



Jackson County Beekeepers Monthly Newsletter

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# Getting ready for Spring Swarms



by Meindert Dijkhuis

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March 2023  
TOP STORIES

## In Memoriam: Dustin Davis

On February 1st 2023, we lost our friend and fellow beekeeper Dustin Davis of Hollywood, AL at the age of 40. He is survived by his wife Tricia, and sons, Darren, Drew and Lelan. As I am writing this, I am still not grasping the fact that this young man is no longer with us. He was involved in a tragic vehicle accident near Knoxville, TN that evening. He had picked up 3 milking goats in North Carolina that afternoon, and was on his way home when the accident happened.

I have only known Dustin for 7 years, since I became a member of the Jackson County Beekeepers Association. As I got to know him I discovered his trials and tribulations in life, and how he found peace when a friend introduced him to bees, and beekeeping. Since that time he was able to become a Master Beekeeper, and honed his skills in queen rearing and artificial insemination procedures. Dustin was a community focused individual, not only as an EMT and Firefighter, but he was also instrumental in getting people to get involved with beekeeping and recruiting new members to our club. Dustin served as President, Vice President and Secretary of the club over the years. We surely will miss his support, wisdom, and funny stories.

Our former Vice President, and acting President Keith Fletcher wrote a very personal eulogy I also wanted to share.

My relationship with Dustin was no more special than anyone else's who knew him, yet Dustin made every relationship special in their own individual way. Each of us who knew him, also knew that Dustin was as kind and helpful as the day is long, trustworthy, and dependable. I also saw a special side of Dustin, a very rare attribute seen these days in anyone, which is ---a "galvanizer" of people. Dustin had a way of motivating you to do what you always wanted to do but somehow you didn't for some reason or another. Dustin pulled people together, convincing them they COULD, instead of letting them believe the lie that they COULDN'T. That was the positive energy of who Dustin was -- PERIOD.

He was my friend. Perhaps my best friend who also had his hands in the

bees. And the pain of his absence hurts my heart deeply, still. I know I have to push on, because not doing so would have been counter to what Dustin expected of me as his friend.

On Thursday Feb 2nd, I awoke in the early morning hours, like many of you, wiping the sleepers out of my eyes to learn of the tragedy of Dustin's passing the evening before. He was cut down in his mortal prime. A loving father, a devoted and loving husband, a good decent friend. A man always looking ahead for new opportunities. Positive attitude incarnate. I had little awareness that Dustin was thinking of starting to raise, keep and manage dairy goats. But his passion in seeking out new opportunities led Dustin didn't surprise me at all. So it made sense why he traveled on the highway that day.

Just four days earlier, standing by my car in the Hardee's parking lot after we had finished eating our breakfast, Dustin witnessed to me the power of God's love, telling about a skilled laborer phoning him about laying the building foundation for his new house, when his previous help had suddenly quit on him. Dustin told me that could only be a gift from God.

Later, for God to deliver Dustin up to Heaven to be with Him, our earlier conversation began to make sense to me. The force that Dustin gifted us mortals here on Earth was just a sideshow to the Big Show, which was Dustin's glory and majesty as one of God's own to be with him in Heaven. For that, Dustin continues to serve all of us left behind as a shining example of what God wants from us. We sure will miss you, brother Dustin. I, selfishly, will miss you. You'll always remain in my heart and thus you'll be there every time I work my bees. Rest easy our friend. We'll take it from here, until we meet you again.

Keith W. Fletcher

# 2023 Club Meetings

**We will be meeting on Thursday, March 2nd 2023**, at the ALFA building on Hwy 72 in Scottsboro. The meeting will start at:

- **Start time: 6:00 PM,**
- **Presentation: Lionel Evans, a long time beekeeper from Limestone County, will do a presentation on Swarming.**

## Current Management (2023)

February is traditionally our changing of the Guards so to speak, and as of February 2nd, 2023 our leaders are:

- Charles Smith - President (email: charlie2875@yahoo.com)
- Rob Woody - Vice President (email: rwoody@nehp.net)
- Maggie Smith - Secretary (email: oneloveneverfails@gmail.com)
- Trisha Jacob- Treasurer (email: tjacob04@gmail.com)

Current 2023 directors are:

- 1-Year Term: Tim Dalton and Marguerite McClintock
- 2-Year Term: Jeremy Mulkey and Terry McClendon
- 3-Year Term: Dale Orlofsky and Lane Walden

We are proud to have you as our leaders for the next season.

## 2023 Membership Renewal Due Now!

February is traditionally the month to renew your membership.

It's only \$10 per year, and covers your whole household. You can pay the treasurer at the meeting, or if you want to mail it in, please forward your payment to:

- **JCBA, attn Treasurer Trish Jacob, xxx abc street, Stevenson, AL 35772.**

Please include your Name, Address, Phone-number, and eMail. You will receive your proof of payment in return mail.

## Club Resources you can use!

- If you want to use any equipment, like the extractors, or EZ-Vape, for instance, CALL or TEXT Keith Fletcher at (703)887-6071 and reserve whatever you need.

## Business Opportunity.

**New Opportunity:** **Alchemy Farms, at The Market at Artisans Cove, offers Bee related workshops in March of this year. Please go to their website at [www.themarketatartisanscove.com](http://www.themarketatartisanscove.com)**

**Click on “Shop Now” to see all offerings. In addition, they offer 3 lb Honey Bee Packages for \$150 per package.**

**New Opportunity:** **Blossomwood Honey offers Nucs, Packages and Queens. Please see Bill Elliot’s website at [blossomwoodhoney.com](http://blossomwoodhoney.com), and click on Bees or Queens. Packages are \$150, Nucs are \$200**

**(Carry over from last month)** **I received a message from Mr. Chris Gully. He runs a Hardware Store in Bridgeport, AL. He’s looking for someone to sell honey products at his store. If you are interested in this opportunity, please call him on (256) 495-1033 (store number)**

If you have information to share or bee related items you want to sell or looking to purchase, let me know, and I’ll add a note in the newsletter.

## Let’s Talk Bees!

As some of you know, I will be leaving the club this year. The exact date is still up in the air, but my wife and I are slowly moving stuff to our new home in Jacksonville, Florida. We’re emptying our home here in Alabama to a point where we can start doing some painting and repairs before we put the house on the market. The big question for me: what am I going to do with my bees. At the beginning of the year I had 6 hives. I wasn’t sure if I could move them in their current state (hive boxes and bee colony as one unit). I found out that I would be able to move them, but I would need some type of confirmation from the Alabama Bee Inspector saying my hives were safe to bring to another state. Once in Florida, I would have to report and register my bees with the authorities there.

What I am going to tell you next is not by the book, and I may get in trouble for it later on, but so far so good.

On January 15th I loaded 2 of my hives on my truck, for the long trip to Florida. I decided to take my Warre Hive, and the hive from the last swarm I had in 2022. The Warre hive was pretty easy to move, since the boxes are much smaller than the Langstroth hive, and this hive had only 2 boxes filled with bees and foundation. The 3rd bottom box was still empty, so I removed it to make the whole unit smaller, and easier to carry. The Langstroth hive was another story. This hive consists of 2 brood boxes and a honey super. The hive was already very active, and after inspection, I discovered both brood boxes were already extremely heavy (30 & 40 lbs). The top brood box also had honey stored in it from last fall, which made it more heavy. I couldn't carry two brood boxes and lift them into the bed of my truck. The only option was to split the hive temporarily, and transport them detached from each other. If you ever decide to do this by yourself, make sure you suit up, and have the smoker working. The bees took it pretty well, but they got a bit agitated after 30 minutes.

In essence, I created 2 hives with a bottom board and a cover for each, and closed off the entrances with wool I had. I loaded everything on the truck, and covered everything with shade netting I had from my greenhouses. This is a black woven material that shades sunlight, and the bees could not have gone through it. All this happened at about 6 PM the night before I was to depart.

We did not get an early start the following morning. It takes us normally about 9 hours to get to our destination, and it was already dark by the time we got there. I decided to wait till the next morning to unload the bees, since I still had to set up a stand etc.

By the next morning, the bees had been in this transport mode for about 36 hours. I was terribly worried about their survivability at this point. I found a good spot in the backyard, and set up my hive stand. I installed the Warre hive first since that one was in one piece, and should be safe. The key for the reassembly of the Langstroth hive was to do it quickly. The bottom board with the 1st broodbox got installed first. This one also had the inner and telescoping tops on it. The 2nd brood box had a makeshift bottom and top. The trick was to move that box quickly on top of the 1st brood box without all the bees exploding out of both boxes. They were ready to fly. Again, make sure you wear the suit, and have the smoker primed and ready to smoke. That saved the day. Yes, a lot of the bees spilled out of the boxes, but they clung to the hive boxes, and didn't go anywhere. After I got the brood boxes lined up, and the peace had been somewhat restored, I added the honey super back on.

At this point, it was up to the bees to explore their new home. It did not take long for them to find pollen. I did not do any supplemental feeding. After two weeks they had adjusted to the new surroundings. I lucked out, because my neighbor is also a beekeeper, and he's been keeping an eye out, while I came back to Alabama.

As of March 1st, both hives are doing very well. I added a 2nd honey super to my Langstroth hive. The orange trees in the neighborhood are blooming, and we also had Carolina Sherry blooming last week. That was short lived, but the oranges should bloom for some time. Several times we thought the hives were going to swarm, but we figured out that around 3 PM all the bees are starting to return home, and it creates this amazing activity around the hive entrance. Both hives do it. My neighbor and I have set out swarm traps, just in case. Fingers crossed.

A lot can change in just a few weeks. We had left to go to Florida when it was 23 degrees at my house, and we came back today, and found all the Bradford Pear trees blooming, and it was 75 degrees. Go figure.

## CALENDAR

Based on the Beekeeping Calendar for our climate zone, we should: (Covers February, March & April)

1. Check Food Reserves. See if they still have natural resources, or add more supplemental food, including pollen substitute.
2. Check entrance for blockage (if we had accumulation of snow)
3. Weather permitting, do the 1st comprehensive inspection of the season. If you wait to do this until March, check for eggs/queen.
4. If you're thinking about ordering package bees, you better hurry up, and get that order in.

In March, think about the following:

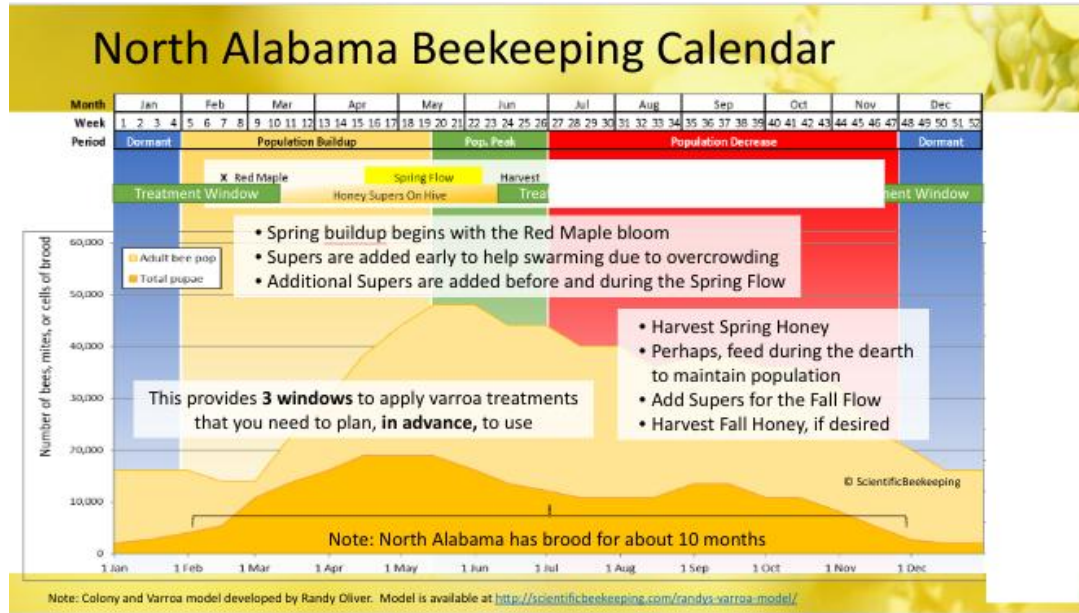
1. Medicate for AFB (American Foulbrood - bacterial disease of larvae - worst problem), EFB (European Foulbrood-bacterial disease of larvae), and Nosema - (Fungus infection of intestinal tracks of bees) - We advise to read up on these problems before administering medications.
2. Medicate for Varroa mites. - Ask about the Easy-Vap device you can borrow from the Club
3. Medicate for tracheal mites
4. Check for Hive beetles, and medicate if needed
5. If you haven't already done so; make sure to get your additional hive boxes ready for service. By adding an additional box as soon as you notice increased activity, early swarming may be prevented.

As April approaches, start thinking about the following:

1. Check for eggs and or the queen
2. This would be a good month for new bees installation in new hives
3. Continue to check for capped brood and brood patterns
4. Feed pollen substitute

- Look for supercedure cells. These are queen cells attached toward the top of a frame. These cells indicate the queen is no longer performing well, and the bees are preparing for a replacement queen. (remember; swarm cell are at the bottom of a frame)

(From Beekeeping for Dummies, 3rd edition by Howland Blackinton)



Copied from Bill Elliott's presentation about Varroa pests

## Favorite Book List

### *Keeping Bees in Horizontal Hives: A Complete Guide to Apiculture*

Georges de Layens & Gaston Bonnier

Dr. Leo Sharashkin (editor)

374 pages, 250 ill.

\$49.95. ISBN 978-0-9842873-6-9

Deep Snow Press, 2017

### *Keeping Bees With A Smile: A Vision and Practice of Natural Apiculture* (I Like!)

Fedor Lazutin

Dr. Leonid Sharashkin (editor)

402 pages, 140 ill., 32 full-color photos

\$34.95. ISBN 978-0-9842873-5-2

Deep Snow Press, 2013.



***Honeybee Democracy Hardcover – Illustrated, October 10, 2010***

by [Thomas D. Seeley](#) (Author)

Can be purchased Used for \$15.00. \$22.00 on Amazon

Honeybees make decisions collectively--and democratically. Every year, faced with the life-or-death problem of choosing and traveling to a new home, honeybees stake everything on a process that includes collective fact-finding, vigorous debate, and consensus building. In fact, as world-renowned animal behaviorist Thomas Seeley reveals, these incredible insects have much to teach us when it comes to collective wisdom and effective decision making.