

Beekeepers helping Beekeepers!

Sudbury and District Beekeepers' Association - 50 years!

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Cool crisp mornings and shorter days. The bees are noticing too. Are they ready?

Summary of Sept 23, 2026 meeting

Firstly, congratulations to those who made orientation flights and found the room!

7:00 pm Welcome: Meghan and Justin

Approval of:

June 2026 minutes: moved/2nded by Otto/Rose

Agenda: moved/2nded by Rose/Jo

Welcome and new ideas?

We welcome 2 new directors who officially started their duties this month following our June election. These are Terry McIndoo and Jennifer Scott.

Please email your ideas for our monthly meetings. Getting fresh speakers can be a challenge. We are always open to your ideas about what you would like to get out of your association.

Our format for this meeting was more of an open dialogue and there seemed to be an appetite for it as the room was filled with lively discussion.

Weird bee moments open discussion

Moisture content – harvesting honey:

Generally, harvested honey should be below **18% moisture** content to avoid it fermenting. Some members noted higher than normal moisture this year with up to some seeing up to 23%. Rose dried her honey post-harvest using fans and a dehumidifier in a small room. Terry noticed that moisture content can actually increase when leaving honey in a pail during humid conditions (honey is hygroscopic).

Sometimes honey does not even get capped but can have low enough moisture for storage. The 'shake test' is a manual method you can use to assess moisture. If you shake a frame and the nectar remains largely in place, it may have a low enough moisture content for storage. For those that have a refractometer, Wayne mentioned that you can use Olive oil to calibrate as it has a moisture content close to 17%.

Forest fires:

We had a lot of smoke this summer. At high enough concentrations smoke can effect the behaviour of honey bees. Some members noted reduced foraging. Smoke is thought to cause bees to start gorging on honey in case they have to relocate resources in the face of fire danger.

Queen things:

There was some discussion of odd queen moments.

Meghan observed a queen cell in a super. How did it get there? The queen was still below the queen excluder.

Otto observed a swarm that had 2 queens. It is typically the original queen that leaves with a swarm but some have suggested that a virgin queen could also be part of a swarm. **Secondary swarms** can often have a virgin queen in them.

Otto that 2nd and 3rd generation queens from **hygienic stock** seem to gain undesirable characteristics such as aggressiveness or tendency to swarm.

Wayne described that if a queen cell is open from the side it has been killed by another queen (or otherwise torn down). If it's open from the bottom this means the queen has emerged. An emerged queen cell will often have a small flap at the bottom.



Alasdair's weird bee moment: This frog was under the top cover. Grey tree frogs can be attracted to the warmth and moisture associated with a hive.

Resource dearth:

Many members observed a dearth at the end of July into August. A lack of rain can cause a gap in available nectar and pollen.

How can you tell there is a dearth? Apart from a lack of resources in the hive, robbing behaviour is often observed. Robbing can be discouraged by using an entrance reducer which makes it easier for your bees to defend against unwanted guests. Foraging behaviour is also often reduced. Hives can also start to feel lighter during this period.

Do not hesitate to feed 1:1 syrup if you think your bees are hungry. Placing a jar on the inner cover enclosed by an empty super is the best way to discourage robbing.

Oxytetracycline:

EFB and AFB were discussed. Oxytetracycline is an antibiotic used to treat EFB while AFB-infected hives must be burned. Oxytet is only available

through a veterinarian. Using this prophylactically or indiscriminately is discouraged because it can lead to antibiotic resistance. Resistance can lead to a problem for all beekeepers if those resistant bacteria then spread. This is why it is Oxytet is regulated. Refer to the **September 2025 buzzword** for more details on EFB and how to deal with it.

break

Mite treatments:

Winter bees start being produced by early September in our area. These are the bees that we want to be healthy to give them the best chance of making it through to the spring. This is why it's important to get mites under control as early as possible. Formic Pro (or formic acid) is one common treatment. The benefit is that it can get under the brood cappings where mites love to multiply. It can also be legally used with supers on as it is naturally occurring in honey. Some members use Apivar or other products. Always refer to the manufacturers directions with regards to the application and timing of treatments weather-wise.

Many members also treat prior to winter wrapping with an **oxalic acid** drip or using vapourization (at 160 C to 180 C). Refer to the **October 2025 buzzword** for mite treatment details.

Fall Feeding:

This generated some unexpected lively debate. Some recommended feeding 15-18L of **2:1 syrup** and others warned of keeping an eye on excessive moisture. Regardless, most were in agreement that hives in our area should be close to 80lbs to see them through winter. If your hives have sufficient honey stored, they will be difficult to lift and you might only need minimal feeding.

If you are moving around frames of stored honey from other hives, keep in mind that the bee cluster will tend to move upward over the winter. If you imagine a ball of bees in the middle of your hive it's best to have stores above and around them. In the winter the cluster cannot easily move and bees can sometimes starve if resources are not appropriately positioned in the hive.

Did you know?

If you dissolve 2kg sugar into 1L of water, the final volume will be about 2.25L (not 3L).

A **1:1 solution** (by weight) of sugar will encourage brood rearing, while a **2:1 solution** is more suited at this time of year in that the bees can more quickly dry this down and store it. When temperatures are consistently **below 10C**, bees tend to **cluster** and have trouble evaporating the solution down enough to store it. Moisture can be a killer during cold weather, particularly if hives are not appropriately wrapped (this will be discussed at our October meeting). There is no harm wrapping your hives early other than it makes it inconvenient to access your hives.

Rose pointed out that hives should be generally be wrapped by her birthday each year which is rapidly approaching.

As an insurance policy, prior to wrapping, many members place **fondant** or **dry sugar** (on a newspaper layer) over the top frames, prior to closing up the hive. The sugar will absorb moisture and almost turns into a fondant eventually.

Upcoming Meeting

Our next public meeting is scheduled for October 21 at Lo Ellen public school library.

Memberships

Thanks to those who renewed their memberships! 12-month Memberships can be paid in person at the meeting or by e-transfer (**new address TBD**)

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

- Seniors or students \$15
- Individuals \$20
- Family \$25

Keep in touch with us!

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