

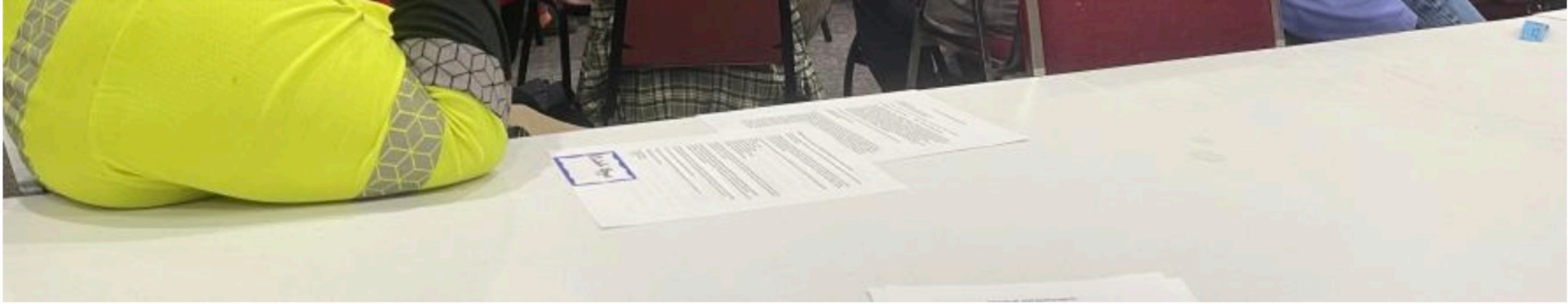
Oglethorpe County Bee Club aims to educate, expand

By Olivia Shapiro and Molly Linder on Wednesday, March 8, 2023

More Info:

The Oglethorpe County Bee Club will meet at 7 p.m. March 20 with guest speaker Harold Lanier, a Commerce beekeeper who sells beekeeping supplies. Club meetings are held every third Monday of the month at the Farm Bureau in Crawford, and dues are \$12 annually.





Caleb Epps, a new member of the Oglethorpe County Bee Club, listens to guest speaker Annette Kleiser explain a new honeybee vaccine. Epps, who has two hives, joined the club to gain knowledge and share ideas with other members. (Photo/Olivia Shapiro)

Veteran beekeepers and folks just starting in the beekeeping world are coming to Oglethorpe County Bee Club meetings to gain more knowledge.

Crawford's Caleb Epps, a new member, has two bee hives, but joined to learn from others.

"Knowledge and information, that's the biggest thing, having other people's ideas, and comparing your ideas to their ideas and trying to make something even better," Epps said.

Club president Joe Conti said education is one of its biggest goals, so the club tries to invite a guest speaker each month. That helps its growing membership continue to innovate.

The club has between 30-40 paid members yearly and around 25 people at monthly meetings.

"We have a lot of new beekeepers that are in the club now," Conti said. "Getting new beekeepers educated on how to do it is one of our big goals."

Innovative practices, such as those Annette Kleiser shared at a recent meeting, have been of particular interest to members.

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Kleiser, CEO of Dalan Animal Health, Inc., spoke about a vaccine she and her team developed to fight American Foulbrood, one of the most widespread and destructive of the honey bee brood diseases, according to the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#).

If the disease is found in a hive, the hive must be burned.

“We want to improve the health, and we feel that these animals are completely overlooked by traditional animal health,” Kleiser said. “All the big companies, they are developing vaccines and biotherapeutics for all other animals, but not honey bees.”

Although a specific price wasn’t provided, she said they hope to make the vaccine affordable for beekeepers.

Conti, who has kept bees for 27 years, doesn’t think American Foulbrood has affected his hives.

“I don’t believe I’ve ever had American Foulbrood, and don’t know of any members who’ve had it over the last dozen years or so,” Conti said.

Regardless, keeping track of the trends and possible threats is key for researchers and local beekeepers.

“It’s really important, and I love to take every opportunity to spread the word that we have to save the bees,” Kleiser said. “We have to do more, and we can do more.”