

Sheboygan County Beekeepers Association

May 9, 2023

Minutes

Dan H called the meeting to order.

Attendance: 26

New members: 3

Minutes - Minutes for April were sent to the membership and posted on the SCBA Website. No corrections were reported.

Treasurer's Report

The savings account balance reflects Nourish's reimbursement for the Pizza with a Purpose newspaper ad for our February gathering.

Checking account balance - \$ 456.04

Savings account balance - \$ 2212.12

Motion to Accept: Ray

Second: Jason

Old Business -

- Pass around sign-up sheet for programs and refreshments. The refreshments sheet is full, but we have slots available for programs, if anyone is interested.
- Sign up to volunteer to help at Nourish?? If you would like to volunteer and haven't yet signed up, please contact Kathy or Dan H. to be included on the list.

Correspondence

- Kurt and Kathy received a request from JMK Art Center for a local beekeeper to sell their honey at the Art Center. No one immediately responded to the request.
- Jo F. gave an update on her Ozaukee County native plant purchase. She will pick them up just prior to next month's meeting (the picnic) and offer them for sale for \$2.00 each.

New Business -

- Next month (June meeting) is our annual summer picnic. A signup sheet for grilling volunteers was circulated and returned to Dan H. It is a potluck, so bring a dish to pass and utensils for that dish. The picnic will be held at Nourish on June 13th and will begin at 6:00 pm.

Questions sent from membership -

- Would the Club consider purchasing "No Mow May" signs in bulk on behalf of the membership? Dan H. said we can look into it.

Hive Reports - Hive reports were not given, as we jumped into our program right away.

Program - We were very fortunate to have today's program delivered by Garry Oreskovic of Honeyland Farms. He is a professional apiarist, has been keeping bees for 55 years and is a former hive inspector for the state of Wisconsin.

One of our members recently approached Garry with questions concerning a hive that failed last autumn. Upon inspecting one of the frames from that hive, Garry immediately recognized the presence of American Foulbrood (AFB), an easily spread, infectious bacterial brood disease that weakens and kills honey bee colonies.

Early detection of AFB is critical to containment. On inspection, the beekeeper will first notice a change in the color of the infected honey bee larvae to a dark tan and then brown or even blackish. A peculiar odor will develop (some liken the scent to dead fish); the bacteria then liquefies the larvae, turning it into a thick, elastic goo. Beekeepers who attempt to remove the goo (e.g. with a toothpick) will only spread the disease. When the goo dries, it appears as scale in the bottom of the brood cell.

The larvae are infected when eating food contaminated with bacterial spores. Spores can be spread from frames, from hive tools, swarms, from anything that has come in contact with the bacteria.

Past treatment for this insidious disease was to dig a hole, destroy your bees, and burn the infected hives. Today, the recommended treatment is the use of antibiotics, which can be ordered from bee supply houses, but requires a Veterinarian Feed Directive (VFD). This means a bee-knowledgeable vet, which can be difficult to find, must prescribe the drug for your hives.

Two items of interest mentioned here: 1) some bee groups have contracted a vet to visit all of their hives, thus sharing the cost of obtaining prescriptions and 2) one of our members, (Jamie V) is a vet, who may be able to offer us some advice.

Garry emphasized the need for preventative treatment for AFB. He stated very clearly that if you haven't seen AFB, you will. He treats his hives in the Spring and in the Fall. The Spring treatment must be applied 5-6 weeks before honey flow to avoid introducing antibiotics to it, the Fall treatment is done after honey harvest. Each treatment consists of 3 applications, spaced 7 days apart. Treatment should continue for 3 years.

Garry uses oxytetracycline (Terramycin or "TM") for his treatment of AFB, which he said is the only approved treatment. The product comes in two forms: a powder (it contains powdered sugar and looks a little like soy flour) which is used to dust the end bars over the frames, or as syrup which is fed to the honeybees. Garry uses 2 scoops of the powder per hive per application. He cautioned against sprinkling over the hive as the antibiotic is toxic to the brood.

The general costs involved include vet fees (around \$50.00?), the product (around \$17.00 per pound), and shipping (around \$18.00). Product cost may be less per pound when buying in greater quantity, but be aware that the drug will expire in about 2 years.

Garry's presentation prompted lots of questions from the membership. They are listed here, along with their answers.

Q: If you have to use the antibiotic, should you then treat with a probiotic?

A: Using probiotics is always a good idea. (Independent of the antibiotic treatment),

Q: Can the bees become resistant to the treatment?

A: Bees don't live long enough to develop resistance. Studies are being done to find out if weaker concentrations of TM can be used effectively, although dosages are stronger now than they used to be.

Q: Do vets have an issue with using antibiotics as a preventative?

A: The bee industry recommends preventative maintenance.

Q: How is AFB different from European Foulbrood?

A: European foulbrood can be cleaned up by re-queening. Also, in European foulbrood, the larvae twist in the cell and present a different odor than AFB.

Q: You said 3 applications in Spring, 3 in Fall for 3 years. Why are you treating 3 times if it is a preventative measure?

A: This is the recommended treatment.

Q: And you do this with all of your hives?

A: Yes.

Q: Does it pay to disinfect your tools?

A: Absolutely yes. It is a good general practice anyway. You can use a solution of 90% rubbing alcohol, which also removes wax, or you can use fire.

Garry brought some infected frames to very carefully show the members. No one but Garry (who was gloved) handled the frames and we were allowed to inspect the sealed cells with a lighted magnifying glass (thanks to Dan H.).

Raffle -

Motion to adjourn: Peter

Second: Ray

Next meeting is the June 13th picnic - 6:00 PM at Nourish

Respectfully submitted by Kathy P and Elizabeth D