



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Summer 2022 Edition

Ron Miksha, ABLB editor

**"Keeping bees is like directing sunbeams...
- Henry David Thoreau**

Here at the **ABee Landing Board**, we try to bring interesting seasonal stories. This issue is especially timely. We have some things that every beekeeper in Alberta should know at this time of year.

During the next three months, you will likely be discouraging swarming, making splits, supering hives, making honey, and extracting your big crop. You will need to register your hives, at least with the province, and maybe with your town or city. This issue has the information you need.

Lots of people help make this a great newsletter. And you can help, too! We would enjoy your favourite tall tales and tips and tricks. Please send your pictures and stories by [email to ABee Landing Board](#).

In this issue, Glenda is sharing one of her sustainability secrets, and it's a good one. My family used this trick when I was a youngster. You'll enjoy reading about it.

Malcolm is back. This time he gives us some advice on making nucs. There are a lot of ways to split hives, but Malcolm details, step-by-step, something interesting that works here in Alberta.

Liz continues to do so much for our newsletter: writing, copy-editing, and organizing. Russ tells us how and why to mark queens; Mark reports on spring maintenance of his Calgary apiary; Carmen treats us to sweet honey flavours; and Olav's team has a report on some clever 3D-printing of an experimental frame with varying worker-cell sizes!

Enjoy!

Ready for Summer?



Summer will keep you as busy as your bees. Here is a quick overview of some of the main things you will need to take care of during the next three months. Chores and timing always vary from place to place and year to year, so just think of this as a summer summary that will help you organize your work somewhat chronologically:

- ★ Check brood: should see even pattern in all stages;
- ★ Test for mites, treat if necessary;
- ★ Look for disease: identify misshaped or dead brood;
- ★ Add 2nd brood box to hives that cover 8 frames;
- ★ Consider splitting strong hives;
- ★ Control swarming (more space/splits/foundation);
- ★ Register beekeeping with the province by June 30;
- ★ Add honey super(s) around July 1 for summer crop;
- ★ If the lowest super is very full, shift it to the top;
- ★ Keep monitoring and controlling swarming;
- ★ Remove honey frames only if at least 2/3 sealed;
- ★ Try to extract the same day as honey is removed;
- ★ Generally, remove honey boxes before August ends;
- ★ Begin any needed disease and pest treatments; and,
- ★ Begin feeding for winter supplement stores.



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Country Blossoms – Glenda Livingston

Glenda Livingston has taught various parts of the beginner beekeeping course for the Calgary and District Beekeepers. Glenda and her husband operate a market garden (and many honey bee hives) on the dry-country prairies east of Calgary.

Necessity, the Mother of Invention

Worn-out bee boxes are inevitable after serving for many years in a bee yard. If you find yourself with a collection of aged brood boxes, consider repurposing them in a garden. In this edition, we will showcase some creative garden uses for retired bee boxes.

Now, before I explain the functionality of used bee boxes in a garden setting, I'll note that we live in a rural area that is somewhat remote and very exposed to high winds. For us, the appearance of our garden bee boxes is a minor concern but their function is crucial to the survival of many plants. For sure, with a pretty coat of paint, they could look quite handsome. Instead, you will view photos of our farm's set-up – cracked and faded old brood boxes functioning superbly to help us grow food in this formidable prairie! Surprisingly, the boxes hold up quite well due to the interior being lined with wax and propolis.

The Armour Box:



Gardening on the prairies can be heartbreaking. Between the merciless wind, scalding sun, chewing rodents and the freeze-melt cycle of a Chinook wind, tender new trees can be wiped out easily. So, a few years ago, we started experimenting with old bee boxes when we realized that our nursery of year-old shelter-belt trees needed protection. Our solution was to put an old brood box over the baby trees and instantly create a windbreak, intermittent shade and, during the winter, a means to hold mulch in place and trap water from snow that blows in.

Our experiment using old brood boxes worked! The shelterbelt trees, now in their 6th year, no longer need bee-box protection. We also use the Armour Boxes to protect any delicate transplanted tomatoes, squashes and herbs, especially when their first few weeks outside coincides with challenging conditions of wind and frost.

The Seeding Box:



If you are seeding crops for transplant such as onions, leeks, shallots, or flowers you may notice that the black plastic seeding trays are not deep enough to promote strong root growth. Once again, old bee boxes provide a great alternative. By slicing full brood boxes in half and attaching plywood bottoms an effective Seeding Tray emerges. Holes can be drilled to allow for drainage, but we found it is unnecessary. We fill our trays with potting mix, seed our crop and are pleased with the results. The seedlings tend to be robust and transplant easily into the garden when the time is right.



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

The Mini-Garden Box:



Repurposed old bee boxes can make excellent mini-garden containers. We have rows of them to grow a variety of herbs. The bee boxes function like mini raised beds. It is easy to incorporate soil amendments in these 'mini raised beds' and their generous depth encourages healthier root growth. Also, water is conserved since the space is contained. We use drip lines and emitters to target individual plants in a long line of bee box gardens, but a garden hose will work just fine in a smaller setup. The only challenge occurs when overwintering perennials in these boxes. The roots may be overly exposed to the walls of the box. However, we have found overwintering success by creating a two-storied bee box set up. Introducing the next solution... the "Overwintering Box".

The Overwintering Box:



By attaching a solid roof to a second bee box, one can create a closed in environment for overwintering perennials. It fits perfectly over the Mini-Garden Bed because that's how brood boxes work! We have

attached plywood to one of the open ends of the brood box. By cutting back the perennial plant, stuffing it with insulating straw and then roofing it with an overwintering box, the plant is ready for winter.

We weigh down the roof with a sandbag or block and the plant enters winter protected from the elements. The tight-fitting setup appears to deter chewing rodents as well. It works!

The Mini-Greenhouse Box:



In the spring when your vulnerable transplants are out in the garden and the weather forecasts hail, heavy winds, or frost, there's no problem – enter the Mini-Greenhouse Box! This structure is basically the Armour for Transplants with a sheet of rigid and clear polycarbonate screwed on one open side. We pop it over tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, melons, delicate herbs and flowers when we expect harsh conditions. The polycarbonate allows sunlight to enter so it can stay on during a particularly cold day and it will repel hail or snow. Just remember to remove the Mini-Greenhouse Box when the weather turns sunny.

So, before you give up on your old bee boxes consider giving them a second life in your garden!



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Notes from Dr. Olav Rueppell's Team at the University of Alberta Bee Lab

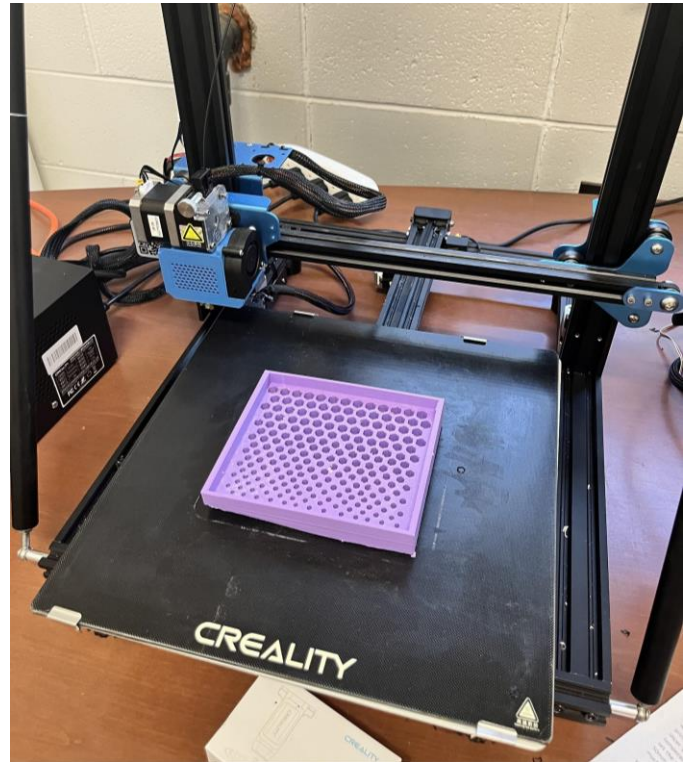
*Dr. Rueppell highlights research in various-sized cells and the queen's egg-laying response. Maybe we shouldn't be using uniformly-sized foundation in the broodnest. This is important and intriguing work. **This article was written with student researcher Tianna Tanasichuk.***

You would not expect our growing lab at the University of Alberta to reinvent the honeycomb, for honey bees, would you? Well, at the Rueppell Honey Bee Research Lab we are getting the opportunity to use the relatively new technology of 3D printers to do just that. These printers provide us the opportunity to be more creative and with some simple programming instructions, we can now print the proper resources for our experiments. One research project of the lab is focused on manipulating the body size of worker bees. Body size affects almost every aspect of life and it is curious why honey bee workers are all similar in size, while in other social insects, such as bumblebees, body size has a tremendous effect on colony organization. Have you ever wondered why we don't have bigger or smaller bees, while in Asia giant and dwarf honey bees roam the world? And 3D printing has made it possible to generate honey bee workers of different sizes by printing comb with vastly different hexagonal cell sizes.

Figure 1: A 3D-printed, experimental frame of comb with cell sizes ranging from smaller than worker head to almost twice the normal cell size. Queens lay eggs into almost every one of these cells.



Figure 2: After a few hours of printing, this comb is ready for hive introduction. Initially, the bees are reluctant to use it, as is the case with most plastic materials. However, once it has acquired the hive smell, bees do not seem to mind using it.



Our group has many questions about honey bee body and cell size variation: Will body size affect the division of labour among workers? Are larger workers more stress-resistant and longer-lived than smaller workers? Can colonies with a mix of workers outperform colonies that have uniform workers? And how is cell size affecting the queen egg laying behaviour? These are the questions we want to answer.

Of course, the beekeeper knows that queens will preferentially lay drones into large cells and fertilized, female-destined eggs into smaller cells. But can we change the queen's experience of comb enough to affect her choices? Alternatively, we will use a method that was invented by Karl Jenter for queen rearing (the Jenter system), using a separation between cell bottom and walls to trick the queen to lay worker eggs that will



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

then be transferred into larger cells. For the small cells, we have to overcome the opposite problem: Queens lay into cells that are so small that the workers do not fit in and therefore cannot provide brood care! Once the small and large workers are produced, we can study the consequences of the body size differences with another cutting-edge method: We label each bee electronically with a miniature radio-frequency identification chip that allows a recording device to automatically monitor the behaviour of the bees. If all of this works out, we should soon have more to report on honey bee body size and what it means to “bee” of the right size.

Tianna Tanasichuk and Olav Rueppell



A Bee Walked into a Hive. . .

***A Bee Walked into a Hive...** This feature will brighten everyone's day. Dennis Milbrandt has a great sense of humour and a gift for word-play. Bees, honey, and combs are naturally punny. What could go wrong?*

While sitting next to the hives and talking philosophy with the older bees the subject of where did bees originate came up. Both hives said they came to Earth from the stars. However there was a conflict about which star.

❖ One hive said they came from BEEtlejuice in the constellation of Orion

❖ The other hive said they came from Alpha Centauri Proxima Bee.

Both said they came to Earth in the Star Trek 1701 Bee So many things about bees we don't know. *

- DennisM

**editor's note – I didn't know either, I had to look it up:*

[Workbee | Memory Beta, non-canon Star Trek Wiki](#)

Enterprise **1701** refit — A **Workbee** is a type of workpod, a small utility craft which is used throughout the Federation. The name, sometimes split into two ...

[History](#) · [25th century](#) · [Known craft](#) · [Specifications](#)



Alberta Bee Clubs

Here are links to some of Alberta's clubs:

- [Calgary District Beekeeping Association](#)
- [Edmonton District Beekeeping Association](#)
- [Grande Prairie Beekeepers Club](#)
- [Red Deer & Area Beekeepers Association](#)

Edmonton District Beekeeping

EDBA MEMBERSHIPS:

Monthly meetings for Edmonton-area beekeepers. If you are interested in becoming a member or renewing your membership, please contact the EDBA treasurer at: EDBAtreasurer@gmail.com. The cost is \$25/yr. Cash, Cheque, or e-Transfer accepted.



The EDBA is considering car pooling members to the **Beaverlodge Beekeeping Field Day** if it's held on the usual third Friday in June. That would save money and give members a chance to talk about bees all the way over and all the way back!

Malcolm Connell and Craig Toth are offering their bee courses, now in their 8th year, in the Edmonton area. [Contact them here.](#)

The tentative schedule for the Edmonton and District Beekeepers monthly meetings in 2022 are as follows:

- ★ Saturday, July 23rd, BBQ
- ★ Thursday, August 18th
- ★ Thursday, September 15th
- ★ Thursday, October 20th
- ★ Thursday, December 1st or 2nd in conjunction with the [Alberta Beekeeping Commission AGM, Conference & Trade Show.](#)



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Calgary and District Beekeeping

Beekeepers at any stage can benefit from the CDBA mentoring program – either if you are starting out or ready to share your experiences with novices. This newsletter has posted some of this information before, but we don't want anyone to miss out. Be sure to check [the CDBA website](#) for details about these opportunities.

CDBA Member Mentoring Program – 2022

CDBA mentoring has taken place for many years in one form or another. Because we are a club, members try to support each other to become successful and better beekeepers. Recently, members have been provided mentoring in at least 3 ways.

1. **Saturday at the Hive** – This program finds beekeepers with over 5 years of experience who volunteer to open their apiary and operations to other beekeepers. Although this program is normally most beneficial to newer beekeepers, experienced beekeepers also enjoy seeing how other beekeepers manage their bees. This program has been somewhat hampered by Covid; however, because the demonstrations are normally outside, the program has continued.
2. **One-on-one Mentoring** – This program is designed to benefit the new beekeeper most. The plan is to extend this program in 2022 to consist of volunteer and paid options. The beekeeper seeking mentoring sends an email with their general location to liz.goldie@shaw.ca.
3. **Email questions and answers** – If you have a question about beekeeping, present and past members can email it to calgarybeekeepers@googlegroups.com and beekeepers on the distribution list provide answers.

If you have any questions about the mentoring programs, would like to volunteer, or are seeking a mentor, please contact liz.goldie@shaw.ca.

Should you have suggestions or would like to volunteer for any Calgary and District Beekeepers Association programs, contact calgarybeekeepers@gmail.com.

Calgary and District
Beekeepers Association

CITY OF CALGARY APPROVED

Beginner's Beekeeping Course

June 25 and 26

Instructors:

Neil Bertram, Ron Miksha,
Liz Goldie, Thomas Schweizer

Everything you need to know for
your first year of beekeeping. Meets
City of Calgary educational
requirements.

For details, please go to
[the CDBA events web page](#)

The CDBA Speakers' Series will wrap up this season with a very special talk about **Alberta queen rearing**, to be presented by **Glyn Stevens** on **June 8**.





ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association



Stampede is riding into town.

There are CDBA volunteer opportunities for **Calgary Stampede: 2022**. Please click on the following web link to go to the signup sheet:

volunteersignup.org/MRPBP

and then just follow the instructions on the page. It only takes a few seconds to do. Thank you for volunteering!

- Liz Goldie liz.goldie@shaw.ca

CDBA First Annual Photo Competition

Calgary and District Beekeepers Association is calling for entries to its **First Annual Photo Competition**. The **grand prize winner** of the competition will receive a cash prize of \$150 and their photograph will be displayed at the Calgary Stampede. In addition, there will be **first, second and third place prizes** (\$100, \$50 and \$25) for the winners in each of 5 categories. Cash prizes will total \$1,500. Winning entries will appear in the *ABee Landing Board* newsletter and will be posted on the CDBA website. Yes! Money and Fame! Contest rules and submission details are available from Calgarybeekeepers@gmail.com The competition began **April 15** and the **deadline for entries is June 30, 2022**.

These CDBA notes were provided by Liz Goldie (on behalf of the CDBA board members)



2022 Southern Alberta Beekeepers (SAB)

Field Day June 16, 2022 | University of Lethbridge

The Alberta Beekeepers Commission and The University of Lethbridge are hosting a one-day Southern Alberta Beekeepers (SAB) Field Day event this June 16, 2022, at the University of Lethbridge.

This educational and networking event will focus on best management practices around pollination activities, grading hives for pollination, pesticide practices, and strengthening collaboration between beekeepers, crop producers, and seed companies.

SAB Field Day speakers include Jeremy Olthof, Shelley Hoover, Andony Melathopoulos, Thomas O'Shea-Wheller, Renata Borba, Rodrigo Ortega Polo, Ross Tisdale, Brian Crump, and Jeff Kearns.

Check the ABC website for more details.

<https://www.albertabeekeepers.ca/2022-sab-field-day/>



Bearspaw BenchFair

The Cochrane Bearspaw Fair is looking for bee-passionate people interested in participating at the Bearspaw Fair this August 26, 27, and 28.

This year's theme is **Bees & Trees**. The fair will have honey judging and bee-themed exhibits. CDBA will be sponsoring the first, second and third prizes in the light honey, dark honey and creamed honey categories. The help of knowledgeable people to judge entries would be greatly appreciated. If anyone from the CDBA or folks around Cochrane are interested, the Fair organizers would be most grateful to hear from you!

You can get more information from Jackie Morton (mortonjackie@ymail.com) and Susanne Roth at (horseabode@gmail.com).



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Calgary Maker Faire

A BIG THANKS to the participants in the **Calgary Maker Faire** that was held at the BMO Centre on May 14 and 15. Bill Rayment coordinated the event with volunteers Tibor, Jim, Andrew, Daniel, Anna, Soleil, Keith, Oliver, Joni and Mike hosting the booth throughout the weekend.

For those of you who haven't heard of a Maker Faire, it is a venue where "makers" show their hobbies, experiments and projects. Everyone from engineers to artists and beekeepers showcase their innovations, creativity and resourcefulness.

Our CDBA booth showed items like electronic hive monitoring devices, solar water pumps, and the evolution of different hives from skeps to polystyrene hives. This was a different kind of exhibit than our standard beekeeping exhibit and it was designed by Bill to reach out to a different group of Calgarians.



Andrew, Bill and Mike explain bee innovations to visitors.



Bill and Keith explain in-hive electronic monitoring devices.



Bill's bee vacuum and a 3D printed mite (luckily not to scale).

Photos provided by Tibor Hickman



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

How do you shake? – Malcolm Connell

Editor's note: Malcolm was asked how he creates "Shook-swarm Splits", which usually refers to making a split by shaking out the old queen and lots and lots of workers into new equipment. In other words, you are sort of making a swarm, but you don't have to get a ladder to catch this one.

Here's Malcolm's step-by-step procedure:

- A) I just look to see if each queen is laying ok, i.e., has at least 1-2 frames of brood in a good pattern.
- B) I group the hives in groups of 3 hives or 4 hives (following Bill Ruzika, Vernon, BC, Feb. 2019 issue of 'Bee Culture'. Bill died, Nov. 10, 2021.)
- C) I put all the brood frames from the 3 other hives into one hive, hive number 4 in each group. I'm creating artificial swarms rather than simple splits.
- D) I only shake 40 % of the bees from hives 1,2,3 into hive 4, the mega-hive with all the brood from hives 1,2,3.
- E) I make sure I keep the queens, 60% of the bees and no brood, in hives 1,2,3. In hives 1,2,3, I put 2 frames of sugar syrup, 2 frames of pollen and 5 empty frames with drawn comb. This creates a population explosion. Ruzika says a queen will panic and will lay 3 frames of eggs in 3 days. Last year it usually took 5 days for a queen to lay 3 frames of brood.
- F) I can sell hives 1,2,3 as nucs with 3 frames of brood each and a frame of honey within 10 days: May 24th.
- G) When I sell/take away the nucs created from hives 1,2,3, usually there is a fourth frame of brood left over in hives 1,2,3. I use this to start round 2 of the nucs.
- H) How do I get extra queens in mid to late May when most grafting does not succeed because of erratic and cool weather?
- I) I turn mega-hive 4, which has all the brood, into an incubator supercedure hive by putting the queen in the mega hive separate in the bottom box for 3-4 days, and have 4 boxes of brood on top in the mega hive. On those 36 frames in those top 4 boxes,

about 10-15 supercedure cells will be created, and will hatch 10 to 11 days after you lock the queen in the bottom box of the mega-hive.

- J) You use these supercedure cells to create a second round of nucs by putting one or two brood frames with at least one queen cell into each leftover 1-2 brood frame nuc from leftover bees in hives 1,2,3.

You can continue creating a few more rounds of nucs until mid-July. Those mid-July nucs can provide extra queens on August 10 when you split mega-hives with at least 8 frames of brood.

Put the empty box in each split on the bottom board; otherwise, an empty top box can be crowded with more honey coming in and the queen will lack space to lay future winter bees.

A shook-swarm system like this is meant to lessen the transfer of American foul brood and viruses. Don't forget to keep using sugar syrup and frames of pollen in nucs. Don't do this within a city backyard, except with 2 hives.

Malcolm

By the way, any backyard beekeeper can follow this system and can create a couple of extra nucs from 2 hives without buying queens.

Comments to Malcolm: connellmjm@hotmail.com



Beekeeping Hint: You can use drawn comb and foundation in the same super. Many beekeepers use drawn comb on the outer edge (1st and 10th frames) of the box and alternate foundation and drawn in the rest of the super. Comb is best drawn on foundation when a nectar flow is in progress, the comb is warm at night, and young bees can reach it easily. This happens if the super is placed right above the broodnest.



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Our series, "It's honey, Honey" focuses on backyard urban beekeeping as performed by a very experienced Haysboro (SW) Calgary beekeeper. Mark is quite active in our bee club, contributing with Saturday at the Hive, organizing the winter banquet, and volunteering in a wide variety of roles, including auditing CDBA's financials. The retired firefighter is an award-winning honey producer and accomplished bee master.

It's honey, Honey

By Mark Soehner
Summer 2022

Greetings to readers of the third edition of the Calgary and District Beekeepers publication.

It is a windy, overcast Spring Wednesday afternoon (4 May) with the temperature at plus 15C. Yesterday we had plus 20 °C and sunshine with a slight wind.

The past weekend I was into all ten of my hives. On my last writing, there was a postscript that in late February I discovered that 4 of my 10 hives had died. What I was doing this past weekend, was going into all the hive boxes to determine what went wrong.

Mice, mice, mice and water.

I had mice in half my boxes. The evidence was mouse droppings, the eating of comb, wax particles on the bottom board, and finally missing bee bodies replaced by bee parts on the bottom board. I expect the mice terrorized the hive, eating everything and laying waste.

With the centers of many frames eaten and destroyed by a mouse, the nucleus of the hive ceased to exist and likely the queen was destroyed.

I had water intrusion and that was evidenced by water on frames, mold on frames, water on the bottom board, mold on the bottom board, and dead bees throughout the box on all surfaces of the frames. I expect the bees were chilled in a wet hive and gave up.



Dead bees on the frame.

Perhaps the lids were placed faulty, and covering of the lid ineffective.

I know on examination, generally the ten hives were slightly tipped backward. As a result, when there was snow melt on the bottom board veranda, the water moved inwards into the hive, rather than draining and dripping away from the hive.

Did the bees have sufficient food and freedom from mites? I think so. I did not see dead mites amongst the bottom board cleanings. There were lots of frames with honey in the four dead hives.

I did have multiple boxes rather than the standard two, and this extra space perhaps added a chilling.



Multiple-storey hives may have contributed to chilling.



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

What I have done so far:

Cleaned the bottom boards and aired them, tilted the hives forward to drain if needed, completed two oxalic treatments, screened the front bottom entrances, inspected a week later to confirm no freeloader mice.

What I will do extra in the Fall:

Cover the two colony pairs with a new 6x8 rain tarp, fix mouse guards, place mouse poison, noticeably tilt the hives forward. Go back to a winter top entrance/vent, ensure only two boxes stacked per hive in October.

My Fall Check List

Mite control
Weather wrap
Rain wrap
Tilt forward
Honey & Sugar patty
Mouse guard & poison
Maximum two boxes per colony
Top entrance/vent

– Mark Soehner



Regulatory Updates

All Alberta Beekeepers - It is that time of the year again when, according to the *Bee Act*, beekeepers are required to register with the provincial government by June 30. The *Bee Act* defines a beekeeper as “a person who owns and possesses bees or beekeeping equipment or both.” This means that even if you only own used equipment, you are still required to register every year. It is also a good time of the year to sell used equipment if you no longer keep bees.

The beekeeper registration form can be found at [Beekeeper Registration Form](#) and if you need some help, a guide is provided at [Beekeeping Registration](#).

If you plan to move and/or purchase bees, queens, or used equipment from outside of Alberta, you need a

permit to do so. Please check [Movement of bees and equipment](#) for more information and a guide on how to apply. Importation of bees or nucs from Ontario has special requirements at this time. Please contact the Alberta Bee Health Assurance Team at 780-644-8746 or bee@gov.ab.ca if you have any questions.

You can find updated honey bee management practices at the following links.

[Honey Bee Health and Apiculture – Resources:](#)

- ★ [Honey Bee Pests and Diseases 2022](#)
- ★ [Bee Health App](#)
- ★ [American Foulbrood Fact Sheet](#)
- ★ [European Foulbrood Fact Sheet](#)
- ★ [Purchasing Honey Bees or Equipment in Alberta](#)

Calgary Beekeepers – Effective January 2022, beekeepers in the City of Calgary are required to register their bee colony locations with the City. To register, go to <https://www.calgary.ca/csps/abs/animal-services/responsible-pet-ownership-and-licenses/urban-bee-program.html>

Beekeepers who had bees prior to 2022 have until the end of the year to register with the City. The City has indicated it will take a month to process the permit. Beekeepers who started beekeeping in 2022, prior to the registration form becoming available, are required to register immediately. Now that the application form is available, it is expected that anyone planning to get bees will first apply for a permit.

If you have any questions about the City of Calgary bylaw requirements, please contact calgarybeekeepers@gmail.com.



Liz Goldie

Enjoying this newsletter? Want to share it? Before we can send the newsletter to anyone, we need their approval. Anyone can subscribe for free by sending a note to ABee Landing Board: [email ABee Landing Board](#).



ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

Talking Bees ranges as far and wide as the bees we keep, covering topics as diverse as how to share your passion for bees with family, friends and the public, tips to keep your back healthy in the apiary, and the importance of mentorship and education in beekeeping, all while recognizing that there's no single flightpath to success in beekeeping.

Talking Bees by Russ Peters

The joys (and perils) of marking queens

It's been a slower spring so far in 2022, but last year we had three colonies come through the winter strong and as soon as the warm weather hit, they took off like bottle rockets.

Every week we'd find swarm cells – and through May and June it felt like we were pulling a split almost every week.

Which meant that we needed to know where the queen was in each colony.

The problem is, I'm not a confident queen wrangler.

I truly admire (even envy) those expert and agile beekeepers who seem to be able to spot a queen from about 10 yards away and then casually pluck her from the frame between thumb and finger and steer her into a queen cage or, even more amazingly, just hold her in a closed fist while they efficiently complete their hive inspection.

That's not me. Not at all.

But after a few seasons of straining our eyes trying to find our queens, last year we decided to at least try marking them to make our swarm-season inspections a little more efficient. A much more experienced beekeeper told me, "If you see a queen and she's not marked, catch her and mark her."

There was no way I was going to attempt to do it freehand, so to speak, so I bought a pen and one of

those queen marking cages, with the sliding gate and the foam-covered plunger.

Despite our nerves, our first attempt went smoothly, and the queen came away sporting a prominent white dot on her thorax.

The second one went well too. With two hi-viz queens under our belts, when we went to mark our third queen we felt like old pros. We weren't. Which we proved to ourselves (and the queen) when the pen leaked. Rather than giving her a stylish white dot, she wound up with a gaudy full paint job, pasting her wings down and coating her abdomen.

It was one of our more deflating moments in the apiary, and we were sure that the ghostly queen, all gummed up with paint, wouldn't survive. (Don't worry, she did)

As to the question of whether marking queens is worth the effort, for our little apiary the answer is a strong yes. This is particularly true during May and June when you might find yourself needing to do an emergency split to take a little horsepower out of a swarmy colony. If you make it easier to find the queen and cage her up or put her somewhere safe, you'll significantly cut the time and work required to pull a split.

And even when we just need to do an inspection or move frames around, if we know where the queen is, we can get our work done more quickly and with the confidence that we aren't going to inadvertently injure her in the process. At least, that's been our experience. Individual results may vary...

Make no mistake, even if you mark your queens, they're still queens, which means they're going to play hide and seek, especially when you really need to find them. We still haven't seen our all-white ghost queen yet this year, but we know she's around, because she's producing sheets and sheets of brood.

Who knows? Maybe the next time we see her, we'll give her paint job a touch up.





ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 3 – June 2022 Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

***Honey Reci-bees** is a quarterly series of recipes and cooking/baking ideas from **Carmen Peccie** and from contributing club members. Carmen is an enthusiastic second-year beekeeper located in De Winton.*

HONEY RECI-BEES by Carmen Peccie

It's time for picnics and camping! Here are two unique reci-bees that you may not have tried before.

I am going to try this one as a foil pack when I go camping in June.

HONEY-GLAZED SPICED CARROTS

4 tablespoons of unsalted butter, melted

3 tablespoons of honey

1 tablespoon of brown sugar

1-2 teaspoons of salt

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 lb small carrots, peeled and trimmed

1 tablespoon of thinly sliced fresh chives

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Mix all ingredients except the carrots and chives in a bowl, reserve 2 tablespoons of the mixture. Pour the remaining mixture over the carrots, and toss to combine. Spread it in a single layer on 2 baking sheets. Bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes. (Or put it in a foil pack and place on a grated campfire!)

Toss the roasted carrots with the reserved 2 tablespoons of the butter mixture and place on a serving platter (or camping plate). Sprinkle the chives on top.



HONEY FRENCH DRESSING

1 can (10 oz) tomato soup

1/2 cup vinegar or lemon juice

1 teaspoon of salt

1 teaspoon of black pepper

1/4 cup of honey

1/4 cup of salad oil

1-2 teaspoons of dry mustard



Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Enjoy on your favorite salad. Store in the refrigerator.

If you have a favorite honey reci-bee that you would like to share with club members, email it to me with "Honey Recipe" as the subject line to: Carmen



Beekeeping Hint: As colonies grow in population, they have the potential to become dangerous. Until your experience builds up, keep a lit smoker ready and dress to your comfort level. It is possible to work bees without smoking them, but you'll need good weather, equipment that is not welded together with propolis and wax, a gentle bee strain, and you'll need to be in your Zen space. That may come one day. If you have just a couple backyard hives, losing the smoker might be possible after a few years of beekeeping.

At this time of year, especially when splitting colonies or pulling honey (occasions when the bees may become a bit defensive), judicious use of a smoker is a good idea. You don't need to blast a lot of hot smoke, but just soft wafts of "cool" white smoke. Smoke the entrances lightly before touching the hive. Don't light it after you've stirred up the bees. Keep them (and yourself) relaxed and calm from the start – don't try to make friends with the bees after they've disapproved of you.



Got great photos to share in this newsletter?
Send them to [ABee Landing Board](#).



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THE BACK PAGE EDITORIAL

Ron Miksha

Whatever happened to the Flow Hive?

When [the Flow Hive](#) appeared, I didn't like it. I had only seen it in the ads. I never used it. But I didn't like it. And I could tell you why in a very condescending tone.

First, the flow hive was invented by an Australian surfer and it was promoted like it was the seventh wonder of the modern world. It would make beekeeping simple and easy for anyone who could turn a tap and let the honey flow.

Second, I didn't like the advertising pitch that implied no one would ever open a hive again. I know, they didn't say that, but it was the message I heard between the lines. I worried that my honey customers would see how easy beekeeping actually is and they'd discover that I'm lazy and I overcharge for turning my honey tap.

Third, I didn't like the Flow Hive because I knew it wouldn't work outside of Australia. Bees don't like deep plastic cells and even if they stored honey in them, our honey gets cold and granulates and would never, ever drain onto my breakfast pancakes.

Finally, I'm an old beekeeper and I have seen many, many gimmicks come and go over the years. People get excited about a slick new beekeeping idea, which inevitably crashes and burns. Almost inevitably. I remember when old Reverend Langstroth came up with his moveable-comb thing and I laughed so hard that my tobacco plug flew across the room. But then folks started using it. Now I see his hive almost everywhere.

A few weeks ago, I decided to ask around and I found a few brave Alberta beekeepers who tried Flow Hiving. Seven years on, they are still using it. I had my reality jolted a bit.

The Flow Hivers are real beekeepers. They know their bees. They don't put the super on and forget about it. They say it's not perfect, but it works for them.

"I like trying new things. The bees took to it slow at first, but much easier later. Granulation can happen around canola, so tap regularly."

"Overall, the experience is much nicer than typical extracting... it's less distracting for the hive. You need to keep your hives strong to get them storing in them."

These people, here in Calgary, like their Flow Frames. These are "early adapters", willing to try new things. They recognize the flaws (less honey, more work deterring swarming while keeping hives extra strong, monitoring so crystallization doesn't start) and the high cost isn't appealing, but they see some positive aspects and have kept using the frames.

I won't switch. But I'll try to keep an open mind about new ideas – like Olav's 3D-printed experimental worker brood cells we saw on page 4 of this newsletter.

I will also try to keep an open mind about old ideas. I never made shook-swarm splits in my life, but Malcolm explained how it could work (page 9); and, if I were growing plants, I'd use some old bee boxes for all the reasons Glenda gave us on page 2. In fact, that is something I had seen before. When I was a teenager, my family's farm reduced from 800 colonies to just 300 because in that part of the world, the greenhouse business was blooming and made a lot more money than honey bees. Just as Glenda showed, we used empty rims for seedlings during the transition. As the greenhouse prospered, we went to plastic. But years later, I still saw the occasional hive-tray of sprouting tomatoes.



Many thanks to all our [ABeeLandingBoard](#) volunteers. All readers are invited to contribute. We'd love to hear from you!