

# FCBA NEWS

**Franklin County Beekeepers Association**



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## **Club Upcoming Scheduled Events**

Currently we have no scheduled events due to Covid-19 regulations. Meeting places are hard to find that would allow GROUP gatherings.

Board member elections are being postponed until next year, following the PSBA example, current board members will remain in their positions until next cycle.

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## **FCBA Officers**

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First, I apologize for the lack of a September newsletter. I had computer problems and had to get that worked out.

We are hopeful that we can all get back to sharing our stories and experiences in person in the near future.

Some of you may know Kay was asked to have a display at the Country Creek Produce for their weekend activities. We will have representatives there each weekend through October.

## **October In the hive**

There is little to no egg laying in October. Drone populations dwindle and any drones that remain in the hive are kicked out by the hive members. Bees tend to form their winter cluster at around 50°F. On warm days, the bees venture out looking for food and may rob unprotected hives. A few asters may still be in bloom. Fall witch hazel may be flowering, too. You probably smell the Golden Rod honey in your hives by now, it is a beautiful autumn smell to me.

## **Beekeeping activities**

Inspection: The weather may be too cold for extended inspections. It will also be difficult to correct any problems this late in the season.

## **Nutrition**

A full-sized colony should have at least 70-90 pounds of honey to eat by the beginning of October, or more than one full deep. Bees are now consuming more than what is coming in, plan ahead. Large colonies with lots of brood and bees can consume lots of honey at this time and run out before winter's end!

Nucs of course need less. Estimate the weight by slightly tipping and hefting the hive. If you extract honey, leave enough for the bees or feed

them sugar syrup to make up for the difference. If you feed the bees sugar syrup, it should be a 2:1 ratio, thicker than the spring feed; the bees can evaporate the excess moisture from the hive faster from this thicker syrup. Do not feed pollen or pollen substitute for the remainder of autumn, as bees use the reduction in pollen flow as a cue to continue rearing winter bees.

*Fall Feeding to Build Up Winter Stores – Outside temperatures above 50. If your hive does not have 80 - 100 pounds of honey stored, you may have to feed. You can estimate the increased weight of feeding 2:1 syrup. Consider adding one teaspoon of Clorox bleach or Honey Bee Healthy (or equivalent) per gallon to help prevent spoilage if the bees don't dehydrate sufficiently. If you dissolve 8 pounds granulated sugar in 4 pounds of very hot water, you will have 12 pounds of syrup that is 33.33 % water, by weight. The bees will "dry" this down to about 18.6 % water, by weight, before capping. This means that the final product will contain 8 pounds of sugar and about 1.49 pounds of water. To achieve this, the bees must remove about 2.51 pounds of water from the original mix. The final product will weigh about 9.49 pounds, or a little more than 1.5 full frames of capped honey. 2:1 sugar syrup, by volume: Translated into gallons, 1 gallon of 2:1 sugar syrup weighs about 10.98 lbs (3.66 lbs. water and 7.32 lbs sugar). This will "dry" to 8.99 lbs of syrup with 18.6% water. This is a little less than 1.5 full frames of capped honey.*

### ***Pests, parasites, and diseases***

At this point in the year, if you find three or more mites per 100 bees...from a sugar shake, or alcohol wash, you will want to treat. Treatment methods will depend on your management goals, the condition of the colony, and external conditions. Treatments that are most effective when there is no brood present are good options now. Always remove chemical Varroa mite treatments according to label directions, but make sure none remain in the hives before you winterize them.

### ***Equipment***

Winter preparation should continue: remove extra supers and queen excluders, secure the hive cover with a rock or straps, add a mouse guard (after confirming that a mouse has not yet moved in), and add an entrance reducer (if it is not already in place). Consider raising the hive up off the ground, if it is not already. Remove any supers that have not been filled. You may insulate the hive, but be sure foremost to avoid moisture build-up in the hives. ***Cold is less of a problem for bees than condensation.*** Since much of the heat escapes out of the top of the hive, some beekeepers add a super with an insulating, absorbent material (e.g., Quilt box). Others wrap the hives in black tarpaper or similar materials. Leave an upper entrance open for the exhaust of moisture. Tilt the hives forward a few degrees so that any moisture that does accumulate can drain out the bottom entrance.

### ***Yard maintenance***

Consider moving your hives to sunny winter yards. They can be crowded in these yards, since they will not be foraging. Be sure that these yards and the spring/summer yards will be accessible in mud season (early spring). Consider setting up a wind break near the hives.

### ***Excerpt from PSBA newsletter:***

**Winter Feeding – Non Liquid Feed –** Outside temperatures below 50. After outside temperatures fall below 50 degrees bees will not consume sugar syrups and non-liquid feeds are needed. There are many variations of sugar candy that you can make or you can use the "Mountain Camp" method of feeding dry sugar. Placing dry feed on the hive with a feeder rim spacer can provide insurance against your bees starving if they reach the top of the hive during the winter or spring. It is common for bees to starve in the early spring when they become

more active, start raising brood, and consume more of the hives stores.

**Mountain Camp Method**

The Mountain Camp method of feeding is simple. You take a piece of newspaper and lay it over the top bars. Next you add feeder rim, then you dump dry granulated sugar on top of the paper. Moisture from the bees' respiration condenses on the sugar and makes it palatable for the bees. You can spritz the sugar with water to form a crust on the surface and add Honey-B-Healthy (or equivalent) to the water before you spritz if you desire.

**Sugar Candy (Sugar Bricks)**

Heat 3 cups of water to boiling. • Slowly add 15 lbs of sugar about 5 lbs at a time till it is dissolved (16 lbs is fine if you have 4 lb bags) • Add 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar • Add 1/2 cup canola oil • Boil until the temperature reaches 234 – 240 degrees F., also known as soft-ball stage. See variations below (I find getting to 250 degrees makes a nice hard brick). Stir frequently to prevent burning. • Remove from heat. • Stir vigorously until the temperature drops to about 200 degrees F and then pour into molds sprayed with Pam.

WARNING: This mixture will is still very hot and sticky! Be careful. Disposable aluminum cake and pie tins work great for making candy and may be reused. Bricks made using pie tins fit perfectly in 5 gallon buckets for storage and transport.

**Variations**

You may start with a little more water to make dissolving the sugar easier, but it will take longer to boil. • You may add pollen substitute to the

mixture after it is done boiling. Add up to about 1 to 1 1/2 cups to the recipe above. Add after turning off the heat and stir in well. • You may add Honey-B Healthy or equivalent feeding stimulant. Add about 2 teaspoons after the mixture stops boiling. Be careful as it may spatter. The soft-ball stage (234 – 240 degrees) won't make a hard candy and it may get soft if it gets warm or exposed to humidity. Boiling the mixture to the firm-ball stage (244 – 248 degrees) or the hardball stage (250 – 266 degrees) will provide a harder sugar candy cake that is less likely to soften due to temperature or humidity. You can experiment to find your preference.

**Generic Feeding Stimulant** (Homemade Honey-B-Healthy) (Optional)

- ) 5 cups of water
- ) 2 1/2 lbs of sugar
- ) 1/8 teaspoon lecithin granules (used as an emulsifier)
- ) 15 drops spearmint oil
- ) 15 drops lemongrass oil
- ) 6 drops of thyme oil (optional)

Dissolve lecithin in 1/4 cup of hot water. This may take several hours. Bring water to a boil, remove from heat and stir in sugar until dissolved. Stir in lecithin until completely dissolved. Stir in essential oils until everything is evenly distributed. Cool before using. Add one to two tablespoons to a gallon of sugar syrup bee feed or add to sugar candy in place of Honey-B-Healthy.

Makes about 2 quarts.

This is a lot! Consider halving the recipe or making with a friend.

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### **Message from the Club President**

Our fiscal year is coming to a close, I feel a sense of “failure” for what we couldn’t accomplish this year. I feel somewhat responsible for what I consider a poor year for the association & what we have NOT been able to provide our members. As I look back, we ALL started the year with great momentum hoping that we could improve the association and it’s activities, but I’m very saddened by the difference of what we actually provided & what I feel we could have provided without this virus.

One of our most important events is our basic beekeeping class and that was literally stopped halfway through. Your board spent many hours trying to do the best possible workaroud given the situation. From there, our hands were very tied.

I want to give a true shout of appreciation to the dedication of each and every board member for their input in making the best we could from a year we easily could have done nothing. I often say that we in the welding field can literally make something from nothing because we can add metal as required, whereas our machinist friends can only take away metal; I use that example to say it would have been very easy to “scrap” everything because it didn’t fit our “mold” (or idea of what it should be), but we added where we could to make a “useable part” when we could.

We cannot get a venue for our banquet/annual business meeting so each officer has agreed to serve another year. This could make next year a mess because literally every officer should be given the opportunity to be replaced (officers staying in a position for “many” years is great for continuity, but limits new “blood” & can cause the individual to “burn out”).

The Do You Want To Be A Beekeeper (DYWTBAB) doesn’t have a venue either nor have we had any opportunity for outreach where can “advertise” to potentially interested people so right now, I’m going to call it postponed because we could hold that as late as February then still start the classes in March.

In the next month or 2, your board will meet to work on the 2021 calendar. Please do not give up on this association because I assure you, we, your board, are still doing our best to give you, the members, what you want & need.

I’m still “manageably busy” with FCBA business. I’m still doing a few mentoring calls and I have followed up with some of my past visits.

We have some sugar so I’m getting occasional calls for that.

One topic I’ve asked the board about is Mason Bees and I feel there is enough interest that we should have a presentation on those so if anyone would like to share a presentation, it would be appreciated because most of us know little about them (no pun intended).

Kay has a busy month of October doing outreach at the Country Creek Produce farm on the south side of Chambersburg, every weekend (both days probably).

As always, if you all have any suggestions please feel free to reach out to any of you board members.

***Happy Fall!***

***Stay Safe and well!***