

Orange County Beekeepers Association

Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2022

Tim Struttman, OCBA President, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for the annual “Ask the Experts” session for this July meeting.

“Ask the Experts” Panel:

Don Hopkins (NC Apiary Inspector), Randall Austin (OCBA Master Beekeeper), and Walter Starks (OCBA Journeyman Beekeeper) served as panel experts and generously fielded questions and led the interactive discussion of a wide range of topics.

A selection of questions and topics is provided below:

1. Hot hives: Recently, there have been an increased number of posts on the OCBA listserv mentioning aggressive bee behavior.
 - Don has heard of similar events, but in each case the report was made after the hive had already been destroyed. Ideally, inspectors would like to be notified of hot colonies before the hive is destroyed so they can visit, take some measurements, assess the apiary location for potential triggers, and run some behavioral tests to rule out Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) genetics. He noted that this time of year (going into the dearth), there are always more reports of aggressive colonies, which does not necessarily automatically mean AHB.
2. Does increased “pinging” (guard bees bumping up against but not stinging) signal an upcoming swarm? This behavior was noted to occur more frequently in the spring.
 - Don has not heard of that behavior being associated with impending swarming, but speculated that they may be more inquisitive in general because they’re scouting.
3. Adjusting mite treatments for application on horizontal hives (eg, long langs): The panel hypothesized about differences in air flow patterns and how hive configuration might impact treatment dosing. The consensus was that you would still want to apply the treatment closest to the brood cluster.
4. Is there value for beekeepers with apiaries in close proximity to coordinate timing of mite treatments?
 - The panel mentioned that Bee Informed Partnership has 2 “Mite-a-Thons” per year (~May and ~Aug), where beekeepers across North America are encouraged to report mite counts in an effort to collect Varroa mite infestation data. Don suggested this would be a good club activity (and also to report the follow-up mite counts post-treatment to assess efficacy).
5. Robbing: This time of year, weak hives are prone to robbing, what can a beekeeper do to minimize this?

- Use of robbing screens, if feeding colonies, try to do so later in the day when other hive's foragers are not out and about, minimize beekeeper error such as spilling syrup, having hives with a lot of nectar stores open for extended periods during inspections.
6. Update on Tropilaelaps mites and Asian Giant Hornets:
- Don: The NC inspectors do a yearly survey of hives and have not yet observed Tropilaelaps mites. Further, all the reports of presumed Asian Giant Hornets that inspectors have been called about have turned out to be European Hornets or Cicada Killers.

Club Business:

Announcements:

Tim provided an update on past announcements:

- The Rehoming Honey Bees and Equipment and Temporary Assistance programs are still ongoing (<https://theocba.org/rehoming-honey-bees-and-equipment/> and <https://theocba.org/temporary-hive-care/>)
- Christmas Parade (Dec 4, 2022): Our volunteer coordinator for this project is Janet Staats. Janet announced she will send out another request email to the listserv. Briefly, what is needed:
 - Space to build/set-up the float (probably the most important need! Ideally withing ~2 miles of the parade route),
 - Volunteers (need 5-6 more people, especially those with basic carpentry and creative skills)
 - Equipment (trailer, generator, lights, amplifier for music, lighting, and Christmas lights and other decorations to use for the float). Please let us know.
- Tim provided a reminder about the upcoming NCSBA State meeting
- Certified Beekeeper Practical Exam: Walter Starks mentioned that a few people have contacted him about doing their certified beekeeper practical exam. He's thinking about providing his apiary as a venue for members to take this hands-on exam in the fall if there is enough interest. If interested, please email Walter and he can set something up. Tim suggested it would be great to send this out to the listserv. Just a reminder, this exam is open to people who have passed the written test (within 4 years) and have been keeping bees for at least one year (successfully overwintered a hive).

Door Prizes

1. 2 bee shopping bags: (in person winner: Dawn Rogers)
2. DVD (on beekeeping, starting your first hive): (online winner) Erika Wittchen
3. DVD (top hive beekeeping): (in person winner: Nancy)
4. OCBA ball cap : (online winner) Debbie Dupree

Next Month's Speaker

August 11th, 2022: Megan Damico a PhD candidate at UNC-Greensboro, will be speaking to us (in person!) about her research on the honey bee gut microbiome.

Erika Wittchen
OCBA Secretary