**Rowan County Beekeepers Association**

**Meeting Minutes**

**3/14/2022**

**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. Marcel introduced officers for anyone new. There were 34 participants in person and 2 on Zoom.

**Program: YouTube Video:**  [Swarm Trap Types - Pros & Cons, What Bees Want - Swarm Trapping #1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tK47OiXhHg) (internet link to presentation by Duck River Honey)

Bee viewpoint and beekeeper viewpoint – symbiotic relationship.

Bee viewpoint - Bee hive is known as a superorganism. The hive’s 1st priority is the survival of the hive; 2nd priority is reproduction of the hive. The swarm is the means of reproduction of the hive - 30-70 % of the bees leave with the old queen. If you give them a bait hive/swarm trap, they will be more likely to move in and you have a new colony of free bees. The presenter recommends “Honeybee Democracy” by Dr. Thomas Seeley which describes research by Dr. Thomas Seeley on what is common between what colony needs for hive dimensions. Also “Bait Hives for Honeybees” by Dr. Thomas Seeley which describes how to construct bait hives. 1. Height ~15 feet above the ground. 2. Needs to be shaded, but highly visible. 3. Total entrance area about 1 ½ - 2 inches, but shape is not important. 4. Entrance should be facing south but other directions are acceptable. 5. Volume ~40 liters. Shape is not important, but should be dry and snug, especially at the top. 6. Odor of beeswax is attractive. Presenter also thinks that empty space within the bait hive is important to allow all of the swarm to enter as the hive begins to organize.

Beekeepers viewpoint – Minimizing time, money and aggravations and maximizing likelihood of catching swarms. Two options for bait hives include a wood fiber pot (commercially available) or a 5 gallon bucket trap (does not recommend because of the aggravation of cutout and removal). He uses bait hives that contain frames and foundation so no cutouts. Likes to have empty space in the swarm trap so swarm can enter quickly and then move up and get organized and start building comb. He has void on bottom of hive and frames and foundation all across the top.

Will not put up a swarm trap unless he can back up his truck to the tree to stand in and reach the trap. No longer uses ladders due to safety issues and aggravation of carrying trap up and down the ladder.

He is currently using a medium box with migratory lid with spacer and bottom board. He attaches the folding platform on tree first. A chain and quicklink enable leveling. Uses frames with old brood comb in the bait hive.

Bees don’t fly if it’s cold and raining. If the hive is ready to swarm the swarm will likely be cast after several days of cold and rain.

Swarms won’t move into a swarm trap that is already occupied so you need to empty the trap as soon as a swarm moves in to make the trap available for additional swarms.

(YouTube presentation is linked at the top if you want to view the video.)

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

**Treasurer Report:** Mark Heuser provided the Treasurer’s report. Beginning balance as of 2/1/22: $2489.60. Ending balance as of 2/18/22: $3124.60. Several people paid for local dues and a number of people also paid for state.

**Old Business**:

None

**New Business**:

Marcel asked for volunteers to provide refreshments for the April meeting – Holly Hutchins and Beth Stebe volunteered.

The club has been asked to provide an information booth at the Hurley Park Spring Celebration, April 10, 2-4 pm. No one was available and interested. Lee will let Sarina Dellinger know there was no one able to participate.

Cody Craddock was asked to add Nathan Hough to the swarm capture list on the webpage. We currently don’t have anyone who is able and willing to do structural cutouts. Marcel and Riley have done them in the past and felt they needed to charge $2000. Structural swarm cutouts have very low survival rates, probably due to damage incurred while the bees are vacuumed from the structure. Marcel charges $25.00 for swarm collection.

The NCSBA Spring meeting was held at New Bern, NC Convention Center, March 3-5. Mark Heuser provided a summary report on the meeting. The next meeting will be in July in Hickory, NC.

Marcel and Randy Elium attended the state Farm Bureau meeting. One item that came out of the meeting was that Clemson University will accept samples to determine causes of hive death – cost is $50.00. They also discussed the status of the NC State Bee Lab.

Denny Booe said that if you can’t reach a swarm, put an old brood comb near them and they will move right on it, which can then be shaken into your box.

Nathan Hough warned that if you do a structural cutout, there could be potential liability for any damage to a home or structure. Suggested that we develop a basic swarm extraction contract. Marcel suggested that if you want a swarm contract you can Google a swarm extraction contract to protect yourself.

Several people have put supers on already.

Someone said that this month’s Bee Culture magazine had several very good research articles.

Mike Williams mentioned our mentor program. If you are new or would like some help with information, let Mike or Lee Williams know and we will connect you with someone who is willing to be a mentor in your area of the county.

There were no additional Q&A.

Door prizes were handed out and the meeting was 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.