



## VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS SPRING MEETING

June 17 & 18, 2016

Smithfield Center

220 N. Church Street, Smithfield, Virginia 23430

This year's spring meeting is being hosted by the Nansemond Beekeepers Association and will be held at the Smithfield Center, Smithfield, Virginia. The Speakers: Dr. Larry Connor, retired Extension Bee Specialist at the Ohio State University; and, Jennifer Berry, Apicultural Research Coordinator and Lab Manager for the University of Georgia Honey Bee Program. There will be workshops Saturday afternoon.

Registration on Friday, June 17 will open at 12 noon with the meeting beginning at 1pm. Registration will re-open on Saturday morning at 8:00am. The meeting will begin at 8:45am. There will be speaker presentations, a business meeting with elections, the State Apiarist's Report and an update on the Master Beekeeper Program.

For more information and to register: <http://www.virginiabeekeepers.org>



### CAPE CHARLES FARM MARKET



Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore has signed up for a space at The Cape Charles Farm Market. The market is located at the Cape Charles Historical Society Museum on Stone Road. BGES Members may sell their products from the hive. All honey and consumable products from the hive must be labeled. Check the National Honey Board website for honey labeling requirements and the FDA website for labeling of any type of cosmetics or "balms".

BGES paid the \$25.00 fee to sign on with the market so there is an assigned permanent space but each week, the cost is \$10.00. You will need your own table and your own canopy. Hopes are that someone from the Guild will be there with honey, every week.

If you decide to participate, please setup prior to 4PM and stay until the market closes at 7PM.

The dates and hours of operation are as follows:

Tuesdays	from 4-7PM	From May 3 through May 24.
Tuesdays	from 4-7:30PM	From May 31 through August 30
Tuesdays	from 4-7PM	From September 6 through October 25.

Check out their page on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/capecharlesfarmersmarket/>



## **BGES Annual Picnic Saturday June 4, 2016**

BGES Annual Family Picnic will take place at the Agricultural Research and Extension Center (aka "Virginia Tech Experiment Station") 33446 Research Drive Painter, VA 23420-2827.

BGES provides Fried Chicken and Drinks. You Bring a Covered Dish - bring what you want BUT, if you can't decide what to bring, we suggest...

Last names A-P = Appetizers and Desserts. Last names Q-Z= Salads and Sides. This way we can assure everyone of wonderful pot luck delicacies.

IF the weather is good, please bring comfortable chairs for your group for outside.

Members and families - no charge. Non-members- \$5.00 per person.

### ***Activities and Events:***

- plant exchange, so we can share those "over-abundant garden volunteers"
- honey contest
- smoker contest
- drone marking- practice for the Queens!

- show and tell
- bee yard sale (bring your unneeded bee items, price them, get the cash if they sell!)

This yearly event gives all of us time to relax, enjoy the company of fellow beekeepers and simply talk about our bees!

## **The Beginning Beekeepers' Class**

On the first three Saturdays in April, Russell Vreeland did an excellent job of presenting the basics of beekeeping in a relaxed informative manner. Twenty-five participants learned the essentials for a successful journey on the road to keeping bees. We welcome all our newbies, wish them well, and encourage them to attend our meetings where questions and concerns can be addressed and experienced beekeepers can share experiences and expertise. The following successfully completed the class:

Exmore: Jacob and Jennifer Foisey

Greenbush: William Bannon

Melfa: Doris Gebel

Painter: Doug Hollingsworth , Herb Johnson +1

Onancock: Claudia Underwood, Yohannes Cusimano

Wallops: Lauren McCready +1

Accomac: Jennifer Kidwell

Chincoteague: Ulli Hollingsworth + 2, Hilary Quinn, Donnie Thornton, and Susan Birch

Cape Charles: John Evans, Madison Mello and Philip Harris

Eastville: Melinda Blanchard + 1

Capeville: Lisa Laufer + 1



## **Best Management Practices and Beekeepers Limited Liability HB535.**

Limited Liability for Beekeepers-makes it harder for beekeepers to be found liable. House Bill 535 provides that a beekeeper shall not be liable for any personal injury or property damage that occurs in connection with his keeping and maintaining of bees, bee equipment, queen breeding equipment, apiaries, or appliances if he follows best management practices established in regulations adopted by the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The immunity does not extend to intentional tortious conduct or acts of omissions that constitute gross negligence or negligence. The Board is directed to adopt initial regulations to be effective no later than November 1, 2016.

### **Colony at Church**

The Cheriton Baptist Church recently became the unwilling host to a large colony of honeybees. On April 25 Jim Moncrief headed a crew of beekeepers who spent the day removing the bees from behind a soffit high up in the air. A member of the church provided a lift from which Jim could access the colony. He vacuumed as many bees as he could and then removed massive amounts of comb dripping with nectar, pollen, and honey and encrusted with drones.



BGES members help unload buckets of bees, comb, and honey at the church.



Part of church colony.

## Varroa Mites and Hygienic Queens

Russell Vreeland

Recently, there has been a discussion in the club about honeybee queens with a genetic trait called Varroa Specific Hygiene (or VSH Queens). Okay so I caused it by my decision to go out and get some and our crack Newsletter editors have asked me to pen a column about this issue. So here it is.

Before I get into the VSH Queens I want to clear up some misconceptions that strangely seem to be running through the club and are related so it makes a full column

**YES BGES** our bees are infested with Varroa Mites. These devastating ectoparasites spread throughout the world about 30 years ago and they are present on the Eastern Shore.

**No** you cannot simply see them when you are looking in a hive and bees are moving all over (so are the mites by the way). If you do you are either very lucky or your hive is so full of mites it is dying and it is too late. Why? Well first, they are tiny brown little creatures. They can be carried around on the bees (most often on the back) where your bees cannot reach them. In fact, there are two of them on the bees in the picture. Since the bees in this almost life sized picture aren't moving and are isolated you should be able to find the mites but think about doing so in a full hive moving all over. If you have trouble finding a queen you will never find the mites (so I will tell you where they are at the end of the column). They are related to those friendly little ticks we all love around here but they make a deer tick look like an elephant.



**Yes** – If left alone they do harm your hives They carry and transmit at least 21 different harmful viruses most importantly Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) and Israeli acute paralysis virus (IAPV). In fact, we now know that DWV has been present in bees for many years but because mites feed on the bee hemolymph (blood) the mites caused the DWV to become a greater problem as they gave it access to more bees. Furthermore, in the mites the DWV combined with another virus (not sure which one) and became even more virulent.

**No** – simply leaving your hives alone will not necessarily make them stronger, it will not cause the mites to disappear and is simply tantamount to giving your hives slow death sentences. There are even videos of poor workers feeling a mite get on them and struggling mightily trying to get it off but failing. It is really sad.

There are many types of Varroa treatments from soft to hard which is a topic for another issue but the one thing everyone should do is monitor your colonies and count the mites. In a future column I will go over the life cycle but a key part for the mites is that they reproduce in the cells of your hive on the larva. A single worker larva will support 4 mite babies and a drone will produce 5. That seems like a low number but consider how many bees hatch each day. The mites reproduce and feed on the capped larva of the hive.

Okay this is where the VSH genes come in. This gene was found by scientists at the University of Minnesota. The bees with the gene have an enhanced ability to literally smell the mites in the capped cells. Once they find an infected cell they home in on it, remove the cap, destroy the larva and toss the whole mess out of the hive. That also kills the mites. One bonus of this is that they also do the same with larva infected with other problems or who are killed by a sudden frost.

So due to all of this I decided to go ahead and try some Queens with this gene. I am hoping that it will help me control the mites and expand the genetics of my hives. If these Queens and bees do the job, I will almost certainly get more. Now one last thing before anyone asks:

**NO!** Simply having VSH Queens will not allow me to stop monitoring for mites and will not allow me to totally stop any treatments. They will not eliminate the problem and over time the genes will be diluted. This is a tool not a cure. If you care about your hives you should monitor them for mites. That alone won't stop you from losing hives but I can tell you that it and any treatment will lessen the frequency of those losses.

By the way, I have learned that our club member Licho does have VSH Queens and will sell them. His are a cross with another bee strain. The ones I decided to try from California are a pure bred strain. Licho has told me that sometimes a Queen raised from a VSH Queen (second generation) will produce some rather defensive bees. So I will be watching for that as well.

I am hoping that at a future meeting we will do a workshop on monitoring for Varroa and if anyone wishes I will be happy to show you how I do it.

Oh in the picture the bee on the left has a mite just at the base of its left wing. The bee on the right has a mite almost down in the area where its thorax joins its abdomen, just below the hairs.

That is all for now!

Russell

## Outreach

Several members have participated in informational sessions promoting knowledge and understanding of the importance of honeybees. These activities included: Kiptopeke Elementary second graders(Laura and Russell), the Pocomoke Garden Club(Mary), Earth Day at Wallops Island(Tara), Girl Scouts in Cape Charles(Donna), Blessing of the Worms at New Roots Garden in Cape Charles(Stan, Phil, Donna).



It's Spring-people are catching swarms!!

*The BGES has a Facebook page. Log on to see some of the latest escapades of fellow BGES.*

*The official website for the BGES is <http://www.bgesva.org/index.html>*

*Any news worthy items-feel free to forward to [emspachmann@gmail.com](mailto:emspachmann@gmail.com) for possible inclusion in future newsletters.*