

**Toronto Beekeepers Collective (TBC)
Monthly Meeting (ZOOM)
July 19, 2021
Agenda and Meeting Notes
7:00 - 8:45 pm**

Meeting called to order at 7: 11 p.m.

Members attending: Alessandra, Alison, Amanda, Anne, Audrey, Deborah, Deirdre, Gillian, Humza, Jessica, Kerry F., Kit, Lynne (note-taker), Maker, Manny, Maria, Maureen G., Maureen (Mo) P., Nancy, Patricia, Robin, Roy, Savino, Sophie, Sue G., Winnie
Joined by Selina-Rachel Mendez, new member and beekeeper for Sundance Harvest – welcome!

Regrets or not registered on the Zoom call: Alana, Allan , Bernie, Christine, Connor, Gita, Helen, Jeff, Jonathan, Julien, June (on leave), Jude, Kerry G., Laura, Luc, Marie, Maryama, Melanie, Nicki, Niyi, Patrick, Oliver, Orlando, Robert, Sierra, Susan W.

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement (Anne/Robin/Oliver)

Robin included in the agenda a second land acknowledgement provided by Gillian whose partner is Indigenous. Robin and Anne asked that members suggest which of the following two they preferred – either indicating in the chat or via e-mail. Whichever is chosen will be read at the beginning of each TBC meeting from now on, and will be included in the notes.

Land acknowledgement #1:

The members of the Toronto Beekeepers Collective acknowledge that we meet in the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat, which is home to many diverse Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is subject to Treaty 13 between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit as well as being in “Dish With One Spoon” treaty territory, a treaty that binds us all to share and protect the land. Those of us who are uninvited settlers commit to listen and learn as we actively work towards reconciliation.

OR

Land acknowledgement #2:

The Toronto Beekeepers Collective is situated and operates in the traditional territories of the Wendat, Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. We are bound by "The Dish with One Spoon" Wampum Covenant, which directs us all to steward the land, air, and water for all inhabitants now and for seven generations to come. This responsibility includes restoring and protecting spaces for honeybees as well as wild pollinators

and other non-human creatures too, as part our commitment to reconciliation with the First Peoples of this land, to the earth, and to those who have journeyed here before us.

2. Fake honey and how to fight it - Truehoney.buzz (Robin)

True Honey is a small team of beekeepers with a deep concern about honey fraud, i.e., about the amount of fake honey that is coming into Canada. Fake honey is honey diluted with some kind of sugar, often rice or corn syrup. Truehoney.buzz is asking beekeepers to scrape some honey from their hives, right from the frame and including comb, and put it into a jar that Truehoney.buzz is supplying. They also want us to take photos of the hives, the surroundings, the yards, to give an idea of what kind of forage there is, and then seal the jar with a label they provide to ensure chain of custody. Truehoney will analyse the honey (using magnetic nuclear resonance) to identify its contents (which they will also provide to the supplier). From these samples of honey, the team is planning to generate a global database of honey components that can be used to help stop the honey fraud. Check out the website (<https://truehoney.buzz/>) and/or the following video for more detailed information. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kueWLhSD2ul&t=36s> Let Robin know if you have hives of your own and would like to join the study.

3. ABC Bees: Michael Bush's beekeeping naturally (Robin)

Michael Bush (MB) is an experienced beekeeper in Nebraska. Check out his website and activities at <http://www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm> (note: not a secure site)

Robin introduced TBC members to some of his extensive beekeeping wisdom and tips regarding queens and queen rearing.

- Levels of “queenlessness” – Bush suggests there are 3
 - o Just lost – workers have lost track of the queen. Bees seem confused, start looking, may be grumpy and unsettled. Lots of fanning.
 - o Within 24 hours of losing the queen, the bees are definitely QL and are feeding larvae in queen cell to produce a new queen. They have moved to fix their situation and are probably working away happily.
 - o Hopeless hives – bees discover that the queen is missing but do not have any larvae at the right stage for starting a new queen. Workers start laying more; the hive is likely obviously unhappy.
- If you ARE QL, and the bees are just starting to replace her, you will be QL for a while –24 days, with bees working from a 4-day-old larva
- How else can you tell that a hive may be queenless? A QL hive “makes a roar” as opposed to the usual quiet “busy-ness”
- To find the queen, start from the bottom and work up.
- Worker bees are always laying eggs, too, but “egg police” remove the eggs because they are haploid and will produce only drones (although

- some species of bee produce clones of themselves instead).
- How quickly each egg is laid, is capped, and hatches for queens – chart follows the notes
- If trying to manipulate the hive to have the queen lay more, then have to know the status of the nectar flow. Keep a bloom diary to track what food is available and when.
- If you see eggs but there is no queen, you know for sure she was around 3.5 days ago.
- Queens may/will stop laying if there is a dearth of food, so not all eggless hives are QL
- MB does not like queen excluders.
- If we see a queen cell, she will emerge within 8 days. However, the workers will chew off the wax on the cell within a day or two of her hatching.
- Robin says we need to be thinking more about encouraging queens to grow to adulthood and catching them as they hatch. It has been difficult to obtain queens this year, and their cost has risen considerably.
- If a queen is in a cage, she is not laying and will stop producing pheromones.
- Queen lays 1,000 to 3,000 eggs, way more than required by the hive, so many are “wasted” – pitched out by the egg police.
- Scattered eggs mean the “egg police” are not keeping up.
- Do not mark a virgin queen until she has had her mating flight and has had a couple of weeks to settle in to her new job. Then mark her. Otherwise she might fly away.
- MB suggests that we refine our observation processes – look, smell, listen.
- Russian worker bees tend to choose their own queen.
- If you see a virgin queen but lose her, take out one frame and let the bees start fanning to tell the virgin where she needs to come back.

4. Beekeepers Report (Luc/Alana/Patrick)

While there were no beekeepers on the zoom call, there were items to report from Patrick, and also a discussion among TBC members about when honey harvest(s) might begin.

- a. Patrick reported there will be a strong honey harvest from the OSC hives. Quite good at BCCF, also. Not as promising at DVP, though getting progressively stronger.
- b. Will there be an early harvest at OSC? If so, then Robin suggests we may use the honey harvest trailer to do it. We can drive the trailer right into the OSC parking lot outside the hives. Deirdre reported that there is a special program being held in the area where we have done OSC harvests previously. That would not allow for a summer harvest at OSC, but Audrey will begin process of applying with OSC to have the usual September harvest. The height of the hives at OSC are becoming a bit precarious and

difficult to maintain, so a summer harvest is highly desirable.
Nancy said it may be possible to have a harvest at FoodShare.

5. **Committee Reports**

- a. Finance (Nancy, Jessica):** Applied for funding from one program promoting bee health, as well as providing for new equipment, including a new decapping tool, a new extractor, additional silver winter wraps. Also applied for funding from a second program for education – courses for some members to learn queen rearing – also some tools to accompany a queen rearing program. Nancy and Jessica were notified today that TBC had received approval for a part of the funding. The funders did not have enough to give the full amount to all of the successful applicants. Nancy will follow up to see if we have to do what we said. If permissible, then Nancy will use some of our TBC account monies to purchase equipment.
- b. Equipment (Maureen/Robin):** Nothing much to report. No builds planned. There seems to be sufficient equipment in the sheds. Big thanks to Kit who cleaned up the beetle-infested woodware and took the bags (many!) to the City disposal site. Manny has taken responsibility for obtaining wood chips and a new propane canister for the torch to take to BCCF.
- c. Website (Jonathan/Melanie):** no report
- d. Social Media (Jessica/Jude):** Jessica said there was a video posted to Instagram by BCCF (also reposted to TBC Instagram). Alison took photos of pollinator garden at OSC and these have been posted to Instagram. Jessica invites members to send photos to her (jess_robertson@msn.com) and she will post them.
- e. Education (Audrey/Maria):** Nicki and Christine did the “Adults in Nature” program with 25 participants at Downsview Park. The feedback was very positive, the program successful. Thanks, Nicki and Christine!
- f. Membership (Nicki/Lynne/Christine):** Robin reported that she met with Selina Mendez, who is the new beekeeper for Sundance Harvest. They are keeping 2 hives which were sourced from Luc. Note: Selina joined the meeting at 8:20 p.m. – welcome!
- g. Health & Safety:** Anne will circulate Allan’s informative guide to bee yard safety. It is a good idea for members to review protocols around bee stings and other safety measures periodically. See also the notes from the June 17, 2021 meeting where we discussed how to deal with bee stings, specifically.
- h. Accessibility (Lynne/Kerry/Maria):** Kerry presented a gorgeous powerpoint on the new raised beds at OSC, reporting on the progress of the perennials. Thanks to the crew that set up the beds (Kerry, Connor (Kerry’s son), Kit, Winnie), the planters (Kerry and Sophie), and the regulars on the watering detail. Sue Gulley reminded everyone in the chat that it is very important to grow plants grown from “Ontario seed-source”. That designation

means that seeds are harvested from plants growing in our local area. Paul Heydon at Grow Wild or any of the growers who participate in the NANPS plant sale (Parkdale) every May are examples of such suppliers. Sue notes, “It is important to buy from small local native growers as they are harvesting seeds locally. Some of the bigger nurseries get their seeds/plants from the southern US and even the west coast.” Robin reminded TBC members (in the chat), to “also ask for plants that have not been treated with glyphosate or neonics — not a given.”

- 6. Ask Me Anything - with the staff beekeepers** - questions about your bees, our bees, work bees, the world’s bees!
- a. Humza asked how you encourage the bees to start building comb on his waxed plastic foundation. Robin suggested putting honey on the plastic to encourage the bees. Humza had thought of spraying sugar water. Key too is new bees - they do much of the wax production.
 - b. Selina asked what to do if there are 2 queens in a hive. Robin said bees may swarm with one of the queens. Or one queen may kill the other. Selina said they are co-existing right now. Will continue to monitor.
 - c. Humza asked if it is normal for wasps and flies to hang around the hives. Yes! They are attracted by the free food. Bees will take care of any intruders.
- **Any Other Business** - Anne said that she hoped members would soon be getting a message from the web committee to sign up for yard visits. The frequency and unpredictability of inclement weather had made scheduling challenging.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 - remember to register on SignUp!!

Meeting ended at 8:37 p.m.

Egg-to-bee: Honeybee “Bee Math” chart

Bee Type (Caste)	Hatch	Cap	Emerge	Maturity
Queen	3.5	8 +/-1	16 +/-1	28 +/-5 (laying)
Drone	3.5	9 +/-1	20 +/-1	42 +/-7 (foraging)
Worker	3.5	10 +/-1	24 +/-1	38 +/-5 (flying to DCA)

(DCA = drone congregation area)