

Gaston County Beekeeper's Association

Next Meeting April 28th

7 pm Citizens Resource
Center Dallas, NC



Upcoming Events:

- **Bee School Practical Test/Field Day & Family Picnic:**

Alternative Beverage April 25th *Please Bring a Dessert*

1500 River Dr #104, Belmont, NC 28012

(800) 365-2739

Rain or Shine! Testing starts at 09:00, lunch around noon.

If it rains, we will be having picnic indoors and not opening the hives....

We will be having a meeting April 28th!

***Bee thinking about the upcoming elections in September, more on that very soon.....

Seasonal Management Spring—a time of year where beekeepers take a big breath and let it out enthusiastically knowing

that a good time of the year (albeit busy) is just around the corner. Yet others, take that breath and seem to hold it in an almost nervous way. The difference? It's simply being prepared for what's ahead. Veteran beekeepers know what is coming and what to look for while newer beekeepers are still anxious about the year ahead. They have made it through the winter, the bees are alive and now they think back to all of the seminars they attended and all of the advice other more experienced beekeepers lectured on and panic sets in... what was meant when they talked about splits and nucs? What about requeening? Will I lose my bees to swarming since they survived? This may be just some of the questions flowing through your head, but don't let it overwhelm you! Keeping things simple and looking at the big picture will help you move through spring with the slightest of problems. This month we are going to talk about what is happening in your hive when it comes to swarm preparation and how to identify certain events so that you can prevent or minimize swarming. At the time of this writing, many of the southern states are already in swarm season while here in the northeast, we are still experiencing temperatures in the 30's!

When it comes to beekeeping, observation is key to understanding a lot of what is happening in the hive. In swarm ecology and biology, often the only signs of swarming that many beekeepers recognize are the production of swarm cells on the lower 1/3 of the frame or the bivouac itself that has formed on a tree limb (hopefully within reach!). By slowing down and really taking a look at the ENTIRE hive we can make sense of a very complex sequence of events.

Timing is everything during swarm season. A few days can mean the successful prevention of a swarm or an act of futility. Before you do

anything, think about your actions and how it will affect the equilibrium of a colony. A colony in equilibrium is one that consists of a mated laying queen, brood of all ages, workers of all ages and a population of drones. Remove a part of that equation and a colony is out of equilibrium. Swarming takes a colony out of equilibrium; and as beekeepers we should understand all that is occurring in the hive and the results of our actions that may disrupt this equilibrium.

Some of the evidence that you may observe in a colony preparing for swarming is the increased presence of fresh new wax at the tops of the frames, the presence of queen cups or queen cells, crowded brood nest and increased nectar collection. Identifying the stage that the brood is in and where the nectar is being stored will help you identify what is occurring inside of the hive.

First is identifying the presence of queen cells and the location and age of those cells. Swarm cells are located on the lower third of the frame and can be numerous. Supersedure cells (not associated with swarming) are fewer in number and generally found in the upper 2/3 of the frame. Emergency cells are present when the queen is accidentally killed, usually by the beekeeper, and can be located around the brood nest. The difference between emergency cells and swarm/supersedure cells is that supersedure and swarm cells are planned and a large amount of royal jelly is produced and fed to the developing queens during the larval stage. With emergency cells, they are not planned and the bees cannot fully devote the energy required to rear that queen. Because of this last minute rearing, queens emerging from emergency cells are often superseded in the weeks following. Back to swarming—its important to identify the type of queen cell that you see in the hive. The age of the cell will assist you in figuring out if that colony has

already swarmed or if you have time to make up a nuc or artificial swarm.

Understanding the biology of swarms is also important. A swarm will issue from a hive generally speaking the day before or the day of the capping of a swarm cell. They do not all have to be capped in order for a colony to throw off a swarm as it only takes one! So take note! You will often see swarm cells of many ages throughout a colony. Also note of any cells that have emerged or have been aborted.

Virgin queens that have emerged will leave behind a cell that may have a small flap at the tip of the cell but at the very least it will have a jagged edge where the queen chewed her way out. Queen cells that have been aborted will have their tip intact but a large opening in the side where a virgin queen stung her sister to death and the workers have enlarged the opening to remove the dead queen. The presence of either of these cells tell you that you have a virgin queen running around somewhere and you can be sure that your colony has already taken off with a large number of work force.

The age of the brood combined with the age of the queen cells will also assist you in determining if the colony has swarmed. Knowing that when a queen lays an egg and that egg remains as such for three days then turns into a larvae, pre-pupae, pupae, etc gives you clues, too. The presence of eggs may mean that your mother queen is there or WAS there within the last three days. The lack of young brood indicates she was there 5-7 days ago. Seeing only capped brood? Well, we know that cells get capped around day 8, so no open brood tells us that the queen was there over a week ago. Perhaps you see brood emerging with lots

of capped brood around—your queen was there over 2 weeks ago and hopefully you have an emerged virgin queen in there!

Once you start putting the pieces together, you can then do the math and determine approximately when that colony will return to equilibrium. Keep in mind that once a virgin queen emerges it can take her up to two weeks to start laying eggs. If a young queen cell that hasn't been capped is observed, you may need to wait three weeks or a little more before you see eggs. Don't rush to judgments and be patient. Let the bees tell you what is happening in their colony and guide you in your decisions. You will be surprised as to how much less stressful and more fun beekeeping becomes! FAQs continued Stephen J. Repasky Stephen Repasky is the author of the book Swarm Essentials. Swarm Essentials outlines the ramifications of swarming behavior (highlighting the often overlooked benefits), proven prevention and management techniques, and how to recover and even prosper from a successful swarm attempt. It can be purchased through Kelley Beekeeping. Reach him at www.meadowsweetbees.com

Something different:

Homemade Coconut Oil and Honey Hair Mask

Perfect for repairing and moisturizing damaged hair. All it calls for is one tablespoon of organic coconut oil, and one tablespoon of organic raw honey. Just add a bit more of these ingredients for extra damaged or long hair. Mix the ingredients together and as an extra step to help your hair follicles open up, heat the mixture up on a stovetop in a small sauce pan.

The mask can be applied to dry or wet hair, although we've found that it's easier to apply to wet hair. Have a towel around your neck

to protect your clothes while applying the mask. Section your hair off and apply generously from top to bottom, focusing on my ends where most damage occurs. Wrap your hair in a bun and let the mask soak in for 30-40 minutes. While you wait for the mask to do its magic, flip through a magazine, read a book, or paint your nails to pamper yourself some more in the meantime. Wash the mask out in the shower using your regular shampoo and conditioner routine and voila! Soft, smooth, healthy hair.

What you'll need:

1 tbsp. Organic Coconut Oil
1 tbsp. Organic Raw Honey
Sauce Pan
Mixing Bowl
Spoon
Towel
Shower Cap (optional)

Website: www.gastonbee.org

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/gastoncountybees>

President - Allen Thompson 704.616.5850

Vice President – Burton Beasley 704.860.1147

Treasurer – Dan Turner 704.648.5511

Secretary/Newsletter – Debi Wheeler 704.867.0927

Program Coordinator – Tamela Bell 980.329.6705

Webmaster – Jim Burke 704.922.2119