



The Monthly Newsletter of the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association December 2017

President's Buzz

by Ed Moyers

Enhancing Transparency

Last month's meeting was a little different. In past years, when we've held the annual Honey Tasting Contest, it included a quick business meeting to elect new officers and maybe a treasurer's report. Over the past few months, a number of folks, spanning new to long term members, asked me to have a more informative meeting that would allow for input from members. I was glad to do so.

I thought the meeting was pretty low key, and wouldn't take more than fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. It started with acknowledgment and thanks for our current officers, followed by election of the 2018 officers and a brief treasurer's report. There was a recommendation to make a contribution to the NC State Apiculture Science Fund and then a call for volunteers to help with our association's functions. All went smooth until we got to the discussion about the donation to the NC State Apiculture Science Fund . . . Then things got interesting.

There was a lot of discussion about whether we should give at all, the amount, and whether it should be one time or recurring. But the most consistent thread through that conversation was frustration on the part of our members with the lack of quality information about the MCBA's finances that are a necessary part of making a decision like this. It's clear to me that our members want to understand not only our checking account balance, but also our revenue and expenditures. And they don't just want to know the totals, they want to better understand where our revenues come from and how we spend our money.

Our new treasurer, Jeff Dieker, is committed to making this happen, and will be working with John Miles, who has extensive banking industry experience, to put together a good budget and means to track our future revenues and expenditures against that budget. Having served on leadership teams for churches and other volunteer organizations in the past, I believe having a budget is very important. From a financial perspective, a budget reflects the soul of an organization, and I think a well thought out budget will do a better job of capturing the spirit of MeckBees, and ensure our revenues and expenditures implement that spirit.

A sidebar discussion resulting from the feedback on MCBA's finances, **and** how those are shared with the membership, is a desire to

December's Meeting

**December 21
7 PM**

Mouzon United Methodist
Church
3100 Selwyn Avenue
Charlotte, NC

This is our annual Christmas
Potluck Dinner!

Please bring your favorite dish!

If you have decorations you'd
like to bring, please email
Andrew Thiessen at
ahi30@hotmail.com

Come and enjoy a cheery meal
with other beekeepers! Chat
with old friends! Make new
ones!



have periodic “short” business meetings throughout the year. I’ll be meeting with our new Vice President, David Segrest, to figure out how to make that happen. I envision something that occurs on a roughly quarterly basis. But what it looks like, and how it is integrated with our speaker program, are details David and I will need to work out.

New Officers

In case you weren’t at the meeting, our slate of officers for 2018 is:

- President – Ed Moyers (yes . . . you’re stuck with me for another year)
- Vice President – David Segrest
- Membership Secretary – Dietlinde Zipkin
- Treasurer – Jeff Dieker
- Chaplain – Tommy Helms

All of these folks have been regular volunteers with MeckBees since joining, so they are likely familiar to each of you. I’ll include a bio for each in next month’s newsletter.

In Search of Eager Volunteers . . .

During the November business meeting, I talked about the various volunteers we need to accomplish our mission. Here are some of the positions that are available. Please consider whether you would be willing to contribute some of your time to help with one of these tasks. If you’re interested, or would like more information, please contact me at meckbeespres@gmail.com.

- Newsletter paper copy mailer (we have a handful of members who are not digitally connected to us, and still need paper copies of the newsletter mailed to them each month)
- Social committee chair and members (to plan and organize one or two social functions for MeckBees each year)
- Community Outreach (to find club members willing to speak or present at schools, community groups, neighborhood associations or corporations who request speakers)
- MCBA Community Speaker Equipment Manager (store and distribute to club volunteers who are speaking or presenting to the community)
- AV Equipment Coordinator (manage and maintain AV equipment used by MCBA; this would primarily be setting up and packing up AV equipment at each meeting and other special functions)
- Nametag manager (ensure nametags are available at each month’s meeting)

I thank all of you for your contributions to MeckBees, helping us do a better job of improving our skills as beekeepers and providing a place the general community can go to learn more about bees and beekeeping.

Member Renewal Changes

In the past, we have allowed folks renewing their MCBA memberships to also renew their NCSBA memberships through us. From a standpoint of getting your information to the state organization, and getting you renewed with the state in a timely fashion (particularly important if you wish to qualify for the member’s discount for the Spring conference), this is a cumbersome and inefficient process. So starting with the 2018 member renewal, you will have to renew with the state separately.

At the end of the MCBA renewal process on our website, we will include a link to take you directly to the state website so you can immediately renew with them, too. We hope that by doing this, we will minimize the inconvenience of registering twice (local and state), while greatly speeding up the process for you to complete your renewal with the state.

I hope to see all of you at our annual Christmas potluck dinner this month.

Thanks!

Ed



In the Beeyard

by David Segrest

This month is the time to begin implementation of the decisions that were made last month. The actions taken now will determine the results to be achieved next spring. Bees are either getting ready for winter or getting ready for a funeral. A weak or queen-less hive can be joined with a strong hive. Two weak hives do not make a strong hive.

Before combining hives they should be given a good inspection and testing for mites. The weather is right for heat sensitive treatments such as formic acid. If both hives to be combined need treatment it may be better to combine first. If this winter is like last, there will be some interesting challenges. There won't be much around for them to eat but if the weather is nice they will be out foraging and burning up a lot of fuel.

Giving the light syrup will simulate a nectar flow. That will cause them to keep brooding and raising more hungry mouths to feed. This is good if you want a head start on spring nectar flows. It means the bees will need a lot of food. For all of your colonies you should have a full brood box of honey. If not feed. Light syrup for brood, heavy syrup for storing food. When the temperature gets too cool for syrup (below 50 F degrees ambient temperature), a sugar brick is good insurance. If the bees have built up a lot of brood, a pollen patty is a good idea as well. These items can be laid on top of the frames in an imrie shim.

The sugar brick serves a dual purpose. It absorbs the moisture that the bees produce, keeping it from condensing and giving the bees a cold shower. The moisture softens the sugar so the bees can lick it. Some colonies will eat the sugar bricks, others will just leave them there. No problem. If pollen subs are used they should be broken into small pieces and fed a little at a time. SHBs love them so they should be closely watched. If the bees eat them give them more. If they ignore them, they should be removed.

A regular langstroth hive is usually good enough for winter around here, but a piece of insulation board under the cover adds a little heat retention and helps keep the vapor from the hive condensing on the cover and dripping on the bees. Most people who have screened bottom boards put a Corex sheet under the bottom or on the bottom inside the hive.

This is a good time to take an inventory of equipment and make sure everything that will be needed next season is available and in good condition. For those who make their own equipment, hanging out in the shop on a nasty day can give a little beekeeping "fix" to make it through the winter beekeeping drought.



Fatsia Japonica

Usually considered a tropical plant, these stunning bushes do quite well in the Charlotte climate. More noted for their gigantic, glossy, green leaves, they do flower in the autumn.

With Charlotte's late summer, late autumn, and late winter this year, these Fatsia Japonicas are currently blooming (yes! In December!) and have been proving themselves to be a wonderful food source for the bees.



Christmas Bees

by Rachel Woodhouse

What exactly are the bees up to this December? Well, if yours are anything like mine, they spend the very unseasonably warm days foraging for food and the chilly nights gathered around their tiny bee fireplace, all bundled up in cozy sweaters, sipping hot chocolate and decorating for the holidays. Hive C was very impatient and had their Christmas tree all set up and fully flocked the week before Thanksgiving. It almost feels like a crime, but what can you do?



When you go to beekeeping school, they don't really tell you about all the side-jobs during December. My queen in hive A decided this year's party was going to have an "Ugly Christmas Sweater" theme. I was in charge of buying them sweaters, and since they're impossible to find anywhere, even on Amazon, I ended up spending the entirety of November knitting itty-bitty sweaters using toothpicks as knitting needles, spider silk for the yarn, and the teensiest of paintbrushes to paint them with tacky Christmas decor. I mean, empathize with me for just a minute. That's over 20,000 tiny bee sweaters. I had to make sure each one had four sleeves, wing holes, and a unique Christmas scene painted on them... I didn't shower all month. I grew a beard so long I was tripping on it when I walked. I'm a woman. Do I do this out of the goodness of my heart, or do I do it for the honey? I haven't decided.

I know I sound like I'm complaining--I'm not, I promise. I love their little festivities and they've worked so hard all summer, I know they deserve it. I'll do everything up my sleeve to make sure they have a Merry Christmas... But I can't wait to get back to the more routine maintenance in the spring.



Odds & Ends

by Andrew Thiessen

Wax Moth Prevention...Gone Wrong

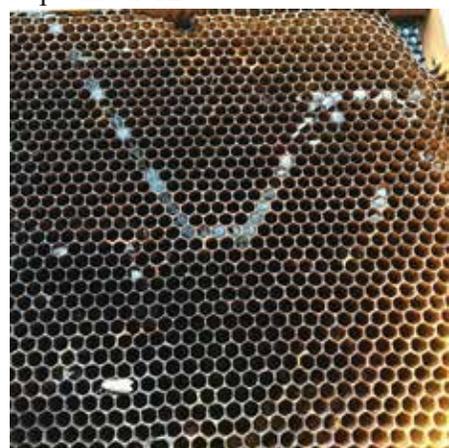
Lately, I've heard & read a lot about using *Bacillus thuringiensis* subspecies *israelensis* (commonly called BTi) for preventing wax moth damage to stored honey comb. Jessica Louque mentioned it in a recent issue of *Bee Culture* and at our July MeckBees monthly meeting. This BTi—a naturally occurring bacterium—is the active ingredient in several mosquito control products. It is said to be highly effective against wax moth larvae and harmless to honey bees...what could be better!



I recently had a hive succumb to robbing, leaving behind 20 frames of brood comb, which I stored in open daylight on my back deck at Lake Lure. Within a week I noticed wax moth damage. Wanting to both curb this damage and run an experiment with BTi, I sprayed these twenty brood frames with tea made from Mosquito Bits brand mosquito control product (pictured).

On Sunday, September 10 I had call that a swarm issued from one of my hives. I ran over to the bee yard with a nuc loaded with a couple frames of that BTi-treated brood comb and a couple frames of new foundation. I scooped the swarm into the nuc, and then worked several hives as usual. After about an hour of bee work, I decided to check on that swarm.

Those dang bees were right back up in the tree. When I opened the nuc to try to hive them again, I saw hundreds of dead and dying bees on the floor of the nuc. What the? (Note: Typically, I use sugar water spray to drench a swarm before scooping them into a hive. But this time I forgot the spray bottle at my house. So, the only foreign substance was the BTi.) Hmm, that's never happened to me before. The second time around, I put them into a different nuc with only new frames of foundation. They stayed. Another hour after hiving them in the second nuc showed no dead or dying bees inside. My bee landlord tells me they're coming and going from the nuc as I write this on the afternoon of Tuesday, September 12.



Now, I cannot say for sure that the BTi killed those bees. But I can say for sure that the hive without BTi did not kill any bees from that same swarm, and they're still fine two days later. I'll let you draw your own conclusions. I'd like to hear if anyone else has experience—good or bad—with using BTi on honey comb. Maybe I just did it wrong???

OTS Principals & “Soft Bond” Update

Many of you attended our day with Mel Disselkoen this past April. There we learned his system is a complex bee management program, which includes replacing queens as needed after the summer Solstice. Mel says unlike older queens that typically slow down after the Solstice, these queens reared after June 21 will

continue to build up well into the fall. Disselkoen says this produces very strong hives, which winter better than weaker colonies.

I did requeen 11 of my hives that had Varroa mite counts above 4 mites per 300 bee sample as Mel suggested in July. I did this in accordance with Dr. John Kefuss's “Soft Bond” method of requeening high-mite-count hives with daughter queens produced from low or zero mite count hives. Although Disselkoen's OTS (On The Spot) “notching” method



works great, grafting yields more quantity & portability of queens when you need to re-queen several hives using daughters from a single mother queen. So, I typically graft when I need a bunch of queens.

(Of my then 34 treatment-free hives, only 11 had varroa counts above 4 mites per 300 bee sample. Six had zero mites and most had 1-2 mites. Using the Soft Bond method year-over-year, you can effectively minimize your mite counts without chemicals of any kind.)

As you can see in the pictures, these new queens are off and running! Their hives are booming with bees, compared to those which were not requeened. Thus far, I can confirm Mel Disselkoen's hypothesis is correct. I'll keep you posted as we progress through winter and into spring of 2018.

Suicide Hives



Do you ever have hives that swarm late in the season? And not just one swarm, but many...to the point that there are very few bees left in the parent hive? I've had two of these "Suicide Hives" this fall. Clearly, there is no hope of a late-August or early-September swarm surviving winter—even in the mountains where meadow flowers were still blooming like crazy. But try telling these bees to "get it together" and see how that goes for you! These were good looking hives that were—to my observations—not over-crowded. But what do I know?! They had low mite counts (1 & 3 per 300 bee sample), and plenty of honey stored. They both had May, 2017 queens.

But I'll be darned if they haven't swarmed themselves to oblivion over the autumn weeks! I've managed to retrieve five of these swarms. Two of them have proven queenless after thorough checking. I marked the three new swarm queens and used them to requeen other hives, so all is not lost.

But what gives, man! Why do seemingly good hives commit suicide?



Honeybee Health Coalition

Honeybee Health Coalition is a reputable, science-based organization with a laser focus on improving honey bee health through disease mitigation, nutrition and pesticide protection.

One of their first initiatives was to produce a series of booklets, videos and powerpoint presentations on Varroa biology and control strategies. In addition, recently they have gathered into one place a very helpful set of resources for beekeepers covering bee biology, hive inspections, diseases and pests, pesticides and more.

Below is a link to their summary page which lists several initiatives. Two of particular interest are:

- Tools for Varroa Management
- Hive Management Resources

As the weather turns colder this would be a great place to start your winter reading!

<https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/tools-and-resources/#oec>

2018 MCBA OFFICERS

President: Ed Moyers (meckbeespres@gmail.com)

Vice President: David Segrest (meckbeevp@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Jeff Dieker (meckbeetreas@gmail.com)

Membership Secretary: Dietlinde Zipkin
(meckbeesec@gmail.com)

Chaplain: Tommy Helms

Webmaster: Kevin Freeman (meckbees@gmail.com)

Contact Us

Email us with questions at
meckbeespres@gmail.com

Picture and Article Submissions
are always needed and are
greatly appreciated.

Email submissions to:

Rachel.E.G.Woodhouse
@gmail.com



Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association

201 8 Dues Form (January 1 thru December 31)

Note: State registration is now handled separately through the state website
Please see link below

(Please print clearly)

Today's Date _____

MCBA Annual Dues: \$5

I am:

New

Renewing

N/A

*First Name: _____ *Last name: _____

*Address: _____

*City: _____ *State: _____ *Zip code: _____

Phone: _____ *Email: _____

County of residence: _____

How long have you kept bees? _____ (yrs) Number of hives _____

How would you like to be involved with the Club? _____

*This information (name, mailing address, email address) will be provided to all members of the Mecklenburg Beekeepers (and to members ONLY - no one else will receive this information from us). If you DO NOT want this information shared, please opt out by initialing here. _____

Please make check payable to MCBA and mail completed form to:

Dietlinde Zipkin
MCBA Secretary
201 Foxlair Ct.
Matthews , NC 28105

For state membership registration or renewal , you'll find a link on the NCSBA home page:

<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/>

Benefits of state membership include :

- Subscription to the quarterly Bee Buzz newsletter
- Notices of bee-related education opportunities
- Member discounts to the state conferences and other education opportunities
- Discounts on magazines such as the American Bee Journal
- Copy of the Yellow Book statewide membership directory
- Annual beekeeping calendar

