

**Toronto Beekeeper Collective  
Monthly Meeting (via ZOOM)  
April 14, 2021  
7-8:45 p.m.  
Agenda and Meeting Notes**

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Minutes taken by Lynne Howarth (Thank you!)

**Members attending:** Alison, Anne, Audrey, Christine, Deirdre, Humza, Jessica, June, Laura, Luc, Lynne (note-taker), Maria, Maureen G., Nancy, Patricia, Patrick Arteaga (new beekeeper), Robin, Sophie, Sue W., Winnie

**Regrets or not registered on the Zoom call:** Alana, Alessandra, Allan, Amanda, Bernie, Connor, Deborah, Gillian, Gita, Helen, Jeff, Jonathan, Jude, Julien, Kathleen, Kerry F., Kerry G., Kit, Maker, Manny, Marie, Maryama, Maureen (Mo) P, Melanie, Nicki, Niyi, Oliver, Orlando, Robert, Roy, Savino, Sierra, Sue G.

- Welcome (Anne/Robin)
- Introducing our new beekeeper!
  - Patrick Arteaga - based in Toronto area; shares interest in the music of the hives; has good technical expertise and lots of knowledge, if not decades of experience
- Hive visits under the grey zone? Lockdown? Emergency brake? Whatever; AND Pollen Traps (Nancy)
  - Safety protocols - with COVID cases rising, we were required to submit protocol to FoodShare and it was approved today; 2 beekeepers in the yard + 1 outside of the yard in case of emergencies; before anyone goes to the bee yard, will have to fill out Ontario COVID self-assessment form online, then forward self-assessment to Luc. Alison asked via Chat: "Did something happen last year to now necessitate 2 beekeepers at every hive check?" Robin responded: "Simply safety/insurance policy — the notion of a beekeeper having an accident with nobody knowing about it made our hair curl. So we implemented the call-in process."
  - Pollen traps - have 3 new ones (courtesy of Nicki and birthday \$\$\$) + 1 purchased (Sundance style); plan to place each on a strong hive but not engage it until June 1<sup>st</sup>. Two members

("pollen collectors") to go and collect pollens every 3-4 days from each of the hives; collect pollen in ziplock bag then put in freezer to prevent mould. Then one more cycle 3-4 days later. Pollen collectors will gather pollen, put it in freezer, and thereafter disengage the traps before next hive check. Don't want to leave on too long as traps can make the bees cranky. Later in the season, may engage pollen trap again. Note at BCCF there is a safety protocol for number of people on the farm at one time. So have to be careful that collectors don't exceed COVID-approved number when they visit.

- Nancy would like to show new beekeeper how pollen traps are to be engaged.
- All details will be posted on sign-up along with link to self-assessment form; will also send the link to all.
- ABC Bees: Bill Stagg's 'holistic' beekeeping: bee health (Robin)
  - Focuses on health of bees and how you can recognize it – rather than focusing on sickness, such as mites, fungal infection, viruses, pesticides, etc.
  - Can recognize a strong hive by smell, look, sound of the bees
  - 3 KEYS: Good management; breed stock carefully, good nutrition
  - With splits tries to mimic swarming to break brood cycle
  - Pollen supplements never used
  - Uses only refined sugar rather than organic sugar because of particulates that seem to cause digestive woes
  - Keep mite levels down – Stagg treats right from opening of hives in the Spring, and treats throughout the season; uses only organic mite treatments
  - If by mid-July the hives is not "bubbling over" with bees and brood, then a possible crisis in the works
  - Best queen mating occurs around the solstice; do not remove drone comb before then; in fact, keeping drones may strengthen genetic pool
  - When Stagg breeds queen, he focuses on gentle bees, and also for quietness in the hive
  - Looks for "winter frugality" – bees that are moving gently and quietly – conserving energy so as not to require same level of feeding in winter as during warmer seasons
  - Stagg Uses formic in the Spring around cherry blossom time
  - Don't split before dandelion bloom is strong in the Spring – need for healthy and plentiful food source for the bees

- Look for +24C for mating
- Robin invites all to share things they may be learning through courses, reading, media/documentaries, etc.
- Beekeepers Report (Luc/Alana)
  - Luc says the timing for checking hives has been limited because of weather
  - Robin and Maureen have been stopping by to take a look
    - Robin showed a photo of a dead queen and a bee covered with mites (DVP)
    - Photo of bees with pollen baskets filled looked healthy (BCCF)
    - 4 lost hives cleaned up at DVP
  - Luc will go by hives Friday (April 16) – DVP, OSC, BCCF, FRY – volunteers accompanying Luc will need to follow safety protocols and fill out COVID form in advance.
  - Robin is negotiating new agreement with DVP for TBC yard
  - Fresh City Farms will be moving to a different site at DVP, but this is happening slowly
  - There are also community farmers who will be staying in site close to TBC yards
  - Alana said both of the community hive sites are doing well – healthy and thriving!
  - Melanie has visited FRY and only 1 hive may be faltering, but others are doing well
  - Luc plans on doing some hive splitting; with an early Spring many beekeeping operations are finding it difficult to obtain queens;
  - Maureen said bees, comb, etc., from DVP have been sent away to college in Alberta for testing; she will text to see when we might anticipate receiving a report on what happened to the DVP bees (mites? viruses/disease? Pesticides or herbicides? Other?)
  - Unless we are all fully vaccinated, it will likely not be possible to do a honey harvest this year in the same way we did at OSC in September 2020. COVID-19 safety protocols must be followed and numbers strictly enforced.
  - Audrey told Luc that OSC must be notified of when he (as well as others from TBC) will be visiting the hives; OSC may not admit him (or others) unless notified in advance Deirdre subsequently texted a form to Luc to be filled out before going on site at OSC (see next bullet point)

- From Deirdre via chat: “For anyone going to OSC - if you can add this link to your phone (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/screening/worker/> ) that would help - basically if you fill this out it will make Security happy. :-).”
  - Luc reported that system for recording hive notes has been set up and ready to go.
- Committee break-out session to touch base
- Committee Reports:
  - Finance (Nancy, Jessica) – The plan was to re-jar the honey in 500 g to 250 g jars but not able to get into FoodShare yet; that honey will help with additional funding for the TBC this year
  - Equipment (Robin/Maureen)
    - Robin reported that a member of the Toronto Urban Beekeepers Association has created a mobile harvest trailer that she is offering to the TBC for use this year
    - Maureen’s update re shipping container - \$2,700 + tax + delivery (ca \$4,000), 7-10 days for delivery, painted white; ready to go when we put in our order; OSC is in favour; Audrey reported that insurance certificate was approved and received today
  - Website (Jonathan/Melanie) – no one to report
  - Social Media (Jessica/Jude) – some updates coming up
  - Education (Audrey/Maria)
    - Maria suggests sending a photo to Pollinator Watch if anyone sees a critter that needs identification
    - Audrey noted that the Education Committee will work out how to streamline the process whereby links to sites, articles, media, etc., of interest are submitted by members for posting to the Forum actually get there. The EC will likely designate a point person to gather and post materials.
  - Membership (Nicki/Lynne/Christine/Kathleen) – no report
  - Health & Safety (Bernie/Helen/Alana) – no one to report
  - Accessibility (Lynne/Kerry/Maria) – the accessible hive is currently under construction
- BeeTeeVee (need someone to take this on!) (You Tube channel) – Robin still looking for a point person on this – beginning with a triad. Will keep asking until there is uptake. (Added enticement ... There

are chocolate eggs for volunteers)

- Other Business
  - Discussion of honey vinegar “mothers” and Luc’s carboys of mead. Exchanges will take place.
  - Nancy recommended *Honeyland*, a documentary playing on TVO, for TBC members to watch. Maria and Luc also said it was excellent - a must see.
- Meeting adjourned 8:42 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 17<sup>th</sup>