

JUNE 2023

MCBA NEWSLETTER

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

GREG LEHMAN

Happy Spring everyone! I hope you are all having a successful bee season. After speaking with the folks at our most recent general meeting, it seems like many are having one of their most successful springs in recent memory and hopefully we'll get some rain to keep this going!

As a beekeeper I'm so excited to see these spring results, but as the President of MCBA, I can't help but worry a bit about swarms. The general public doesn't know that a swarm is one of the gentlest times you could come across thousands of stinging insects and unfortunately when people are scared overreactions happen. I don't want to see someone's ignorance lead to unnecessary ordinances, but unfortunately, I've seen it happen right in our backyard.

We all need to keep the community around us in mind as we tend to our hives. Besides the fact that less than 25% of swarms will survive the winter (according to Dr. Tom Seeley in 'The Lives of Bees') we also don't want to see our bees taking up homes where they aren't welcome. Cutouts can be very expensive and not everyone will be so nice as to get them properly removed. As your supers are filling up, please make sure you're keeping an eye out for swarm cells. My wife and I do quick checks weekly by simply tipping the boxes on their sides and looking underneath for swarm cells. If you find swarm cells, make a split. Free Bees rule! If you don't want more bees, I'm sure someone in the club would love them and if you aren't comfortable doing a split - I feel confident someone in the club would. I'd bet most people on our website's swarm list would love those free bees. Let's all help each other and do our due diligence as responsible beekeepers.

Speaking of our swarm list - special thanks to all the folks that have responded to calls and emails about swarms this year – your service is greatly appreciated! Hearing success stories about swarm calls and getting positive feedback puts a huge smile on my face. Hope to hear about some more successes at our next meeting and the summer picnic! Cheers everyone.

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GENERAL MEETINGS

June 22

7:00PM - Montco 4H Center and Zoom

Main Presentation

Karla Eisen

"Honey Shows" - benefits of entering and tips/tricks for preparing honey and wax entries

Re-invigorating honey shows in Virginia is one of Karla's great passions. She is the chair of the EAS Honey Show Advisory Committee and served as a judge for the 2016-2018 and 2022 EAS honey shows as well as for other shows in the mid-Atlantic. Humbled by the expert craftsmen/craftswomen who have guided her, she obtained certification as a Florida honey judge from the University of Florida in 2019. She and her husband started a small not for profit which still maintains consolidated information about excellence in honey and hive products- [ApiSolutions Consortium](#)

Mini Presentation

Wayne Downs

Tips on Cleaning Extractor and Equipment

Montgomery County 10-Day Forecast (www.weather.com)

Thu 08	74°/50°		Mostly Sunny
Fri 09	70°/50°		Partly Cloudy
Sat 10	80°/55°		Mostly Sunny
Sun 11	87°/60°		Partly Cloudy
Mon 12	80°/60°		Scattered Thunderstorms
Tue 13	79°/58°		Showers
Wed 14	80°/57°		Few Showers
Thu 15	85°/58°		Partly Cloudy
Fri 16	85°/58°		Mostly Sunny
Sat 17	84°/59°		Partly Cloudy

What it means:

Dry, dry dry! After what has been a very productive spring, there is some risk of an early summer dearth in the midst of the sustained dry conditions.

Despite a lack of meaningful precipitation, we have at least been lucky to escape extended heat waves (for now), a combination which could have been severely detrimental to field resources.

Be sure to check your apiaries' water sources, and keep your fingers crossed the rain in the middle of the month materializes!

EDUCATION WITH MCBA

2023 SPECIAL INTEREST CLASSES

June 20, 2023

Topic: Queen Basics/ rearing (not Queen grafting)

Location: 4H Center located at
1015 Bridge Road, Collegeville, PA 19426

Instructor: Michael Awckland

Time: 6:30PM-9/9:30 PM

- Different ways to raise them
- Tools used for raising queens
- How to raise them, without skill

[Register Here](#)

Individual topics open to MCBA members and guests. Cost is \$25 per person for members, per session; \$35 for non MCBA members, per session.

Sessions will be 2.5-3 hours each. Register and pay in advance below. Classes can accommodate 30-35 spots in reserved classrooms.

A minimum of 12 students must be met for class to proceed.

2023 NEW BEEKEEPERS' CLASS

***Tuesday, July 18**

6PM-9PM

(registration closed)

Honey Extraction - hands on extracting from the club apiary
Weather permitting, the first hour will be spent in the apiary

***Please note the change of date due to July 4th holiday**

SMALL HIVE BEETLE

Reflecting on Presentation by Dr. Jamie Ellis

In our May General Meeting, we were fortunate to have Dr. Jamie Ellis of the University of Florida speak to us about the small hive beetle, a honeybee hive pest that is becoming more and more prevalent in northern climates.

Dr. Ellis has a long history of studying SHB, both abroad and in southeast US, so his insights on this insect were especially helpful as we work to understand this pest more intimately. Without hijacking Dr. Ellis' material, here are some of the general highlights from the presentation and ensuing discussion:



Figure 1. Dorsal view of an adult male small hive beetle, *Aethina tumida* Murray. Photograph by Lyle J. Buss, University of Florida.

Is SHB a major threat to our colonies here in PA?

Major threat? Probably not - at least not in the same context in which we discuss the varroa mite. That does not however mean they cannot cause substantial damage. Colonies that are most at-risk from SHB damage are generally susceptible due to 1) a low population (failing queen, disease, etc) 2) poor health (disease, varroa, etc), and 3) excessive hive space-to-bee population. Put more simply, a strong population of healthy bees properly occupying their hive space will generally keep SHB damage at bay.

What is causing the damage?

The most damage is observed when SHB larvae begin to overwhelm the comb. The larvae are voracious feeders and defecators, and their droppings cause honey to somewhat rapidly ferment. This causes a rather messy "sliming" effect that if unchecked can overtake the nest. SHB larvae also demonstrate a preference for feeding on brood, so if given the opportunity to take hold, SHB can spiral out of control.

What control measures are available?

The best method of control begins with colony health - strong population, good genetics, and healthy/disease-free bees. Next, be sure to only give bees enough space that they can productively defend. There are also several "traps" available on the market (as well as some DIY methods like Swiffer sheets). But according to Dr. Ellis, anything you can implement that taxes or stresses the adult SHB population (without causing detriment to the bees, and within label requirements) is worthwhile.

What else should I know?

SHB larvae are opportunistic feeders. They'll happily eat pollen, bee bread, honey, and brood. One major implication here is your honey crop. It is best to extract honey from frames that have been removed from the hive within a couple of days. There is a reasonably high likelihood a few SHB adults are hiding out in some of your honey frames, and if they begin reproducing, your honey crop could be ruined.

For additional resources on SHB, click any of the links below:

[University of Florida - SHB](#); [University of Arkansas - SHB](#); [Clemson University - SHB](#); [Penn State - SHB](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

2023 Annual Picnic

Keep an eye out for a more formal announcement (email and July Newsletter), but be sure to mark your calendars and join us for the 2023 Annual Picnic! The event is scheduled for **July 29th from 12-4PM**, once again at the Carousel at Pottstown. And if you're feeling competitive, enter the **Smoker Contest** (details below)

Smoker Contest will begin promptly at 12:30 PM and end at 3:00 PM

- NO modified smokers. “Traditional” smokers only. (Electric or any smoker with any modification to the air delivery system will not be accepted.)
- Natural fuel only. Any “manufactured” or “synthetic” fuel is not permitted. Wood pellets are acceptable as well as compressed paper products such as egg cartons. REMEMBER.....if you wouldn't use it to work your hives, it's not natural!
- Entrants will start with an empty smoker

RULES

- At approximately 12:15, judges will have all entrants pack their smokers.
- After packing you will have 3 minutes to light your smoker.
- After 3 minutes, judges will call time and all entrants will walk away.
- Every 15 minutes for the first hour, the judges will pump the bellows three times.
- Any smoker not producing smoke will be turned on its side after the first hour.
- Every 30 minutes for the second hour, the judges will pump the bellows 3 times for the remaining smokers.
- Any smoker not producing smoke will be turned on its side after the second hour.
- After the final 30 minutes, the judges will pump the bellows 2 times for the remaining smokers.
- The last smoker producing smoke will be the winner.

In the event that there are no smokers producing smoke prior to the end of the contest, the last smoker producing smoke will be the winner.

In the event there are multiple smokers producing smoke at the end of 2 hours and 30 minutes, names will be entered into a drawing to determine the winner.

Mite Talk with BeeWorks

We're fast approaching that critical time of season for monitoring and treating against varroa mite. With plenty of treatment options, BeeWorks, LLC is hosting a talk by Michael Awckland on this very topic on Sunday June, 11. Open from 1-4PM, the talk is scheduled between 2-3:30PM and presents a great opportunity to plan your mite strategy and purchase your miticide(s) of choice.

PENNSYLVANIA BEEKEEPING

Honeybee Inspector Program & Queen License

Regina Rhoa, MCBA VP

It is that time of year that our apiary inspector, Jeff Eckel, is busy as a bee. If you have not had the pleasure of meeting him, you are in for a treat. Jeff is very knowledgeable and is a person you want to have as your best friend during beekeeping season.

If you do not already know this, you must have an apiary license to keep bees in Pennsylvania. License is good for 2 years and only cost \$10. If you do not already have a license, you can apply for one at <https://www.paplants.pa.gov/Account/NewLicense.aspx>. It is critical that you are registered, since if a case of American Foulbrood (AFB) breaks out in your area, the inspectors are required to inspect all hives within a 2-mile radius of the outbreak. AFB is a very contagious bacterium that is lethal to all honeybee colonies that become infected. While Jeff tries to get out to visit hobby beekeepers, he is only one man for a very large region. If you feel you have a disease or concern, you can always reach out to Jeff to come out and do an inspection. This is not a bad thing but a very good opportunity to learn from a very experienced beekeeper. Every time Jeff comes out, I learn so much more. Jeff's email is jeeckel@pa.gov and his work cell number is 717-956-8245.

While most people know, or I hope they know that you must be registered, I have one issue that I constantly hear. Members mention to me all the time that they are “giving” away their bees (either frames, nucs or whole colonies). They do this since they don't want to expand their operations, or they want to help a friend with a test frame to check for a hive being queenright. While this is noble, it is illegal without the proper license. To sell or even give away bees, you must have an additional license (Queen and nuc license). To obtain this, just reach out to Jeff. He will arrange to come out and do an inspection to issue this license. The license does not have an additional fee and is good for 1 year. This license is to be sure you are not spreading around diseases.

All please have a sweet and sticky beekeeping season. Help us to help all yours and your neighbor's hive stay disease free.

Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association

Don't forget to renew your PSBA memberships or consider joining for the first time! While we at the MCBA try to offer as much as possible to you members locally, the PSBA is another great organization that does so much on behalf of PA beekeepers. Furthermore, our county is always well represented in PSBA membership, something of which we can collectively be proud! An overview of all the benefits the PSBA offer can be found by clicking [HERE](#), so please check it out and consider joining!

THE BEGINNERS' CORNER

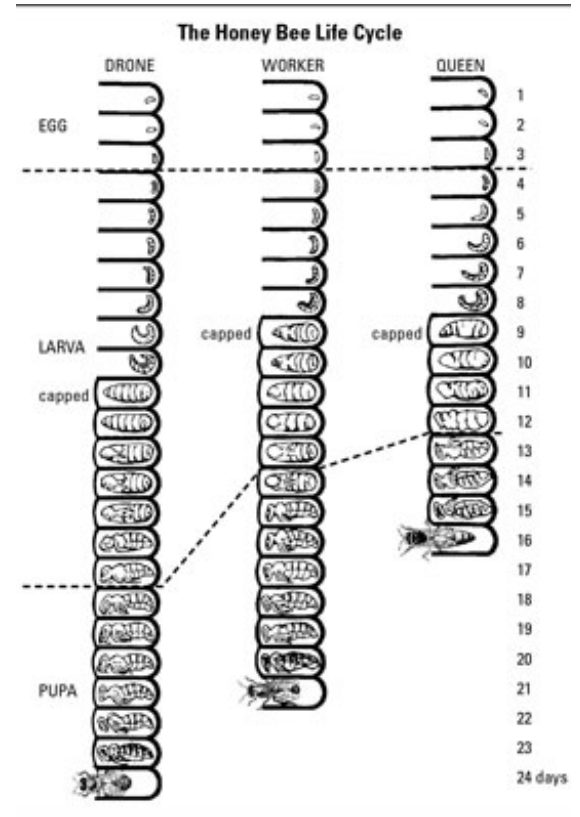
As the son of a retired math teacher, my mother would be thrilled to know that I found another use for arithmetic in my every day apiary operation - bee math! Whether we realize it or not, there are so many mathematical considerations we make when we are assessing our colonies. How many frames are covered with bees? What % of space is not occupied? How much honey, by weight, is colony 'X' taking into winter? What is my % mite load before and after treatment?

So much math, even if it is often a guesstimate. But one aspect of 'bee math' that is arguably the most important and plays a role in every inspection involves the honeybee lifecycle.

Observe Figure 1. Study it, memorize it, use it. This little figure, or some version of it, is extremely valuable when determining whether or not the colony is queen right, and what kind of timeline you are on in terms of queen replacement (if the colony is indeed working to replace a queen).

This time of year, queen replacement is a regular occurrence. This could be the result of a swarm, supersedure, emergency replacement, or a strategic management decision from the beekeeper. I could break down the 'math' on queen development, but the good people at Betterbee do a better job of that than I could [HERE](#). I encourage you to click the link to read **The List for June: Bee Math-- the Queens' Rules**. This guide is incredibly useful for understanding how a queen goes from egg to CEO.

Figure 1. The Honey Bee Life Cycle, <https://www.dummies.com/article/home-auto-hobbies/hobby-farming/beekeeping/tracking-the-life-cycle-of-a-honey-bee-188429/>



COOKIN' WITH HONEY

Honey Lemon Bars

If you're looking for a great catalogue of honey recipes, check out the National Honey Board's website at honey.com/recipes
This featured recipe is a quick and easy summer treat!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup all purpose flour
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 3/4 cup butter, cut up
- 3/4 cup honey
- 3 eggs
- 2 TBSP all purpose flour
- 3 TBSP fresh lemon juice
- zest from 1 lemon
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt

Directions:

- In small bowl, combine flour and powdered sugar; mix well. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press mixture into lightly greased 8 x 8-inch baking pan. Bake at 350°F 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned; remove from oven.
- Meanwhile, prepare filling.
- In large bowl, whisk together honey and eggs. Add remaining ingredients; whisk until well blended.
- Pour over baked crust. Bake at 350°F 25 to 30 minutes or until filling is set. Cool completely on wire rack. Cut into bars.