (especially varroa mites, American foulbrood, and European foulbrood) and treat if needed. Treatments should be completed by early April to limit risk of contaminating honey.

Check honey stores; feed (1:1 or thinner syrup) if needed.

Look closely at the brood pattern; order new queen if current one failing.

Continue to replace few frames of old/undesirable comb, if needed.

Near end of the month, add at least one honey super; remove entrance reducers; equalize hives.

April: Nectar flow is often heaviest this month: make sure that all medications are out of hive unless required for bees’ survival, be prepared to add new supers every 7-10 days, and remove feeders from all except new or weak hives.

Bees should be very busy; closely examine hives that are not, and trim weeds that may be hindering flight.

Swarming usually heavy---continue prevention/capture measures.

Look closely at brood pattern; replace queen if needed.

Have everything ready to install nucs/packages that you’ve ordered; feed upon installation.

Consider adding queen excluder to prevent brood in honey supers.

May: Nectar flow continues---keep adding supers; get extraction/bottling equipment ready. Consider adding an additional hive entrance (via 5/8” hole or shim) above brood area, for foragers.

Swarming continues---keep up prevention/capture measures.

Replace failing queens.

Start/continue planting warm season annuals for ongoing nectar/pollen supplementation.

Install traps for small hive beetles if needed (i.e., if more than 20 adult beetles seen in hive).

Place two or more bee “watering holes” in apiary, if not already present.

June: Main nectar flow starts to dwindle---fewer supers needed, unless sourwood nearby: if in area of sourwood, consider harvesting available honey before mid-June sourwood flow to ensure more “pure” sourwood crop.

If honey being harvested, put “wet” supers back on hives late in day to limit robbing.

Can start late-season splits during last half of June; feed splits initially, even if there is nectar available

Continue measures to control small hive beetle population.

Check varroa mite levels if not done since February. (www.honeybeehealthcoalition.org)

Keep water for bees constantly available.

Make plans for attending NCSBA Summer Meeting in mid-July.

July: May harvest some (or all) of honey; may continue late-season splits; continue beetle controls; keep water available for bees (see June activities).

Attend NCSBA annual Summer Meeting, if possible (usually mid-July)---great learning opportunity!

Get supers on for cotton honey, if hives near cotton fields.

Replace failing queens; consider replacing any queen that is two years old or older.

Continue varroa mite assessments, and treat if needed/practical.

August: If not in area of significant cotton bloom, harvest remaining desired honey by mid-month to keep bees from eating it.

Nectar dearth in most areas; may need to feed carbohydrates (1:2 sugar:water, or honey water)

Pest control is critical this month: hive beetle populations are peaking, varroa mites are nearing their peak populations, some factors increase risk of damage from wax moth larvae, and yellow jackets/ hornets tend to be plentiful.

Careful assessment of queen performance---this month is usually last chance to replace queens until the following spring.

Can still make late-season splits early in August if using mated queens.

Keep water available for bees constantly.

Be prepared for ”badly behaving bees”: because nectar flow is so scarce, bees may become more defensive and more likely to rob other hives; install robbing screens or entrance reducers (but be aware of need for ventilation), and keep hive inspections as brief as possible.

Completing honey harvest + decrease in queen’s egg-laying = extra empty supers of drawn comb; store them using method that prevents damage from wax moth larvae (freezing, keeping open to light/ventilation, using paradichlorobenzene [PDB] crystals).

September: Continue measures for pest control. Varroa control should be completed by end of month!!

May feed thin (1:1 or more diluted) sugar syrup for 2-3 weeks to stimulate queen laying---builds up winter population---but by last week of September, begin feeding thicker (2:1) syrup for winter stores, although thicker syrup may not be necessary if >3 supers of honey left on hive and/or heavy fall nectar flow.

Consider assessment for Nosema parasites.

Combine colonies later in the month if weak and/or have failing queens.

Should have brood in bottom box; if not, may need to rearrange things.

October: Assess for varroa mites via sugar roll or alcohol wash. Varroa levels need to be below threshold by mid-October, as winter bees are developing and can be permanently damaged by varroa.

Remove all queen excluders, if present.

Combine hives that are weak/have failing queens.

Feed thick syrup, if needed, for winter food stores.

Limit frequency of inspections after mid-October: bees are sealing cracks with propolis, and waste lots of time/energy if they have to keep replacing it.

Add entrance reducers near end of month to keep mice out.

Drones being expelled in most hives.

Plant (October through December) herbaceous perennials, shrubs and trees for future nectar/pollen sources.

November: Combine hives that are weak/have failing queens.

Ensure adequate ventilation near top of hive.

Feed thick syrup, candy boards or fondant if needed, for winter stores.

Provide weights (brick, rock, concrete block, etc.) for tops of hives to limit wind-induced toplessness.

Plant trees for future nectar/pollen sources (tulip poplar, maple, sourwood, etc.).

Consider closing off screened bottom board to improve heat insulation.

Bee caught up before Thanksgiving, so you can enjoy food, family, football, Black Friday, etc.!

December: Combine hives that are weak/have failing queens.

Feed thick syrup, candy board or fondant if needed (i.e., if not more than one super of honey stored up).

Consider insulating smaller hives (those with 4 or fewer frames of bees).

Consider single dose of oxalic acid late in Dec. (while hive is likely broodless) to clean up residual varroa.

Sell honey to Christmas gift shoppers.

Year-end review/assessment of apiary success/challenges.

Leave bees alone, if possible. (Take a break---you probably need it by now!)

As of APRIL 2021

EXTRACTOR EQUIPMENT LIST FOR USE BY RCBA MEMBERS

(YOU MUST BE A CURRENT MEMBER OF RCBA TO USE THE EXTRACTOR.)

Please fill out the Sign-Out sheet with date, your name, and phone number.

1. Randy Elium is managing the extractor and accessories
   1. Phone: 704-213-2661
   2. Address: 2085 Lake Rd, Salisbury, NC 28146
2. The list of extracting equipment includes the following (15 items):
   1. Maxant 9-frame Electric Extractor s/n VO851A0015
   2. Extractor wood floor bracket (keeps it from vibrating)
   3. Hot knife
   4. 2 Capping scratchers
   5. Stainless steel strainers (sieves)—2 parts. Smaller sieve has straight sides and fits inside the larger bowl-shaped sieve. The larger sieve has side arms that adjust to hold sieve over top of a bucket
   6. Collection Bucket (5 gallon bucket with honey gate)
   7. Capping bar (yellow rectangular device to fit over top of bucket and support frame as caps cut off)
   8. bracket for supporting a tipped bucket to drain into another bucket or container
   9. lubricant for the extractor axel—needs to be food-grade
   10. Refractometer
   11. Capping vault (5 parts):
       1. Bottom box with honey gate
       2. Top box with separate metal grid to catch cappings
       3. Wooden support with nail to balance frames on while uncapping
       4. lid

All small accessories are inside the gray capping vault box labelled “RCBA”

Extractor Instructions and diagram are included, in a small plastic bag.

1. Please thoroughly clean all equipment when finished extracting and return all equipment to Randy Elium.