

OABeeA Minutes

Regular Monthly Meeting August 29th, 2013

The regular August meeting of OABeeA was held at Fordham's Farmhouse restaurant in Statesboro, Georgia, on August 29th, 2013. The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm by President Brent Tharp, with Secretary John Dyal recording.

Before proceeding to the raffle, Brent Tharp had everyone introduce themselves.

There were about 35 people in attendance.

The meeting was also attended by Al Hackle of the Statesboro Herald, who was going to write a piece on OABeeA.

Raffle

The raffle table was much more heavily loaded than it has yet been.

Items donated included:

- quite a few of jars and bottles of honey, donated by numerous members.
- 2 jars of homemade olive oil/ beeswax wood polish.
- a bottle of homemade kombucha.
- a loaf of homemade bread.
- a dozen eggs.
- various small items.

Program

Rhett Kelley introduced our speaker, Georgia State Apiary Inspector Henry Price, and turned the meeting over to him.

Henry Price said he started beekeeping in collage. He studied entomology at UGA. He then worked as a farm manager before going to work for the State.

He is now the lead inspector for the Georgia Apiary Program. The Apiary Program is under the Plant Protection Division. He has six bee inspectors that work for him. He and his inspectors also do other Plant Protection jobs, such as inspecting blueberries. Four of them spend about three quarters of their time inspecting bees, the other two only about half.

He said Georgia law requires anyone producing bees to sell, such as queens, packages, and nucs, to be licensed by the State.

He also said that Georgia law requires all bees in the State to be registered, but it is not currently enforced due to a lack of manpower. He hopes that this will be enforced at some point.

They do inspect all bee producers, as well as those who request to be inspected, such as pollinators who move bees across state lines. There is no charge for the regular inspections, and currently only a one-time \$25 fee for issuing a permit to sell bees.

He commented that the honey bee is the state insect.

The routine for an inspection is:

- Inspect 20% to 100% of hives in each yard.
- Remove and inspect one to two frames per hive, look at eggs, larva, and sealed brood.
- Checking mainly for AFB and EFB, but also SHB and mite damage.
- Want to see nice pearl white c-shaped larva, AFB larva are brown.

If AFB is found:

- The yard is quarantined for sixty days. You can move anything into a quarantined yard, but nothing out.
- If only 20% of hives were being inspected, go back and inspect 100%.
- All infected hives destroyed by fire. If the beekeeper is present, the inspector will watch them move the hive and burn it. If the beekeeper is not present, the inspectors will move and burn it themselves.

He mentioned some of the signs of AFB, such as “false tongue”, sunken caps, and especially “roping.” EFB can sometimes rope too. If they find roping they assume AFB, unless the beekeeper objects (because EFB can be treated), in which case they would test.

In the past the State compensated the beekeeper when hives were burned, but no longer.

Inspecting for Varroa, SHB, Tracheal Mites:

- Beekeepers who move bees across state lines will request inspection because a lot of states don't want one or more of these varmints, and will not permit hives to enter that have not been inspected for them.

California Fire Ant inspection

- Twenty thousand colonies of bees go from Georgia to California to pollinate almonds each year.
- California does not want fire ants.
- It only takes a few eggs or ants to count as a nest.
- \$10,000 USDA fine for a fire ant nest.
- This inspection costs \$140.
- Inspectors watch while pallets of hives are carefully cleaned. They must then be placed off the ground for “the Spam test.” Small cubes of Spam are placed on the pallets around the hives. If after thirty minutes no ants can be found around the Spam, the hives are cleared to load on the trucks. If any ants are found, the whole cleaning process must be done over again.

Other duties include responding to calls from beekeepers, such as a pollinator complaining of a pesticide kill.

About Georgia's bee industry

- Georgia is the second (California is first) in queen and package production. Fourteenth in honey production.
- Honey bees in Georgia were a \$16,382,140 industry in 2010.

While there are many queen and package producers, there are five major ones; Gardner's/Spell, Hardeman, Wilbanks, H & R, and Rossman. Each of these apiaries have over one hundred yards. Gardner's operates in four counties, and Hardeman in five. All together they have around forty-thousand colonies and produced around ninety-thousand packages in 2012. That is down 15%, probably due to weather. Henry said they cannot meet the demand for packages.

Henry said bees cannot be brought into Georgia without notice except from Florida. (Georgia and Florida have an agreement, and as long as the bees have been inspected by one of the states, they can be moved back and forth without much trouble.) Resident beekeepers can move their bees around freely so long as they were not brought into the state illegally. Any bees found moved into the state illegally are “depopulated” by fire. Abandoned bees are also depopulated if an owner cannot be found.

He said, much to the shock of everyone present, that it is illegal to catch swarms in Georgia, even swarms from your own hives. This drew many questions, exclamations, and the comment that many people advertise themselves as swarm catchers in the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Farmer's Market Bulletin. Henry responded that this is not enforced at all, and he was not worried about folks catching swarms. It was something that came about four or five years ago as part of a multi-state agreement that Georgia entered into with several southern states to make it easier to move bees between them. Due to concerns over Africanized bees the agreement required that swarms not be caught.

He said his department monitors for Africanized bees, doing trapping from the port and along the Florida state line, as well as a lot of bee testing. He said there has only been one case of Africanized bees in Georgia.

Someone asked about the case where a dog was killed by supposed Africanized bees. Henry said when the bees were tested they were all European.

He has been called to investigate bees that were so mean that the beekeeper would swear they were Africanized, and sometimes he thought they must be too. But so far, except for that one instance, after genetic testing they have all been found to be European.

Henry told a funny story about trying to get a live bee sample to the post office before they closed. He said he has a lot of trouble shipping live bees at post offices. But the post office in Mt Vernon, where he lives, has gotten used to it and it's easy there.

Once he found himself somewhere in south Georgia, late in the day, with a bee sample to mail off for testing. Trying to make it back to Mt Vernon before the post office closed, he was speeding at eighty to ninety miles per hour, when he passed a State Patrolman. He pulled over and got out his driver's license while he waited for the State Patrolman. The Patrolman asked him what he had been doing.

“Speeding,” he replied.

“Why?”

“I was trying to get to the post office before they close to mail a bee sample.”

“Are they Africanized?”

“They could be,” Henry replied.

“Go on!” said the State Patrolman.

Ruth Mettler asked if anything was being done to educate farmers about proper use of pesticides to reduce impact on honey bees.

Henry read some of the results from a USDA testing of pollen in hives for two-hundred chemicals.

He listed various bee diseases that he tests hives for, including Black Queen Cell Virus. It was not heard of in Georgia till last year when someone called from Ohio to complain about bees they had gotten from Georgia that they claimed had Black Queen Cell. Henry investigated and found it was

from an apiary he had already taken samples from, but the results had not come back yet. When they did it was found that they were infected. He complained that it takes around six months to get results back on most bee tests. The turn-around on the Africanized test is faster, around two weeks.

While giving some statistics about beekeeping in Georgia, he commented that beekeepers were too secretive and wouldn't all give him information.

Mark Mettler said that if all beekeepers were registered, crop dusters and sprayers could be required to notify beekeepers in an area before they sprayed.

Someone asked if the Commissioner had plans for something like some other states have to make sure that honey that is labeled "local" and "raw" actually is.

Henry said no, but they watch the port closely for bad honey, and stopped a bunch last year.

He said, "Get up and act, don't wait for someone else." He said to invite legislators to the club, and to get involved; beekeepers are a small minority, and because they are secretive they are perceived to be even smaller.

Show and Tell

John Dyal brought a Kenyan-style top bar nuc hive. He said he has both top bar and Langstroth hives. He talked about some of the aspects of top bar hives, such as low cost and horizontal design that eliminates lifting supers.

Heather Davis does an educational group she calls Living Organic Locally. She said she would be showing the movie "Vanishing of the Bees" and having a bee education session in Vidalia, September 6th and 7th, at the Pal theater. On the 6th there would be a wine reception at 7:00 pm and the movie would be at 8:00. The education sessions would be on the 7th.

Brent Tharp asked Jared Wood to tell about the wood polish he had donated for the raffle. He made it for a safe finish for a wooden bowl he made. He used 4 parts olive oil and 1 part beeswax. It is made by warming the oil till the wax melts, then stirring as it cools. He likes to put it in the refrigerator after it is cool to harden it more. It is then easier to spread it thinly as you work it into the wood.

Outreach Opportunity

Brent Tharp told of a vocational program done through Georgia Southern at the prison in Glennville. They are trying to include beekeeping. They started a hive last year, but lost it and would like to get started again. They need beekeepers to help and teach. Anyone interested in helping please contact him, Brent said.

Request for Speakers

Brent Tharp said we have a speaker for February. He asked anyone who knew someone who would do a program to please email a member of the Executive Committee.

Discussion Time

John Dyal asked about the brood pattern created by his VHS bees, and if any one had experience using formic acid to control varroa mites.

Rhett Kelley said he had used Mite Away Quick Strips (formic acid based) with no problems. He said to follow the instructions for eye and hand protection as the formic acid would get you if you did not. He said he also used Hop Guard (made from hops- Mann Lake) to rotate types of treatment.

Henry Price said he does not like Hop Guard because the bees abandon the comb near the strips and do not return for a good while even when the strips are removed. He said thymol worked well.

A discussion of thymol treatments and how to mix them followed.

- Usually mixed with sugar.
- A tracheal mite treatment is 1 pound of Crisco and 4 pounds of sugar. Thymol is also supposed to treat them. It was proposed to mix all three for treating both kinds of mites.
- Henry Price's recipe for varroa treatment was a coffee scoop of thymol crystals dissolved in rubbing alcohol then mixed with 2 pounds of sugar. He said a man he inspects uses thymol in the bee's feed with very good results. He did not remember the man's formula. He also said wintergreen and tea tree oil are said to be useful by some people.

Brent Tharp reminded everyone that the next meeting would be September 26th, 2013 at Fordham's Farmhouse.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 pm.