

North Okanagan Beekeepers

March 16, 2020

Minutes

- 1) Welcome:
 - a) Keith welcomed all to our meeting (approx. 7:00 pm)
 - b) Approx. 16 people were present
 - c) Corvid precautions discussed: door handles, elevator buttons, table tops, and chair backs were wiped with disinfectant, and 50/50 draw, name tags, and email address clipboard excluded from this meeting

- 2) Business:
 - a) January 20, 2020 minutes accepted as posted: Rick motioned, Doug seconded, carried
 - b) Reminder of membership Fees:
 - \$40 BCHPA or \$20 to local club
 - BCHPA will rebate our local club \$10 if you registered before Jan 31 (but we still get rebate for new members)
 - Register online at the BCHPA site: <https://bchoneyproducers.ca/>
 - BCHPA membership includes *BeesCene* magazine
 - When registering remember to also select “North Okanagan Beekeepers”
 - c) *Honey Bee Diseases and Pests* book for sale for \$15.00 to BCHPA members
 - d) AFB/EFB Disease Survey: reports are still being received at Beaver Lodge as they continue checking for variations across Canada in bee resistance to terramycin and oxytetracycline (talk to Stephanie for inspections, testing, and for more information)
 - e) Club email list showing good response with notices being sent to over 425 addresses
 - f) “North Okanagan Beekeepers” Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/532888917134061>:
 - Over 200 members
 - Members are posting ideas and images and asking if beekeepers have items for sale (equipment, nucs, hives) and if they need help with their operations or are willing to mentor
 - g) Website <http://northokanaganbeekeepers.ca>: to update lists (equipment, bees, swarms, pollination, etc.) or post events contact Keith or James or use the dialogue tab on the website; however, please consider posting to the club Facebook page first
 - h) Regional BCHPA Report: Rick Plantinga
 - Kamloops Semi Annual of March 27/28 cancelled; full refund if already registered
 - Discussion to hold Semi Annual in various locations and AGM in Kamloops but need input from host clubs regarding implications of this action
 - CBC’s *Nature of Things*, *A Bee’s Diary* available on the CBC website
 - Costco suspended sale of bulk (pallets of) sugar
 - Suggestion made for phone conversations to resolve disputes with BC Assessment

- Discussion regarding donations to Boone, Hodson, Wilkinson trust fund; because this is a charitable organization clubs must be careful how donations are made to avoid tax and legal issues
- BeeBC funding of projects (brood minder, etc.) continues and funds pending
- Canada Honey Council:
 - i) Continue working towards reducing interprovincial barriers for movement of honey and bees
 - ii) US peers questioned proof of authenticity of Canadian honey; were surprised to learn that Canada uses NMR and mass spec tests and that, unlike the US, the CFIA does checks and has authority to seize and remove adulterated honey
- University of Alberta research students:
 - i) Have developed a “genetically engineered” probiotic that inoculates bees from Nosema
 - ii) Working on a “bee-tector”; a system comprised of M13 phage labelled with a chromoprotein and displaying a ligand specific to *N. ceranae* spores
- Though not yet in North America, an Asian mite (*Tropilaelaps*), similar to but considerably more problematic than *Varroa*, has been discovered to survive well in cooler climates, contrary to previous assumptions
- Canadian Honey Council’s *Hive Lights* and BCHA’s *BeesCene* spring editions have been published

3) Announcements:

- a) Hold off ordering BeeBC Kerry Clark Regional hive monitoring system (scale, hive temperature and humidity); they are trying to get a grant to fund their newer version, which has a new scale design, as the older model sometimes has issues during winter
- b) Local honey samples are still being requested for testing/research. See Provincial website for more details: <https://bchoneyproducers.ca/honey-samples-wanted-for-nmr-testing/> (will send you honey kit)
- c) Bees and operations for sale:
 - Brainy Bee (Bob and Kay); Arlo’s Honey (Helen Kennedy); Bill’s Honey Farm (Bill Ruzicka); Joe Lomond (is selling hives in the spring \$400 2 deep with bees)
 - Nelson “Smiley” Estate: working with the family, equipment will be sorted, inspected, sold, and some disposed of; discussing a scholarship with proceeds be established (Carol is assisting with bookkeeping), Rick P. will as for help as needed and inform the club when available
- d) Bee courses (subject to cancellation or postponement due to Covid):
 - Paul van Westendorp: Introduction to Beekeeping finished; webinar not available
 - Victor MacDonald’s Beekeeping Basics at OC continuing/leisure studies
 - Beekeeping Basics & Beyond with Doug Gordon and Bruce Watkin in Armstrong <https://www.orchardblossomhoney.com/beekeeping>
 - Beeginners Bee Course with Bill Stagg of Sweetacre Apiary in Tappen end of April <http://www.sweetacreapiaries.ca/beeginners-bee-course.html>
 - BCHA Introductory Beekeeping Course with Rick P. to be announced; contact Richard Plantinga at rhplantinga@telus.net

- e) Urban bee table (requested by Heather Clay) at Seedy Saturday of March 21st in Vernon was cancelled
 - f) BCHPA AGM in Abbotsford October 23 – 25, 2020 is still a go at this point; Langley Bee Club will be hosting the BCHPA 100th Anniversary
 - g) Joe Lomond's spring beekeepers field day in Kamloops, if a go, is May 2, 2020; queens available
 - h) Day of the Honeybee is Friday, May 29th (related events subject to cancellation):
 - Vernon Farmer's Market (Thursday, May 28th) to host a special Day of the Honeybee event (on a holiday Monday (?))
 - Kelowna Farmer's Market, Saturday, May 30th; if open, will need club table volunteers
 - i) We should be feeding our hives this time of year; fondant and pollen patties were made available for sale at the meeting
 - j) College Apiary and Hive Project: nothing new announced (?)
- 4) Speaker Bill Ruzicka, experienced beekeeper and developer of MiteGone®:
- a) Bill shared some of his history: how he started in 1979 with 100 hives that grew into a 500-colony commercial production, which he sold in 2010, retaining approx. 24 for the purpose of the breeding program he created
 - b) Bee Breeder's Circle:
 - Program is for beekeepers "...who wish to keep and rear Vernon stock honey bees."
 - Individuals participate either as Hive Lenders or Learner/Student Helpers:
 - i) Hive lenders: participants bring in best stock hives, which you get back, along with 30 grafted cells per hive donated or a percentage of those you graft (if you choose to graft, but can let experienced grafters do the work), etc.
 - ii) Learners/student helpers: you volunteer to do the grafting of two bars of cell cups in a controlled environment under Bill's instruction along with supervision of experienced grafters, and are rewarded with experience and 30 cells (and if needed a caged virgin queen)
 - iii) Grafting skills required: essentially, it's a matter of manual dexterity and the ability to follow instructions
 - iv) Participant meeting scheduled for mid-April, grafting begins end of May, monitoring continues on through to the end of July (contact Bill directly to confirm exact dates)
 - For more information regarding the Breeder's Circle go to the MiteGone® website <http://www.mitegone.com>, click "Successful Beekeeping," click "Kelowna Bee Breeder Circle 2019 Program"
 - c) Mite treatment; importance of spring treatment and preventing re-infestation:
 - Should treat for mites in mid-April (and then again late July) with a low dose continuous release formula such as MiteGone®
 - Do not need to kill all mites in one round; is better to use low dose of formic acid that is released over a longer period of time, which makes them infertile and weakens their suction causing them to fall to acid on bottom
 - Formic acid is naturally found in honey and therefore using this treatment does not contaminate the honey

d) Buying and selling bees:

- Northern beekeepers traditionally would destroy their colonies (gas them with cyanide) at the end of every honey season and then start with new colonies the next
- These traditional keepers relied on nucs, swarms, splits, and packaged bees to refill their colony-empty-but-fully-drawn-comb hives; they were not starting from foundation
- Starting hives from foundation means your bees will be spending a lot of energy drawing out the comb first and therefore your honey production will be minimal that first season
- Natural vs artificial Swarms:
 - i) Natural swarms are a good way to replenish your stock and are effective in hives with new foundation because the queen has naturally prepared herself to hold off laying until a new home is built; you will see good results in honey production if you provide them with heavy feed while they're drawing out the new comb
 - ii) Artificial swarms (queen plus 60% of the hive) are an excellent way to replenish your stock (instead of ordering nucs, splits, or packages) and if you put them into hives with deep drawn comb you will have a good honey crop; artificial swarms also help eliminate transfer of diseases like AFB; make sure the queen gets a nice clean drawn out frame as she will continue laying immediately
- For an interesting article and more information regarding buying and selling bees, visit the MiteGone® website <http://www.mitegone.com>, click "Successful Beekeeping," click "Buying and Selling in the 21st Century"

e) Rearing your own queens:

- You want to go into winter with a new queen, and though you could order one in September, it's preferable to work with one you reared in June because you've had an opportunity to test her brooding prowess over the summer
- Commercial beekeepers usually requeen their hives annually (hobbyists can do it less frequently or only when their colonies appear to be failing)
- Simple requeening is done by using a cell-in-cell protector which is placed on the emerging brood comb; the virgin hatches and kills the old queen (if not, you do)
- Can also requeen by splitting and running a parallel colony in which to introduce ordered queen cells or caged virgins
- For more information regarding requeening, visit the MiteGone® website <http://www.mitegone.com>, click "Successful Beekeeping," click "Requeening, Swarm Control, Splits = Wintering Success"

f) Contact Bill Ruzicka via email at billruzicka@mitegone.com or phone 250-762-8156

g) Keith video-recorded Bill's presentation, which included a discussion of the above topics and numerous amusing anecdotes; Keith will announce when and if it will be made available for viewing (?)

5. Closing

- a) Next Bee Club meeting to be held in same room on April 27th (fourth Monday instead of third due to academic testing)
- b) Meeting adjourned approx. 9:15 pm: Rick motioned, Ken seconded, carried