

Minutes

The Toe Cane Beekeepers Association (TCBA) met at 6:30 pm on March 28, 2017 at the United Community Bank (UCB) meeting room in Burnsville, NC. It was the second meeting of 2017 and was well attended with approximately 30 attendees.

We had a special guest, the Reverend Allen Blanton (Brother Allen), one of the directors of the mountain region for NCSBA, in attendance as well.

Association Business

Rick Harty opened the meeting by welcoming the members and guests. He then asked attendees to go around the room and introduce themselves and tell a little about their beekeeping experience and how their hives survived the winter.

Michelle Mejia announced that TCBA would be hosting Michael Bush, renown beekeeper and author of *The Practical Beekeeper: Beekeeping Naturally*. The event will be held at the Burnsville Town Center on September 30, 2017 from 1 pm-3 pm.

Michelle also passed around a survey and asked attendees to provide ideas for future speakers, topics and things they like/dislike most about the TCBA meetings. She also asked attendees to indicate committees or functions they would be willing to help on.

Treasury Report

Alice presented the treasurers report. We currently have \$3,805.58 in our account.

Speaker

Rick introduced the speaker for the meeting, Lewis Cauble. Lewis is the Bee Inspector for WNC. His topic was on spring build-up and hive management. Lewis started off his talk by saying that spring build-up begins in the fall with proper winter preparations. He stressed the importance of making sure hives were large enough and strong enough to survive inclement weather and lack of foraging. Preparations, included checking for adequate food storage, pest management (mites, in particular) and weatherizing (e.g. tilting hives and providing airflow to control moisture). Lewis indicated that mite management (at a minimum monitoring) was key to coming through winter with good survival rates. Of all the possible problems that can arise, he noted that heavy mite loaded were the biggest factor to hive losses. This was due mainly to the viruses that mites transferred to larva in the cells and nurse bees. He recommended attendees read *Tools for Varroa Management* (http://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/HBHC-Guide_Varroa-Mgmt_5thEd_Jan-10-2017.pdf) as a guide for how to assess and manage mite loads.

Lewis also indicated that “hive absconding” and “colony collapse” the situations where a healthy hive of bees appears to have abandoned the hive box, may in fact be a slow death due to heavy mite infestation. He recommended attendees read a blog post, “Why Did My Bees Die?” on the Bee Informed Partnership (BIP) website written by Meghan Milbrath, coordinator of the Michigan Pollinator Initiative at Michigan State University

(<https://beeinformed.org/2016/03/08/why-did-my-honey-bees-die/>). In the post, Meghan outlines 7 symptoms of a hive that collapses during winter. All are probably symptoms of heavy mite infestation.

Lewis recommended monitoring mite loads with a “sugar shake”. Videos can be found on at www.youtube.com and search for “sugar shake varroa mites”.

Lewis recommended sampling for mites about once a month during the active season. If the mite count is more than 3 per 100 bees (1/2 cup=300) then treatment is necessary. Joe Capps recommends Hop-Guard (made from hops) for spring treatments. Lewis also mentioned formic acid (MiteAway Strips) and thymol (Apiguard) as natural agents. Lewis talked about other methods of integrated pest management such as using screen bottom boards, killing drone brood, and breaking the brood cycle with splits. He indicated splits were also a good way to increase the number of hives and make extra money from your bees.

Door Prize

At the end of the evening Laura drew names for door prizes. The door prizes included a box of shallow super foundation, hive brush, book, TCBA hat, TCBA t-shirt, a bottle of Poplar Farmstay Honey (thanks Michelle!) and a bottle of mead (thanks Deborah!). The winners were: Dennis Hughes, Troy Hardle, Homer Ayers, Dan Glenn, Dan McKinney, Alice Harty, and Lewis Cauble.

New members

No new members joined at this meeting.

Next Meeting

The meeting ended at 8:30 pm. The next TCBA meeting will be held on April 25, 2017 at 6:30 pm at the UCB community room in Burnsville, NC. The speaker will be Michelle Mejia, VP of TCBA. She will be talking about “Free Bees – Catching Swarms”.