

FCBA NEWS

Franklin County Beekeepers Association

franklincountybeekeeperspa@gmail.com <http://fcbapa.com> FB: Franklin County (PA) Beekeepers Assn.
April 2020 Volume 3 - Issue 4

Club Upcoming Events

Spring Meeting

May 28, 2020 - 6:30 - 9:00, Ag Heritage Bldg., 185 Franklin Farm Ln., Chambersburg, Room 7-8.

Speaker: Jim Bruckart, discussing the requirements to honey entries in fair contest and more.

We will be voting on the bylaw revision.

Please check the fcbapa.com calendar for additional events

FCBA Officers

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Spring events you may want to know about:

Nuc Pick-up (if you ordered)

May 2, 2020 (may change, dependent on weather)

LOCATION: Myron Showalter's, 178 Milnor Rd., Greencastle, Pa 17225



Newbee Checkup

May 14, 2020 - Townsend's Apiary, 771 Mt. Cydonia Rd., Fayetteville, PA 17222

We have sugar again.

We are going to discuss having a scheduled distribution day, but feel free to contact Steve Hill to schedule a time to pick up (email, text or voice, see contact info to the left of this page). I don't know about everyone's calendar, but Steve said his has been pretty much wiped clean for a while. Knouse told Steve that our bee sugar program could be "drying up". They are looking at a way to reclaim the contaminated sugar so depending on how that goes, we may not be getting sugar in the future. Steve, of course, expressed appreciation for what they have done to help the association to date.

This sugar program has been a huge benefit to FCBA and it saves them from landfilling it.

How to Keep Bees During COVID-19

Credit: PennState Extension

It is springtime in the United States and beekeepers are preparing for the honey bee season. Overwintered colonies will be checked, fed, and split, and new colonies will be established by installing packages and nucs. If your county or state is on lockdown and you are asked to stay home, can you legally and ethically take care of your colonies? The answer, as with most questions in beekeeping, is “it depends”.

Agriculture is a life-sustaining business because it is the basis of food production. Beekeepers are producers of animals and provide support activities for crop and animal production through pollination services provided by bees. Pollination is necessary for sustaining the food supply. Because of this, beekeeping businesses are considered essential. Therefore, if your state allows all essential businesses to continue functioning, you may continue with the regular activities of your beekeeping operations. However, several precautions must be taken to comply with the social distancing recommendation that will help to slow the spread of COVID-19. If you are a beekeeper who will be managing colonies during this time, please do so responsibly to avoid compromising your health and the health of others. Here are a few recommendations:

-) Limit the number of visits to the colonies while also caring for them properly. For example, add supers in a manner that ensures that they have space for several weeks of nectar collection which can help prevent swarming.
-) Practice social distancing by managing colonies alone or with as few people as possible. Consider driving separate cars to the bee yards. It is recommended that people stay at least 6 ft away from each other and your veil, bee suit, and leather gloves are not barriers to the virus. Nitrile or latex gloves can be worn and disposed of to keep the virus off of your hands.
-) If you are feeling sick (even mildly) or if you have been around someone who is sick, please stay home for at least 14 days and ask a trusted friend to manage the colonies in your absence.
-) Beekeeping clubs and groups must not meet in person for any reason. We should all be enjoying the use of modern technologies that allow us to meet virtually. Beekeeping classes and meetings can be held via Zoom or Skype, for example.
-) Take this opportunity to create online resources for your club. Beekeepers can wear GoPro cameras while assessing colonies to create videos for upload onto YouTube or your club’s web site. Consider writing a blog or creating a vlog about what is happening in your apiary. Create and share a list of beekeeping books and articles. There is a lot that can be shared.
-) If you are distributing or picking up packages or nucs, practice social distancing. For example, set up drive-through pick-up so customers don’t mingle or get out of their cars. Consider using Sign-up Genius to designate pick-up times to ensure that customers arrive at staggered times instead of all at once. If you pick up your bees at the same time as many others, do what you can to stay six feet away from everyone else.
-) If you participate in a farmer’s market and it is still open, review recommendations. They include social distancing, surface sanitation, and other helpful suggestions for your continued safety.
-) Health care workers are wearing N95 face masks to protect themselves from infection. The P100 respirator that you wear for oxalic acid vaporization is also

effective! However, you might scare away everyone you meet.

We're all in this together, while staying separate physically. Please continue to be informed about how the situation changes—since it is constantly changing—and follow the guidelines and recommendations from local, state and federal governments. Be safe, stay well and allow your bees to bring you joy.

April in the bee yard

April is the cruelest month in the beekeeping calendar, especially for bees and beekeepers. Temperatures are still volatile, there's nothing really blooming yet for foraging, it's frequently rainy and/or windy – all of these factors create a huge challenge for bees and beekeepers. This is perhaps and even bigger challenge than surviving the winter.

In April, mentally, it's easy to have the mindset that the bees got through the winter. You think you can breathe a sigh of relief and relax, but it's actually too soon to stop being vigilant. If anything, April requires more vigilance. In the winter, once the hive is prepped, there's nothing else you, as the beekeeper, can do. In April, the fluctuating temperatures and lack of food mean even the most non-invasive beekeeper will need to monitor the hive and supply food.

Feeding

Feeding in the spring is a bit simpler than feeding in the winter. The bees are moving around and more able to control the inner environment of the hive. A 1:1 ration of sugar to water (boiled and stirred until the sugar dissolves) is recommended for spring feeding until there are enough naturally growing forage plants. The 1:1 ratio also helps stimulate hive growth, which

strengthens the hive to protect against absconding or robbing.

You may need to feed through May. The best way to know when it's safe to stop feeding is to observe the plants. What's in bloom? How much of what's growing provides bee food? Observing and thinking along these lines will help you ensure your bees are fed when needed, but don't become dependent upon syrup.

Monitoring

Weekly hive checks are a good idea all season long, but particularly in the spring. Extra care needs to be taken in these first weeks, however. Since the weather is so volatile, it's important to be sure you're not opening the hive on a cold/rainy day.

If it's going to reach 50°F or higher without rain, it might be a good day to plan to check the hive. Also, if you're using an inner-hive feeder, plan to refill it at the same time as your hive inspection to avoid opening it multiple times.

Summary

April is a time to celebrate the end of winter, but it's also a time to use extra care and caution in the bee yard. Getting overly excited and inattentive can lead to the loss of your precious bees just when you thought you'd successfully gotten them through the winter. Hive check and appropriate feeding are keys to getting bees through April, the cruelest month for bees and beekeepers.

Message from club President

Where to begin this month?

I'm sure we are all very aware of the situation with COVID-19. Let's just say that it has caused quite a mess with our Beginner Beekeeper Classes, but we are working through that the best way we can.

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Most of us feel we did not deliver as good of course as we would have liked, if for no other reason as instructors, (humans in general), we depend on facial feedback of our audience and a camera just doesn't offer that.

We still have some upcoming events on the calendar and none of us know when the restrictions will be lifted so things could change. I posted on Facebook recently that the Governor of Virginia has extended the "stay at home" order until 10 June (I teach in Virginia). That could be shortened, but there is a very real possibility that this whole thing could last quite a while yet.

Like many companies & organizations, we are doing more of our work online. If we need to cancel or change an event, please check the website and club facebook page, as it should be announced there.

One of the reasons we are changing our by-laws is to make "webmaster" an officer on the board. I really felt it should be a specific officer position and not "an assigned duty" of one of the Board of Directors. I think now we all understand why I felt so strongly about making sure we have that skill set covered.

For the record, and a great round of thanks to Matt as he has been "gainfully employed" with just our club and has been doing a great job making the information available.

Mentor Coordinator

You can help!

We are currently looking to add Mentor coordinator/s to our team.

Would you like to volunteer?

The duty would include pairing persons that want a mentor to the correct mentor. This would be pairing based on location and/or personality types.

There are a few more folks who seem to want to get involved and help make the club a good experience for all. Here is your chance. Come on, help us thrive!

If you are interested please reach out to one of the board members.

Have a great month, it's the start of another Spring to enjoy you beekeeping hobby/business.

Everyone please stay Healthy and Safe!

