

## HIGHLANDS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

### MINUTES of meeting held Monday, March 2, 2020

The meeting was convened in Room 103/104 by President Phil Ernst at 6:30 pm. About 50 persons were in attendance. Officers present were introduced. New participants were welcomed. Raffle tickets were given out for a chance to win one of David Miller's "Tater-made" hive bodies. The winner of that raffle was Scott Berry.

Announcements: Lists of mentors and club business owners were made available, as well as a flyer for the Honey Convention in Knoxville on March 20-21.

- Jeremy Blackwell announced that he would be attending a workshop soon in Delaplane, Virginia, on "Preparing, Exhibiting, & Judging Bee Produce for the Honey Show".
- Preston Holmes announced that Tim Widener has an appointment soon at the UNC Chapel Hill Medical Center, and that he is slowly improving.
- Varroa workshop here on Sat., May 9.

Our speaker, Phil Blevins, Washington County Extension Agent, presented a program on "Spring Management of the Apiary".

1. **Inspect** your equipment.
2. **Evaluate** your bees, keeping in mind that you are aiming to maximize your colony size by May to June. That means 45,000-50,000 adults (15-20 frames or 7-10 pounds) and 40,000-45,000 brood bees (8-12 frames).
  - Evaluate the queen according to age and performance. She should lay in a solid pattern. If the colony is queenless, there will be multiple eggs in each cell or all drones.
3. **Consider bee nutrition.** Feed a protein supplement NOW, which should contain 5% bee-collected pollen. As the queen begins laying in January, the colony needs warmth and food, including pollen. A colony needs 3-5 combs of pollen to survive the winter.
  - Yellow poplar and locust bloom in May. Find our bee pollen region at <https://honeybeenet.gsfc.nasa.gov/Honeybees/Forage.htm>.
  - Add a super to the colony. The empty space stimulates nectar-gathering. Place super when top box is 2/3 full.
4. **Manage swarming:** good for the bees, bad for the beekeeper.  
Reasons for swarming:
  - overcrowding,
  - diluted queen pheromones (old queen),
  - availability of nectar and pollen,
  - good weather after bad weather,
  - poor ventilation
  - age imbalance in worker bees,
  - lengthening daylight.
  - a. Look for queen cells (once capped, there is no turning back). Lift the brood box to look under the frames. Supersede cells look different than swarm cells. It is possible to have two swarms leave if two queens survive.

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- b. The “buzz” is higher pitched before a swarm.
- c. Swarms look for space about 10 liters in size. The more energetic the waggle dance, the better the nest site.
- d. After they swarm, it takes about 32 days for the new work force to emerge. \*Look for eggs 12 days after they swarm to be sure queen is laying!

### 5. **Swarm prevention** – what works and doesn't work

- Cut out queen cells every 8-10 days (doesn't work).
- Cage the queen (doesn't work).
- Clip the queen's wings (doesn't work).

What works:

- a. Super in 2' and 3's for space during a nectar flow. A strong colony can fill a super in 2-3 days.
- b. Reverse boxes, but not too early or colony could freeze.
- c. Split or 4:5 split or Demaree split.
- d. Set out swarm traps 12-15' away with old comb.

### 6. **Prevent pests and manage Varroa.**

- Don't add supers if there is no nectar flow (too much area for bees to guard from pests).
- 1. Sample early for varroa. Even 2-3% can weaken a colony. (Honeybee Health Coalition)
- 2. Varroa feed on fat body of bee, not hemolymph. (Dr. Samuel Ramsey, Univ.of Md.)
- 3. There is a correlation between winter losses and varroa mite levels.

Q How long might it take to go from 1% varroa infestation to 3%?

A Possibly one month.

Q Is Fumagillin B available yet to treat for nosema?

A (Tater) At a high cost.

A (Anthony) Commercial beekeepers treat 6 times a year.

A (Phil B) Utilize IPM (Integrated Pest Management) and basically everything that works.

The meeting was adjourned about 7:30 pm and informal small discussion groups adjourned by 8:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Ernst, Secretary