

Lake Cumberland Beekeepers Association

**Newsletter
October 2016**

Message from David Gilbert, LCBA President

With Fall in full swing it may be time for beekeepers to feed and assist their honey bees in preparing for their winter honey stores needed to survive until Spring. Each hive will need approximately 60 pounds of honey. So lift up the back of your hive box and see if it has the adequate weight.

Remember now is the time to double your sugar syrup to 2 parts sugar to 1 part water. As temperatures get colder it may be necessary to feed sugar patties or purchased nutritional patties from a vendor. These are often labeled pollen patties or brood patties.

Pat Rizenbergs is preparing a Year In Review of LCBA activities and accomplishments for our last

meeting of 2016. Please try and make this enjoyable meeting in which the membership will be voting for all 2017 officers of the LCBA during the brief business meeting.

Following the meeting we will enjoy our annual banquet. Spouses are welcome, and members are asked to bring a covered dish. The Association will be providing the meat and drinks for a relaxed evening with fellow beekeepers.

I have truly enjoyed being with the Association over the past several years and seeing the many accomplishments each of you have made in local beekeeping activities and educational projects for the public.

Best wishes to all,

David Gilbert

LCBA meeting will be held on Monday October 17, 2016

The final LCBA meeting for 2016 will be held on Monday, October 17, 2016.

The all-important business for the evening will be the election of LCBA officers. The offices to be filled include those of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The elected officers to these posts will lead our Association for the next two years.

After the business meeting and to celebrate another year of LCBA members and their beekeeping exploits, we hope that all LCBA members will get together and join in on our annual potluck dinner. LCBA will provide meat for our feast, and attendees are asked to bring along a dish to

share. As always, spouses and family of LCBA members are welcome to join in. LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs will present her report on the LCBA Year In Review.

6pm: Doors open for general discussion and advice on bees and beekeeping

6.30pm: LCBA business meeting.

Voting and announcement of new office bearers.

7pm: Potluck dinner

Meeting venue: Pulaski County Extension Service Office.

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Winter Hive Management

In her presentation at the association's September meeting, LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs discussed the importance of proper winter hive management.

Winter is a critical time for the bees, and beekeepers need to be aware of steps they can take to help ensure the bees' survival. Pat emphasized several vital points for beekeepers to follow in preparing their hives for the winter.

First and most important was taking steps to reduce the population of varroa mites in the hives. These mites not only feed on the bees and the brood, severely weakening them, but they are also vectors of several viruses that affect bees.

Pat's second point covered reducing the size of the hives, taking off unused boxes, and condensing the bee population. Any wet frames (i.e. those with nectar or honey in them) could be returned to the hives to be cleaned off by the bees. All frames removed from the hives should be frozen for at least 24 hours to kill off any disease and pest organisms. Pat recommends that the frames be stored and treated with paradichlorobenzene (Paramoth) to prevent infestation by wax moths.

Reducing the entrances to the hives to a gap of 2 or 3 inches will reduce the amount of cold air entering the hive. Smaller entrances will also prevent mice from getting into the hive, where they will build nests and feed on bee larvae and stores.

Pat recommends that the final hive inspections of the season should focus on confirming what the queen bee is doing, and whether she has a good egg-laying pattern. If the brood is 'spotty' with a poor laying pattern, or if there is no brood at all, resulting in a weak hive, now is the time to combine such a hive with a stronger hive. Pat uses sheets of newspaper between the hive boxes, giving the bees time to get accustomed to the pheromones of the queen from the stronger hive. The bees will soon eat through the newspaper sheets, and the weaker queen will be killed, resulting in a stronger colony with the better queen.

During these late summer hive inspections, the beekeeper should also check that there are sufficient bees in the hive: a hive should have at least 8 frames of brood, along with a good population of bees.

The bees will also need sufficient stores to see them through the winter. The easiest way to ascertain the amount of stores is to lift up the back of the hive to feel its weight. Pat reckons that if the hive is too heavy for her to lift, the bees are well stocked! If she can lift the hive easily, it is time to start feeding the bees to help them build up their stores for the winter.

While the fall weather is relatively warm, the bees should be fed a 2:1 sugar:water mixture. Pat explained that an easy way of reckoning this ratio is to dissolve 2 4-pound bags of sugar in 2 quarts of hot water. The sugar syrup can be given to the bees in jars with holes



LCBA member Pat Rizenbergs gave an excellent presentation on winter hive management

pierced in their lids, or in plastic baggies also with holes to give the bees access to the syrup. Either way, a spacer or medium box should be placed on the hive above the inner cover upon which the syrup containers are placed, so that the bees can safely feed on the syrup without the chance of a robbing situation. Pat adds a product called Honey Bee Healthy to the bees' feed. Bees will take this feed only for as long as they need it.

As winter sets in, bees should be fed sugar in the form of bee candy or fondant. Pat's recipe for bee fondant is available on the LCBA website at <http://lakecumberlandbeekeepers.com/resources/making-fondant/>

Finally, bee hives must have good ventilation during the winter. Bees keep the cluster within their hives at a steady temperature of over 90F; when the warm air from the hive hits the cold inner surface of the top cover, moisture will condense and can drop down into the hive, chilling and killing the brood. A vent in the inner cover will prevent this problem.

Pat provided copies of useful handouts for everyone at the meeting, including:

Pat's own notes on Getting Bees Ready for Winter;

Small Hive Beetle IPM produced by Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina

Basic Beekeeping—Winter Management, which includes a very useful Winter Hive Inspection Checklist based on daily temperatures (www.gobeekeeping.com)

Helping our bees make it through the winter, from Phil Craft at www.Philcrafthivecraft.com.

Thanks, Pat, for all this useful information, and an excellent presentation!

LCBA outreach and a learning opportunity

In mid-September, LCBA received a request via the website from Dennis Raven, a resident of Casey County, who was looking for a mentor to help him with his bees. We live in the area, and offered to drive over to view Dennis' hives. It turned out that he had also been in touch with Tammy Horn, the KY State Apiarist, and had arranged for her to conduct a hive inspection in situ. Well, what an opportunity for us to watch the expert in action! We immediately asked Dennis whether we could join in on this inspection.

Dennis has 4 bee hives at present. He reported that the hives had done well earlier in the summer, with plenty of brood and stores, but now they seemed less active and their food stores were depleted. He was feeding 2:1 sugar syrup as a supplement. Dennis' concern was that these present hives were replacements for hives he had lost from the previous year, and he did not want to lose these replacement hives.

Commencing her inspection, Tammy explained that she liked to smoke the bees gently a good 10 minutes before opening the hives. During this time, she watched the bees closely to assess their activity. She also commented that the hives may be better situated in a less shady area.



Tammy took her time gently wafting smoke over the bees, all the while watching and assessing their behavior

Checking through the hives, Tammy only removed a couple of frames from each of the boxes. She carried some of the frames out into a sunnier area for a thorough inspection, making sure that Dennis could identify eggs and uncapped brood. Tammy explained that the brood should be a pearly white color. If the brood appeared brown in color, this was an indication of nosema infection; if the brood had a 'snotty' appearance, this could indicate high varroa mite infection.

Having found eggs and a good brood laying pattern, Tammy did not disrupt the hives further by looking for the queens.

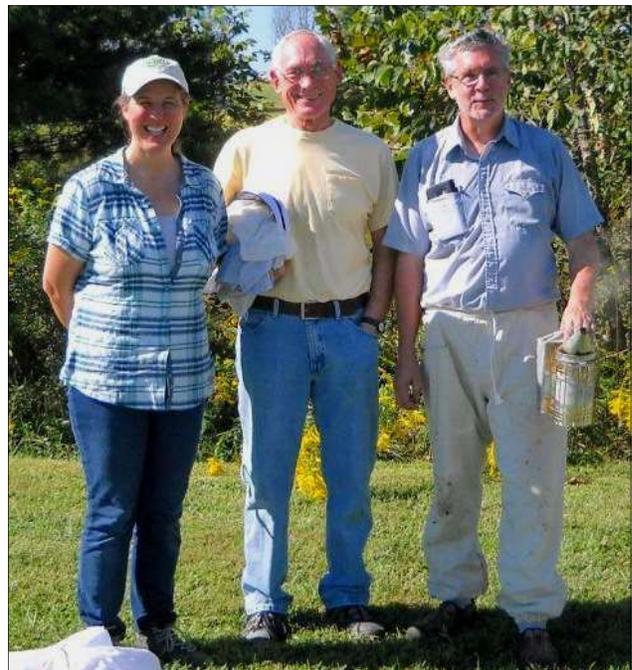


Tammy took several frames out into the sun, so that she and Dennis Raven could see the bees and the brood more clearly

Tammy's overall comments on the hives were that the bees seemed healthy, with good populations and no signs of broodnest diseases. An unoccupied super on one of the hives proved to be housing small hive beetles, and Tammy suggested this super be removed and the frames frozen. Tammy recommended that Dennis keep feeding the bees to build up their stores, but otherwise, she felt the hives were in good shape.

It was a pleasure to watch Tammy's inspection. This was a very instructive session for us all, and Dennis was reassured and more confident in his management of the bees.

- Hilary and Ray Forsyth



L-r: KY State Apiarist Tammy Horn Potter, LCBA member Ray Forsyth, our host Dennis Raven

Bee news from Casey County

September/October bee report

On checking the weights of our hives in late September, we decided that several of them were in need of some supplemental feeding. This despite the fact that the bees have been busy working the copious supply of goldenrod around here, and that the wild aster bushes are now bouncing with bees. No doubt the hot, dry summer has had something to do with the lack of stores.

On September 28 we started feeding all of the hives with a 2:1 sugar syrup. We put the syrup in one-pint feeder jars with holes pierced in the lids. These jars are placed upside down on spacing sticks on the inner cover, with a medium box over the jars and the outer cover on top of it all.

Imagine our surprise on October 4th when we discovered a small cluster of bees hanging from the top cover of one of the hives. This little group of bees had all the appearances of a swarm! The resident bees in the original hive were still going about their daily business. If this was a swarm, we therefore concluded that it had not emerged from this original hive.

We collected five empty drawn frames we had in store, splashing some sugar syrup onto the comb. Carefully lifting up the outer cover plus agglomeration of bees, we placed these frames into the feeder box space. Then we bumped the little swarm into the feeder box. Some of these bees immediately started pheromoning to gather their cohorts together, which confirmed our impression that this was indeed a swarm and that they likely had a queen!

By this time, the resident bees had come up to investigate, and unfortunately they were not friendly. As quickly as possible we placed a double screen combination board on top of the inner cover between the original hive and the feeder box with the new bees. Inevita-

bly, there was some fighting and we ended up with quite a few dead bees. No doubt—and with 20/20 hindsight—we could have handled this better.

The following day, we briefly checked the feeder box to see what was happening. The sugar syrup jars were still in the feeder box, and the new bees had moved some of this syrup into their frames. Three or four of the frames had a good covering of bees, which was encouraging. And then we spied their queen! She is very dark—almost black—so not one of our own bees. She was also very active, walking around quickly over the frames. Our best hope is that she will soon start laying eggs.

Our worry now is that the swarm will not have any pollen to feed to their brood. Our plan is to move a frame or two of pollen, nectar and honey from a couple of our other, stronger, hives, so that the new bees have a chance of building up some population before winter.

We will keep the swarm in their box on top of the combination board. We have read that it is perfectly possible to have two bee colonies kept in this manner, and we figure that the swarm will benefit from the warmth generated by the strong colony of bees in the lower hive. We will in any event keep feeding the swarm bees over the winter.

It was amazing to find this cluster of bees so late in the year. What made them swarm? We can only presume they must have been in dire straits to have taken such a risk, and that this was a decampment rather than a swarm. Why did they choose to gather on an occupied bee hive? It's difficult not to anthropomorphize and conclude that the swarm knew they would be housed and fed there. Bees sure are a mystery!

- Hilary Forsyth

LCBA outreach and a learning opportunity (cont.)

On our visit to Dennis Raven's apiary for Tammy Horn's hive inspection, we were amused to see these bee graphics painted by Dennis' wife, Sue, on the floor of their honey house. More bees were painted on the hives—a lovely expression of bee art work!

