**Rowan County Beekeepers Association**

**Meeting Minutes**

**11/08/2021**

**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 21 participants in person and 3 on Zoom. There will be no December meeting. Kevin Watson (new program chair) asked for input for programs for next year.

**Program: Bryan Fisher – Bryan’s Beekeeping Year / Beekeeping Hacks:** Bryan treats 3 times per year – started this about 8 years ago. With treatments 3 times per year, his losses went from 30-40% annually then and now only about 10% annually. Bryan treats when he pulls honey, checks mite loads in mid-late August and treats if needed, and treats in spring because he sells bees.

This time of year make sure you check and feed as needed. Flow from golden rod and asters has stopped.

Always remember, bees won’t wait. He had not checked his hives in Allegheny County in several weeks and they were starving when he went to get them last week. Flow had stopped there. If we’re in a dearth (no honey flow), need to feed them. He tries to treat his entire apiary the same until this time of year. Now have to feed and treat each hive individually. Can check food stores by lifting each side of the hive and check for weights.

Most of us have lost hives where the cluster was within a few inches of stored food. If queen has started laying, cluster won’t leave brood. If bees have viruses and are sick, you’ll lose bees, the hive will get weak and won’t be able to move to get to the food.

You removing honey supers is one of the biggest stressors your bees will experience during the year. When Bryan takes honey, he feeds and treats right away. Food (syrup) helps with the stress of honey removal. He pulls supers mid to late June (while still some honey flow) to reduce likelihood of robbing.

When working a yard of bees, he opens every hive and that keeps robbing to a minimum.

Ways to feed – (does not use entrance feeders). Bryan uses in hive feeders, but may also use a gallon jug filled with syrup and pine needles set on top of frames with empty box around it. He does not use and does not recommend entrance feeders. Generally, 4-6 gallons of syrup per hive will get that hive ready for winter. If you use in hive feeders, you can feed liquid syrup all year long. (Rick Williams in Canada feeds liquid syrup all winter long – can look him up on Facebook or YouTube.)

Bryan also uses winter patties in winter that he orders from bee supply companies. Winter patties are higher in carbs, lower in protein – doesn’t stimulate brood rearing. The winter patties are soft and food can be squished between the frames. Switch over to 1:1 syrup coming out of winter to help them brood up. Bryan also will add pollen patties in early January to help stimulate brood rearing. Be careful not to overfeed in winter. If you have fed and they haven’t eaten it all, they can move the honey up into your honey supers which will contaminate the honey they make on a honey flow. They may also not have room for brood as they begin brood rearing which can cause swarming.

Bees will make new wax (white comb) as soon as the honey flow begins. White comb can be seen from the top of the frames. When Bryan adds honey supers, he’ll put 2 honey supers on at once and then a box of foundation on top of that. If something happens and it’s an epic honey flow, they will have room to fill with honey. If not, another hive may need that super.

He uses fume boards when pulling honey. Remaining bees are blown out of honey supers with leaf blower. Supers are taken to the honey house and all are extracted. Any frames of open nectar are dehydrated. Does not filter honey when it’s extracted. After the honey has set for several days, the honey is transferred to buckets thru filters into final storage buckets. Wet comb in supers is stacked on pallets on top of queen excluder (to keep mice out) 4 high and then are criss crossed and stored outside. The bees will clean up the wet comb.

Another hack Bryan used when catching swarms is a bucket with parachute cloth closed on the bottom. Use a bedsheet spread below the swarm if shaking them off a branch to catch the swarm and encourage them to go into a box.

Bryan uses all plastic foundation. No blowouts when extracting. Plastic foundation can be power washed to clean it. Once cleaned it can be redipped in wax and reused.

**Secretary Report:** No comments were received on the October minutes. Last month’s minutes were approved.

**Treasurer Report:** Debbie Lucas provided the Treasurer’s report. Beginning balance as of 10/1/21: $2496.60. Ending balance as of 10/31/21: $2496.60. There were no expenses or additions in the month of October.

Marcel asked for volunteers to audit the books before turnover to Mark Heuser as new treasurer. The 2 auditors will be Cody Craddock and Randy Cox.

**Old Business**:

Cody had an article in the Salisbury Post about bees several weeks ago.

**New Business**:

Greg Michaels suggested that more activity on our Facebook page would help promote the organization.

Katie Madray has boxes, frames and other equipment if anyone is interested.

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.

Question about Small Hive Beetles (SHB) – Bryan and others use Swiffer unscented pads on top bars to collect the SHB. SHB and wax moths are all secondary to issues with Varroa mites. If you take care of Varroa mites, which will reduce viruses, and create strong colonies, the strong colonies will take care of SHB and wax moths. Stressed bees emit a stress pheromone that can attract the SHB and wax moths.

Yellow jackets are also an issue this time of year. Best control is to find the nest and destroy it, but they can also can be baited.

There were no additional Q&A.

Door prizes were distributed and the meeting adjourned at 8:30.

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.