Lake Cumberland Beekeepers Association

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July 2017 Newsletter

Next LCBA Meeting:
Monday, July 17, 2017

Dorothey Morgan (pictured below) of the Kentucky Queen Bee Breeders Association (KQBBA) will give a presentation on the work done by KQBBA and Purdue Bee Lab.

In this presentation, Dorothey will be sharing information about Purdue Bee Lab's mite biting bees; how KQBBA is impacting the survivability of the honey bees; and her travels around the Midwest inseminating honey bee queens.

6:00pm Doors open for informal discussion with fellow beekeepers.

6:30pm Business meeting

7:00pm Dorothey Morgan of KQBBA.

Meeting venue: Basement meeting room at the Pulaski County Extension Office, 28 Parkway Drive, Somerset.

The following report is from the July 2017 edition of the KSBA newsletter, *Beelines*:

"Varroa fight goes on;
experts gather at Purdue

In 2016, **Dr. Greg Hunt** and **Dr. Krispn Given** submitted to USDA the CARE (Critical Agricultural Research and Extension) grant, including Kentucky and five other states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia. Each state received funds dedicated to distributing information on battling Varroa mites.

Kentucky formed the **Kentucky Queen Bee Breeders Association** (KQBBA) to work more closely with Purdue University's "mite biter" stock.

On June 4, **Dr. Tammy Horn Potter** (KDA), who wrote Kentucky's portion of the grant, and **Dorothey Morgan**, KQBBA president, traveled to Purdue University to present Kentucky's 2017 activities and discuss the remainder of the year. Potter and Morgan also caught drones for queen bee insemination, and Dorothey helped inseminate queen bees in the Purdue Bee Lab."

Harvesting honey

In a demonstration on honey extraction, two frames of honey were extracted using this hand-cranked extractor at the LCBA June meeting. See page 3 for more photos.

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LCBA Outreach

At the June 2017 meeting, LCBA President Ginger Renaker gave an enthusiastic report on the LCBA information table that she and Cindy Robinson hosted on June 8, 2017.

The occasion was the SKRECC Annual Membership Meeting in Somerset. The LCBA table was one of more than 40 education and informative exhibits at the event. Ginger and Cindy were assisted by LCBA member Roger Baird and his son Dakota.

Cindy and Ginger also teamed up at the recent Earth Day event in Somerset

The event was attended by some 5,000 people, and the LCBA bee information table was extremely busy. Ginger reported that she and Cindy handed out all of their copies of the LCBA informational flyer, as well as hundreds of honey sticks and honey recipe booklets. They had the chance to talk briefly to many attendees about the importance of bees in our environment; how much we relied on bees to pollinate most of our food crops.

There were some interesting questions about bees from the public, including several local tree cutters who wanted to know who they could contact if they should encounter a wild beehive in a tree they were felling. These loggers may just remember their contact with LCBA the next time they come across some wild bees that could be re-hived.

What a great way to spread the word about the importance of the bees we all care so much about, and the work of LCBA. Well done, Ginger and Cindy, and thanks to Roger and Dakota to helping out, too.

Dealing with small hive beetles and varroa mites

At the June LCBA meeting, LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs gave an interesting talk on her recent experience with a small hive beetle infestation.

On checking the inspection board on one of her hives recently, Pat noticed there were several dead small hive beetles on the board. She had recorded that this particular hive had no brood 2 weeks previously, so she had been concerned about these bees. When she opened up the hive, she found the honey comb had been destroyed and the frames were crawling with small hive beetle larvae. The frames appeared shiny, as though somebody had poured corn syrup over them. What a disaster!

Pat removed all of the hive boxes into her basement, and immediately stashed the frames in her freezer to kill the beetle larvae. This left a wriggling pile of larvae on her basement floor, so Pat surrounded these with a ring of course salt some 3 inches wide, thinking this would contain the larvae until she could deal with them. To her horror, the larvae simply crawled right over the salt barrier, and headed out to find somewhere to pupate!

There were still beetle larvae on the frames that didn't immediately fit into her freezer, and Pat put these frames out for the bees to rob. She treated the ground around the frames—and around her other hives—with permethrin ("Gard Star"), using this as a soil drench.

Looking down the frames into the bottom of the brood box, the 'corn syrup appearance of the spoiled honey is clearly visible, as are the piles of small hive beetle larvae

The worry is the state of her remaining hives, and Pat will be keeping a close eye on these.

Pat handed out copies of the very informative Handbook of Small Hive Beetle IPM, produced by Clemson Cooperative Extension, an excellent resource.

As well as the dangers of small hive beetles, varroa mites pose a real threat to honey bees. Hives should be monitored to ascertain varroa mite populations. There was a lot of discussion on varroa mite controls, including a method of fogging the hives with mineral oil. LCBA had ordered Apiguard in bulk in previous years, and sold this off in single hive treatment doses. If people are interested, a similar scheme will be run this year.

2017 Beginner Bee School Report

The Beginner Bee School was offered as a joint program between Pulaski and Lincoln counties. The Lincoln County Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent approached the Pulaski County Horticulture Agent about organizing a joint school.

Historically, 2017 was an off-year for a bee school in Pulaski County after having several very successful schools in years past. After consulting with the Lake Cumberland Beekeepers, they were willing to help with an off-year school. It began in February 2017 and ended with a hive inspection in May 2017.

With the help of local beekeepers in both counties, the program taught the group of inexperienced beekeepers-to-be about honey bee biology, tools and woodenware, hive management, swarm management, and at the end, everyone was invited to a hive inspection both in Lincoln and Pulaski counties (led by local beekeepers). State experts were brought in to teach 4 of the 5 classroom sessions.

Thirty-six people participated. Out of the 36, 11 were already keeping bees. However, 6 of those 11 rated their knowledge as a 1 (scale of 1-10, 1 no knowledge, 10 very knowledgeable). Out of those not currently keeping bees, 17 said they intended to keep bees in the future. It is estimated that this Beginner Bee School helped start at least 13 new beekeeping operations in Lincoln and Pulaski counties.

Beth Wilson
Pulaski County Agent for Horticulture

Harvesting honey

At the June 2017 meeting, LCBA Vice-President Mike Wooton gave a brief talk and demonstration on harvesting honey. To provide a couple of frames of honey for the honey extraction demonstration, Mike and David Gilbert had to run a quick raid on the bee hives at the Extension Center.

The hives at the Extension Center are kept precisely for teaching purposes, and are managed by Beth Wilson, the Pulaski County Agent for Horticulture. These hives were the focus of the recent Beginner Bee School hive inspection; they have been an important part of the queen bee breeding program; and frequently frames and bees are taken from the hives for use in the LCBA Observation Hive. When honey frames were needed for the LCBA meeting demonstration, those Extension Service beehives proved their worth yet again.

There is plenty to learn from a hands-on demonstration of honey harvesting. Attendees at the LCBA meeting listen attentively as Mike Wooton shares his honey harvesting experience

Mike Wooton discusses honey extraction techniques, while Peggy Denham tries out a plastic roller to pierce the honey cappings on one of the honey frames

Mike's Ramblings : Getting Ready for July

Thanks to all for the help and support at the June LCBA meeting. I had a great time showing how I do much of my extracting. Much thanks also to Pat Rizenbergs for the info on mites and hive beetles. The attendance was great and everyone seemed to enjoy getting together.

July is usually when I harvest my honey. I take only the frames where the honey cells are fully capped. I leave any frames that are not fully capped in the super on the hive until the bees cap it completely.

I usually check the honey in the harvested frames for moisture content using a refractometer. If the moisture level is too high, I run a dehumidifier until the honey gets to the right moisture level. LCBA has a refractometer available for rent to LCBA members: contact Pat Rizenbergs if you are interested.

In real dry weather make sure your bees have a water supply nearby. Water should be at least less than a quarter of a mile from your hives. I float a board or a piece of rope on the surface of the water supply, so the bees don't drown.

Now is also the time to check hives for varroa mite counts. If you do have a high varroa mite count, it is necessary to harvest the honey before you treat the hives, as mite treatments will contaminate the honey.

I find that sticky boards are the best way to check for mite numbers. Mite counts may not be high early in July, but numbers can build up quickly and boards should be checked often. To treat for varroa mites, I also use a battery-operated fogger, which produces a fine mist of mineral oil in the hive that kills off the varroa mites. This mineral oil treatment will not taint the honey.

Besides visiting local flowering trees and wildflowers, the bees have been very busy on sunflowers and on Vitex which have been planted nearby. I am also planning on planting buckwheat, to provide the bees with a late season food source.

- Mike Wooton
LCBA Vice-President

Casey County Bees

There's more to hive counts

LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs does a wonderful job of keeping track of the number of hives in LCBA members' bee yards. Her latest figures, published in the June 2017 newsletter, indicated that Casey County beekeepers had a winter loss rate of 17.6% over last winter, a figure which is well below the national average.

This is good news, indeed. But such a hive count cannot tell the whole history of individual beehives, at least not in our bee yard.

Early in the year, we successfully split our hives into 2 and sometimes even 3 colonies, all of which were thriving well, with beautiful new queens and plenty of eggs and brood.

On subsequent inspections during June, however, we found that two of the original hives had neither eggs nor young brood: something had happened to their queens.

What we could not understand was why the remaining bees had not made any attempt to raise new queens from existing eggs or young brood when they sensed their queens were failing. One of the hives did have some young brood and even single eggs in cells, a fact which we momentarily celebrated, until we realized that the brood was suspiciously scattered about on the frames, and certainly did not display a good laying pattern. In addition, the eggs, although placed singly in the cells, were not neatly placed bottom center, as a queen bee would have done: we had laying workers! Not only were these workers laying eggs, the frames even had several pseudo capped queen cells. A quick check on our bee math told us that with no other brood in the hive, these couldn't possibly be 'real' queen cells: 'real' queens would have developed and emerged 5 days before any other brood of similar age. There was nothing for it but to combine this hive of bees with another colony.

For the purpose of Pat's hive count, of course, a hive that has been split and then re-combined still equals one hive. Such failures may be invisible on the hive count tally, but are an important window on the health of the hive overall. There is more to the story!

Bees on Agastache, also known as anise hyssop

Food for bees

We have enjoyed almost perfect weather over the past month, with little in the way of high winds, continuous rain or hot temperatures to impede the bees' progress. LCBA member Dennis Raven reports that frames from which he had extracted honey and returned to the hive for the bees to clean out, were rapidly being restocked with new nectar, an indication of just how good a year this has been so far for the bees in Casey County.

- Hilary Forsyth