

# Dunn County Beekeepers Association

Menomonie Alliance Church Room 116

502 21<sup>st</sup> St. N, Menomonie, WI 54751

August 12, 2019

**Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll Call: 20**

**Guests: John Sippl - NRCS-National Resources Conservation Service**

**Secretary Report:** None. Last month was the picnic. Great turnout and great food!

**Treasurer Report:** Mary B. updated the DCBK checkbook, savings, and petty cash amounts. Church room rent is paid up until November. DNS domain name renewed.

Motion made to pass treasurer report by Veronica K. seconded by Wayne B.

## **Old Business:**

Dunn County Fair: 20 volunteers worked one or more shifts at the fair. Dave Wolske's new 5 frame observation hive did great. 2 frames honey, 2 frames bees and brood, 1 frame on top with the marked queen. He was able to leave it there the entire time and bees did well. Visitors got a lot out of it, so we will use it going forward.

We have only three bags of honey sticks for next year, so will need to order more for 2020 fair. There is plenty of honey candy so won't need to order more candy for next year's fair.

Megan Milbreth, Wisconsin Honey Queen, was at the fair Friday afternoon. Angie M. will send her a thank you card and reimburse her for admission to the fair.

24 people signed up for more information about bees. Mary B. will send them info and invites for our winter 2020 Beekeeper workshop.

## **New Business: John Sippl from NRCS: Pollinators**

All pollinators are seeing a decline in numbers specifically in the last 20 years. How can we help?

Leave areas to go natural. Save some bare dirt areas for underground bees. Leave fence lines, buffer areas and dead grasses over winter for places for bees to overwinter.

Forests: pull out invasive species like buckthorn and wild honeysuckle that take over forests and prevent good trees like maples and basswood from growing. One adult basswood tree provides as much nectar to bees as about 4 acres of clover.

Deer and pollinator plots: Diversify mixes. If you have open areas, a little management can make a big difference. Plant things like radishes, turnips, peas, sunflowers, clover, etc., that will reseed. When planting brassicas, plant before June 15<sup>th</sup> so the photoperiod is right and they will set seed.

Pastures: Clover, alfalfa and trefoil (can be aggressive) let go to seed instead of mowing down early.

Cover Crops: When planting things like potatoes, kidney and snap beans, they come off in August. There would be time to plant a cover crop of buckwheat which would be ready in 30 days and provide bees with plentiful food in September.

**NRCS Programs available:** <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wi/> tech note #8

EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program - taking agricultural land that is non-productive and/or low quality and converting to pollinator and or wildlife plots. There is financial assistance available to help convert. Recommendations are to plant two grass types that are 1-2 feet tall, and 20-25 native flower species.

CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program - Continue to work with existing fallow lands to plant species of grasses and flowers for wildlife.

CRP - Conservation Reserve Program- Working with eligible farmers to help them address soil erosion, water quality of rivers, streams, and lakes, and how to enhance forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland into vegetative cover such as trees, native grasses, or wildlife plantings.

Tips to start a Deer or Pollinator plot:

Mow/control burn the area. Let regrow a bit, then spray with an herbicide mix of Roundup and 2,4-D Amine. Roundup will kill grasses and 2,4-D Amine will kill broadleaf weeds.

If you rough up the soil for seed germination (only with compacted land) do so before spraying. Any tilling of the land will allow weed and grass seeds to germinate and they will compete with the seeds you plant.

Wait about 3-4 weeks after spraying to broadcast your brassicas or pollinator mixes.

To start a pollinator plot: Broadcast the seeds October/November to take advantage of the freeze thaw in the fall and also in March/April. This will allow the seeds to get a good germination. Won't see much bloom until year two. First year is all about root growth on perennials.

To start a deer plot: Broadcast your radishes and turnips mix in the spring before the summer solstice to make sure the photoperiod is right and they will set seed and reseed in. A good compliment to brassicas would be clover.

To maintain plots: Mow high - then burn or remove bulk of grasses and stems.

To promote grass growth - mow in spring.

To promote flowers growth and bloom-mow after flower seeds have fallen in late Oct/early Nov.

Seed purchasing options:

Pheasants Forever/ Elk Mound Seed are two that have a good mix with two short grasses and 20-25 flowering varieties in a mix. Look for good quality mixes with blends for early, mid, and late blooming.

### **Milkweed- Menomonie Community Garden-Mary Lotten**

The garden is a Monarch way station and they do a monarch watch. They have a plot there that garden plants with 5 types of milkweed, plus zinnias. They collect larvae and hatch them; raise them in a butterfly house; then release them. So far this year they have released 74 monarchs.

Tips to deal with milkweed. The flowers are good for nectar, but the butterflies lay eggs on the plant and the caterpillars eat the plant. If you want to prevent too many milkweeds from taking over, remove some of the seed pods, but leave the plants until late September to avoid killing the caterpillars.

### **August To-Do List:**

#### Pull off Honey Supers-Products and Methods to get bees out of the honey supers.

Honey Bandit, Bee Be gone - if using sprays, spray on a piece of felt stapled to a piece of cardboard. Place the felt side down facing the hive. Leave on the hive 5-10 minutes. Remove and use on the next hive. Bees should be out of the honey super and it can be quickly removed. Quickly cover it and get it into a secure location away from the hives. Remove queen excluders at the same time and set aside.

There are also fume boards that can be purchased and reused, but most long-term beekeepers don't recommend doing this. These will smell up your bee storage location even if it is placed inside sealed bags or containers.

Other options to remove bees include using a leaf blower, using a bee brush on each frame, or just shaking the frames to remove the bees. Your preference.

Good idea to get honey supers off of the hives during the month of August while the temperatures are still warm. Comb is more flexible, honey will flow better, less risk of robbing during removal, and it allows time for bees to back fill their hives and prepare for winter.

#### Mite-A-thon:

Mite-A-thon is the week of Sept 7-14<sup>th</sup>. Plan to check all of your hives for mites, and then report on-line, or bring in your hive/mite information to the next beekeeper meeting and get the info to Jenny Gruber. Watch for the Mite-A-Thon link info.

#### Treat mites:

If one of your hives has high mite count numbers, treat all hives in the apiary.

### Feed up Bees:

Once honey supers are removed, rotate the boxes/get the queen and brood to the bottom of the hives and help them back fill the brood boxes with honey. When cool rainy weather/nectar dearth hits, feeding bees will allow them to continue to raise some brood which will keep the numbers of bees up and promote “fat bees” going into winter. Fat stores on the bees will help bees get through winter.

If a hive is queenless- we have until about the middle of August to have them make their own queen from eggs, have her mated, and returned back to the hive. If that isn't possible, combine the hive with a queen-right hive. Place newspaper on top of the queen-right hive, then set the queenless hive on top and allow the bees to chew through the newspaper and connect the hives. This won't work if there are already laying workers.

### Honey Robbing and how to prevent:

Pull honey supers off before the honey dearth. Take “wet” honey supers after harvesting the honey, and place them back on top of the hives for them to clean up. Only leave on 3-4 days tops or bees will be tempted to back fill with honey again.

Build robbing screens for the front of your hives. Take an extra entrance reducer and #8 hardware cloth. Add legs to the entrance reducer and staple on the screen. This will block the front of the hive to robbers, but the hive bees will know to come out the top of the robbing screen and come and go. There are ones you can buy, and also designs on-line to build your own.

### Storing honey supers and extra boxes:

Allow the bees to clean up your “wet” honey supers after you are done harvesting your honey. After several days, remove the supers, and stack tightly in a cold storage building with protection from wildlife. Sprinkle moth crystals on the top and underneath the boxes to prevent moths from moving in. This works well for extra brood boxes you need to store through winter as well. Do not store pollen over winter. It deteriorates and bees won't use it next spring. You can either shake the pollen out, or soak the frames in water, then rinse out the pollen before drying and storing the frames. You want to preserve the frame comb if at all possible to save bee's time and resources for the next year. Work with comb before cold weather as comb gets very brittle in cold and can be damaged beyond repair.

### Wildflowers blooming currently:

Joe Pye weed, goldenrod, boneset, birds foot trefoil, burdock, wild sunflower.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. Motion made by Dave W. seconded by Donna F.